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Thomastown National School

Thomastown, Golden, Cashel, Co. Tipperary

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School Attendance Strategy

**The School’s Vision and Values in Relation to Attendance**

In Thomastown National School, we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive to and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be in school if they are unwell.

Thomastown NS is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All school personnel are expected to show appropriate concern for each child’s welfare and well-being.

**Aims of this Statement of Strategy**

* To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
* To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning
* To ensure compliance with the requirements of relevant legislation

**The School’s Expectations Regarding Attendance**

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on regular attendance in communications with parents and pupils. The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils’ learning.

We expect children to have full attendance at school unless they are ill, incapacitated or have medical appointments. We understand that there may also be urgent family reasons why a child cannot attend school, particularly in the case of bereavements.

**How Attendance Will Be Monitored**

* Each class teacher records attendance on the Aladdin System.
* The Principal and Deputy Principal regularly review attendance matters
* The Principal will make two Student Absence Reports to Tulsa annually (Tusla – Child and Family Agency 2015). The first report for Period 1, from school opening to December 31st, will be submitted online on or before March 31. The second report for Period 2, from January 1st to the end of the school year, will be submitted online on or before October 31st.
* The Principal will submit annual statistical returns to Tusla at the end of every school year.

**Summary of the main elements of the school’s approach to attendance**

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| Target Setting and Targets | Our annual attendance in the school year 2018-2019 was 96%. We would like to maintain our attendance at this high level.  In the 2018-2019 school year, five pupils missed 20 days or more. We aim to reduce this figure for the current school year (2019/2020) and for subsequent school years.  In the 2018-2019 school year, twelve pupils missed between 10 and 19 days at school. We aim to reduce this figure for the current school year and for subsequent school years |
| Whole School Approach | We would like to raise awareness among all members of the school community about school days lost due to holidaying during term time. |
| Promoting Good Attendance | The Principal will regularly speak to pupils about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.  Children with full attendance will be acknowledged at the end of each school year. |
| Responding to Poor Attendance | The Principal will keep in regular contact with parents where there is a concern regarding attendance or punctuality  The class teacher will inform parents when their child has missed 15 days of school. Parents will automatically receive an absence text via the Aladdin system once their child has been absent for 15 days.  Parents will receive a letter from the school, detailing absences from school, once a child has missed 20 days.  Parents may be invited to a meeting with the class teacher/Principal to discuss concerns regarding attendance or punctuality.  The Principal will make an Attendance referral to Tusla where there is a concern in relation to a pupil’s non-attendance at school.  If deemed necessary, contact will be made with the Education Welfare Officer in accordance with the Education Welfare Act |

**School Roles in Relation to Attendance**

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| The Class Teacher | * Encourages and commends good attendance * Implements any whole school plan to promote good attendance * Provides a busy and stimulating classroom where children feel valued * Calls the roll on a daily basis * Collects and stores any notes/medical certificates regarding attendance * Notes any queries or concerns regarding absence or punctuality * Records individual patterns of attendance * Consults with parents where there are concerns around attendance or where parents have not provided explanations regarding absences * Makes the Principal/Deputy Principal aware of concerns with regard to the attendance of individual children, specifically when a pupil’s attendance is approaching 20 days. |
| The Principal | * Promotes good attendance at school assemblies and in meetings with parents * Updates the Board of Management about attendance in the school * Ensures that the electronic version of the “Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil” is filled, printed and filed on a monthly basis * Keeps in regular contact with parents where attendance is a concern * Follows up on any issues regarding attendance * Submits two Student Absence Reports to Tulsa each year. * Submits the annual statistical returns to Tusla * Makes referrals to Tusla where deemed necessary |
| The Board of Management | * The Board of Management works to provide and support a positive, welcoming environment by maintaining and resourcing the school to a high standard, which in turn promotes good attendance * It is the responsibility of the Principal, Deputy Principal and staff to implement this strategy under the guidance and authority of the Board of Management |

**Responsibility of Parents**

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that children are in school every day, as far as possible

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that children are on time for school.

When children are absent from school/late for school, parents should provide a note to the class teacher with an explanation for that absence/lateness.

Parents can promote good school attendance by:

* Refraining from taking family holidays during school time
* Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
* Notifying the class teacher if their child cannot attend school for any reason
* Informing the class teacher in writing of the reasons for any absence from school
* Ensuring, in so far as possible, that their children’s medical appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours
* Showing an interest in their child’s school day and encouraging their child to participate in school activities
* Contacting the school immediately if they have concerns about absence or other school related matters
* Notifying the school if their child is to be collected by someone not known to the class teacher. This applies particularly to children in infant classes.
* Working with the school to resolve any attendance issues

**Monitoring the School Attendance Strategy**

This school attendance strategy will be monitored by:

* Regular review of attendance records and patterns
* Review of attendance targets
* Communication with class teachers, parents, pupils and Board of Management

**Review Date**

This strategy was reviewed by the Principal and staff in December 2019. The next review will take place in December 2020.

**Ratification**

This School Attendance Strategy was ratified at a Board of Management meeting held on 17th February 2020.

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| Signed | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Chairperson, Board of Management |
| Date: |  |