



# *Statement of Strategy For School Attendance*

*St. Louise de Marillac Primary School  
Drumfinn Rd  
Ballyfermot  
Dublin 10*

*Roll No: 20397S*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

<b><i>Topic</i></b>	<b><i>Page #</i></b>
The School's Vision and Values in Relation to Attendance	3
The School's High Expectations Around Attendance and Punctuality: Standards and Procedures for Notification of Absences	3
How Attendance is Monitored and Improved: A Whole-School Approach	5
Identification of Students who are at Risk of Developing School Attendance Problems	6
Working in Partnership around School Attendance	7
Review Process	8

### **The school's vision and values in relation to attendance**

In St. Louise de Marillac School, we value the individuality of all our children and respect their right to access all areas of learning. We work to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that are necessary for their self-fulfilment and their development into active and responsible adults.

This policy complements our school ethos of nurturing children's potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

The school community understands the personal and academic benefits of good school attendance, the impact of poor school attendance and the factors that have been proven in the research (*Tusla "Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools, 2015"*) to influence school attendance. This statement was prepared in consultation with the staff, parents, Board of Management and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in order to highlight the strategies and measures in place in St. Louise de Marillac School to foster an appreciation of learning among pupils and to encourage regular attendance at school. It was updated in the school year 2019/2020 following advice given by the inspectorate following a DEIS evaluation in May 2019.

### **The school's high expectations in relation to attendance**

Our school has always had high expectations in relation to school attendance. Since the school has been part of the Department of Education and Science's DEIS initiative, ongoing monitoring and implementing of our DEIS policy and attendance strategies has increased our attendance rates in the past number of years. Our average attendance rate for the previous school years was:

2013/2014 = 93.7%

2014/2015 = 93.3%

2015/2016 = 92.3%

2016/2017 = 92.8%

2017/2018 = 92.5%

2018/2019 = 92.8%

We wish to maintain our average attendance rate at 93% (or above).

The school has set down the standards in relation to attendance that aim to promote the full attendance by all pupils. These standards are communicated to all members of the school community by various means such as the school's information booklet, regular notes home, monthly school newsletters, text messages, school website.

### **Opening and Closing times**

Parents/guardians are aware that the school doors open for pupils at 8.50am and pupils should be in classrooms at 9am and they begin formal lessons at 9.10am. School closes for infant classes at 1.40pm and for 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> at 2.40pm.

Pupils are expected to be in their classrooms ready to begin work at 9am. The two side entrance doors for pupils will be closed at 9.05am. Any child who arrives after this time must come in through the main entrance door and should sign the 'LATE Book' at the main entrance desk.

The class attendance roll will be called by the class teacher at 9.50am. Any child who has arrived into the classroom after 9.10am will be marked as late and any child who has not arrived before 9.50am is marked as absent.

If a pupil needs to be collected early from school (e.g. for a dentist appointment that cannot be facilitated outside of school hours), a parent/guardian must sign the Early Collection book at the main office. The school secretary will go to the child's class and bring the pupil to the reception area to be released early into his/her parent/guardian's care. All parents are strongly advised against early collection of pupils except in urgent cases.

### ***Procedures for Notification of Student Absences to the School***

On return from all absences (regardless of whether the parent has phoned the school during the absence), the child's parent/guardian should provide a note explaining the child's absence in the pupil's school journal (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>) or by a note (infant classes, as they don't have school journals). If a child is ill for more than three consecutive days, a doctor's certificate should be provided to the class teacher. On receipt of notes and/or doctor's certificates, the class teacher will record on Aladdin the reason given by parents for the absence. If no note is received, the child's absence will be recorded as "Unexplained."

### ***The School's Responses to Absences***

If no note or phone call has been received from a parent to explain an absence, a member of the School Completion Programme (SCP) will phone the child's parent on the morning of the absence in an effort to establish the reason for the absence.

The school will send a text message once a child misses 5 days and again once the child reaches 10 days' absences. A letter will be sent informing parents when their child has reached 15 days of school absence in the school year. At this time, the HSCL teacher and/or the principal is available to parents to meet and to put in place any supports that the school and/or community agencies can offer to identify and remove any barriers to attendance.

There is a pastoral Care Team that meets regularly in the school to provide advice and assistance in this regard. The SCP co-ordinator and HSCL teacher are members of this team and he/she has access to various supports such as after-school clubs, in-school mentoring, one-to-one key work and they can refer families to various support agencies in the community to support pupils with poor school attendance. The school's Special Education Team can offer extra learning support and/or counselling for children who may be experiencing difficulties or have suffered trauma or crisis.

The school has clear legislated obligations regarding referral of students to the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla-Child and Family Agency. They are clearly outlined at <http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services>

Schools must report all pupils who are absent for 20 days or more in a school year to the Educational Welfare Services.

### ***The School's Policy for Absences due to Term-Time Holidays***

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him/her not to attend (Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time.

St Louise de Marillac School strongly discourages parents from taking pupils on holidays during term time. If a parent decides to take his/her child out of school for holidays, the parent must provide a letter to the school to say that they are doing so and that they are aware of the educational and potential legal implications of doing so.

### **How attendance is monitored and improved: A whole-school approach**

The school uses the Aladdin administration system for taking and monitoring of attendance daily. As outlined above, procedures are in place in collaboration with the SCP programme to identify and support those children with a pattern of poor school attendance.

Using a whole-school approach, we set yearly and monthly targets through our DEIS 3-year plan to improve attendance annually. Currently our yearly target is set at 93% or above. We strive to reduce the number of pupils missing more than 20 days in a school year.

### ***Rewarding pupils with good attendance***

As a DEIS school, targeting good attendance is part of our school action plan. Students with good attendance may be rewarded in the following ways:

- ✓ Recognising full attendees at monthly assemblies
- ✓ The two classes with the highest percentage attendance rate in the junior and senior side of school are awarded a class prize monthly e.g. a pizza party
- ✓ Presenting certificates and small prize to pupils who have full attendance at the end of each term.
- ✓ The EWO is invited to a school assembly annually to present Tusla certificates of attendance to pupils with full attendance and/or most improved attendance.

### ***Responding to poor attendance / Strategies for improving attendance***

The following strategies will be employed to improve attendance:

- ✓ The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, will be flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.

- ✓ St Louise de Marillac Primary School will promote the development of good self-esteem and self-worth in its pupils (see Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy).
- ✓ Support for pupils who have special educational needs is provided in accordance with DES guidelines.
- ✓ Attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance and the class teacher will notify the HSCL teacher of any concerns regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- ✓ The school will use regular newsletters and web texts to promote attendance and punctuality.
- ✓ Where concerns arise, the class teacher or SCP staff member monitoring attendance brings the concern to the attention of the principal and/or the HSCL.
- ✓ The principal and HSCL teacher assess each case individually at this point and a home visit may be deemed necessary. The case may be referred to the school's pastoral care team if deemed appropriate.
- ✓ The class teacher will encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- ✓ The class teacher will ensure that contact is made with parents/guardians in instances where absences are not explained.
- ✓ The class teacher will keep a daily record of attendance in Aladdin.
- ✓ Attendance figures are monitored daily by the SCP project worker as part of the Local School Completion Programme.
- ✓ The SCP staff member will also bring details of continued absences and patterns of absences to the attention of the class teachers, the HSCLT and the Principal as necessary.
- ✓ The Principal will promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- ✓ Attendance will be featured as part of monthly school assemblies.
- ✓ Parents of children who are absent for 5 days receive a text from the school informing them of this fact. Once a child reaches 10 days a text is also sent to inform the parents.
- ✓ Parents of children who are absent for 15 days receive a letter from the school informing them of this fact and highlighting the legal requirement of the school to report to the EWO when the child reaches 20 days absent.
- ✓ The Principal will inform the NEWB:
  - When a pupil has been missing for twenty or more days during the course of the school year.
  - When a pupil has been suspended from school more than once under the Code of Behaviour.
- ✓ The School Completion Programme operates to target pupils who are considered to be at risk of early school leaving.
- ✓ Evidence of non-attendance is a factor in including pupils in the various activities; football, basketball, homework club, infant club, computer club, etc.
- ✓ Extra-curricular activities will be encouraged for all pupils, specifically those at risk of non-attendance.

### **Identification of pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems**

The following strategies may be employed to identify students at risk of developing school attendance problems:

- ✓ On transfer to St Louise de Marillac Primary School, attendance records will be sought from previous schools on pupil attendance.
- ✓ Class teachers will inform the HSCLT / Principal of any concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- ✓ Contact with various agencies who are involved with such students.

### **Working in partnership around school attendance**

Closer home/school relations will be fostered through:

- ✓ The work of the HSCL teacher
- ✓ Ongoing communication with the Parents' Association
- ✓ Attendance at meetings (Parent/Teacher, etc)
- ✓ Parent and child groups (through HSCLT)
- ✓ Parent Courses
- ✓ Attendance at Awards ceremonies
- ✓ Attendance at Sports Day
- ✓ Attendance at school events (e.g. Concerts, Masses, etc.)
- ✓ Involvement in Paired Reading, Maths for Fun, classroom activities, etc.
- ✓ Regular newsletters to families
- ✓ School website/blog

Contact with the following bodies will be fostered and developed in order to promote the good attendance of students in the school.

- ✓ TUSLA
- ✓ Other schools in the vicinity
- ✓ School Completion Programme
- ✓ NEPS
- ✓ Ballyfermot Partnership
- ✓ FamiliBase
- ✓ Ballyfermot Youth Services
- ✓ Cherry Orchard Equine Centre
- ✓ Barnardo's
- ✓ Tusla and Social Work Department in Cherry Orchard
- ✓ St Matthew's Parish
- ✓ Local GAA clubs, soccer clubs, etc.
- ✓ Community Gardaí and JLO

- ✓ Local interest groups such as the Vincent de Paul
- ✓ Dublin City Council community services including Ballyfermot Library

### **Review process**

The success of this Statement of Strategy will be monitored by

- ✓ assessing whether we have met our DEIS attendance target at the end of each year
- ✓ reviewing how many open cases are with the school's EWO in relation to poor attendance
- ✓ consulting with staff as to how the various strategies for improvement in school attendance are working.

The staff of St Louise de Marillac Primary School has an agreed systematic cycle of review of policies whereby new policies are reviewed after one year and subsequently every three years. In line with the above, this policy will be reviewed in the 2022-2023 academic year and subsequently every three years, unless changes are required by legislation or other needs arise before then.

This statement of strategy for school attendance was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Louise de Marillac Primary School on

It is available for the school community on the school server, in the parents' room and on the school website/blog.

It is also available in the policy folder in the staffroom.

Signed: *Sr. Claire McKiernan*

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 10/09/2019