



School Attendance Strategy

Changing social habits and patterns necessitate the updating of the schools attendance policy. The redrafting should be a collaborative process involving staff and Board of Management.

Rationale:

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy and strategy could be summarized as follows:

The changing fabric of society
The roll of the N.E.W.B
Levels of disadvantage
Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000
Changing attitudes to education

Statement of Objectives

It is the goal of St. Paul's to promote consistent school attendance by its students. Toward this goal, we endeavour to promote a partnership with parents and students to maximize school attendance. With this in mind, the objectives in establishing a Plan for Attendance are to:

- Increase student performance and the completion of school by students.
- Be able to identify the whereabouts of every student for safety purposes.
- Promote a sense of responsibility on the part of students, parents and staff to insure maximum attendance by students.
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance,



Strategies to Meet Objectives

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system will be introduced for promoting good attendance at school.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

The revised policy is geared towards

- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning

St. Paul's seek to improve attendance by students through a partnership with parents, staff, and students. We examine and analyze data related to attendance to identify areas for improvement. Based on this data, we regularly seek to develop new specific strategies to address these issues. Some of the strategies currently in place include:

- A. Notification of parents at the beginning of each school year of the importance of daily attendance through the distribution of the Attendance plan.
- B. Use of direct contact, telephone calls and texts to parents when children are absent.
- C. Use of direct contact by Community Worker with parents through telephone calls, texts and home visits.
- E. Use of Educational Welfare Officer for visits to chronically absent students.
- H. Attendance Incentives for those students who maintain positive attendance.



The school promotes good attendance by

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Ensuring children are happy
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- Devising IEPs, Behavioural Plans and IAPs
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc. are identified early
- Rewarding good attendance with certificates at the end of the year.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

We recommend that parents call the school when their child is going to be absent or late. It is required that when a child returns from school from an absence, is late to school, or departs school early that the parent communicates with the school the reasons for the absence, lateness, or early departure.

A. Excused Absences, Lateness, and Early Departures: Are defined as absences, lateness, and early departures from class or school due to personal illness, illness or death in the family, religious observance, quarantine, required court appearance, attendance at health clinics, approved cooperative work programs, participation in approved school programmes.

B. Unexcused Absences: All other absences, lateness, and early departures are considered unexcused.

All absences, lateness and early departures must be accounted for through contact by a parent. Without this contact all absences, lateness and early departures are unexcused.

Record Keeping/General Procedures

A. Attendance is taken each day at around 10.20am.

B. The nature of the absence, tardiness, or early departure is recorded in the school attendance log.

C. Parents will be called by the school on the first day of each absence; this may be accomplished by direct contact by school personnel either through telephone calls, texts and home visits.



Incentives and Sanctions

A. **Incentives:** To encourage students to maintain and improve their school attendance, St Paul's recognises student's success by:

Midyear and end of year awards given to students with perfect/near perfect attendance.

B. **Disciplinary Consequences:** Unexcused Absences, Unexcused Lateness and Unexcused Early Departures result in disciplinary action consistent with the school's code of conduct. Those penalties may include, but are not limited to:

- Deduction from CSS
- Possible loss of activity or trip
- Meetings with Parents/ Guardians

Notification of Parents, Students, and Staff

An Individual Attendance Plan will be drawn up as part of referral process.

Parents receive a plain language summary of this plan by mail at the start of the school year and during the referral process.

All staff at the beginning of each school year receive a copy of the attendance plan and other school policies to clarify individual roles in their implementation.

Open Days or meeting with parents are opportunities to reinforce the importance of good attendance by students.

Intervention Strategies:

Letters are sent to parents of pupils with attendance problems.

Designated staff members, including teachers, community worker and principal will contact parents regarding attendance plan, explain the ramifications of unexcused Absences, Lateness and Early Departures, stress the importance of class attendance and discuss appropriate intervention strategies to correct the situation.

Meetings with parents will discuss strategies for improving student attendance.

Meetings between Principal, Community Worker and the EWO will take place to ensure early intervention on chronic absentee problems.



Responsibilities:

Attendance information shall be taken by Principal and teachers. The record shall include the student's presence, absence, tardiness and/or early departure.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

School Principal and Community Worker

The School Principal and Community Worker will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations. The register, attendance log and pupils' files shall include the name, date of birth, full name of parents, address where the pupil resides, telephone number(s) to contact parents, date of pupil's enrollment, record of pupil's attendance, date the pupil withdraws or is dropped from school, record of days school was closed.
- Ensure the attendance log is maintained, recording lates, absences and feedback from all efforts to contact parents/guardians.
- Contact parents/ guardians in instances where absences are not explained.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- At the end of every month, Dave and Peter, as attendance Subcommittee will meet to review roll book and the attendance log for absentees and poor attendees. Intervention strategies and options will be evaluated and put into place to be implemented for the next month and reviewed on an ongoing basis or at the next meeting. Proceedings of these meetings will be minuted in the attendance log.

Ratified by Board of Management on

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date _____



School attendance Plan

Regular school attendance helps a child to:

- Learn
- Progress
- Establish good habits
- Be supervised and safe
- Prepare for the future

Irregular school attendance:

- May put your child at risk in the community
- Seriously disrupts continuity of learning
- Undermines educational progress
- Leads to underachievement and low attainment
- Reduces likelihood of further education opportunities and training
- Creates a higher risk of unemployment
- Creates a greater risk of being drawn into criminal or anti-social activity

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the School and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;
- Making sure their children understand that parents support and approve of school attendance;
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.

Pupils

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

ATTENDANCE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY!