

January 2022

Policy on Reduced School Days

Introduction:

This Policy was developed in response to circular 0047/2021 – *'Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools'* which came into effect on 1st January 2022. to ensure that Reduced School Days are only used in St Brigid's Primary School in a manner that is limited, appropriate and absolutely necessary, and in line with the Department of Education's guidelines.

Aims and Objectives:

The aims of this policy are to

- To provide clarity to the Board of Management, staff, parents and guardians around the use of reduced schools days, as outlined in circular 0047/2021.
- To ensure the School and Board of Management comply with the terms of the *'Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools' Circular 0047/2021*
- To ensure proper procedures are followed with regard to the use of Reduced School Days
- To ensure that the use of reduced school days are limited to only those circumstances where it is absolutely necessary and that best practice is followed with the interests of the student to the fore

Reduced School Days

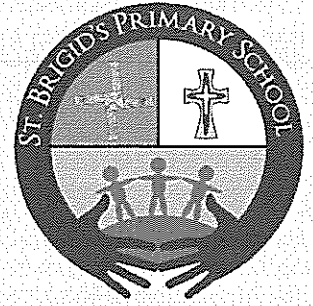
For the purposes of these guidelines, reduced school days are defined as:

- a reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day, and/or
- a reduced week where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student may not attend the full five days each week.

Exceptional Circumstances when a reduced school day might be used

Reduced school days should not be used as a sanction, offered as an alternative to a sanction, or used as a behavioural management tool. The Department of Education and Tusla Education Support Service's position is that exclusion of a student for part of the school day, as a sanction, is a suspension. The procedures in relation to suspension form part of the Code of Behaviour.

Reduced school days should only ever be considered in very limited and time-bound circumstances such as, for example, supporting a student to return to school after a period of absence, or due to a medical or mental health-related condition or due to other exceptional circumstances. It is acknowledged that a reduced school day may be helpful in exceptional circumstances as part of a transition or reintegration intervention, based on the needs of individual students. Any such



arrangement should be short term and transitional, and designed to assist the student to eventually attend for the full school day along with his/her peers. In making any such arrangements school authorities should always be mindful of the best interests of the student and of the student's right to a full day in school.

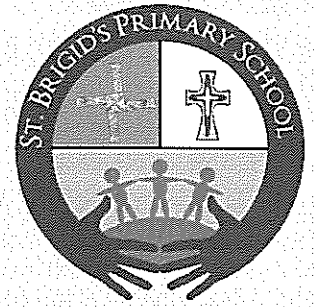
Procedures and Guidelines:

Key Requirements for the use of reduced school days

Where in exceptional circumstances schools are placing a student on a reduced school day, the school authorities:

- a) Must, prior to consideration of a reduced school day, have previously engaged with the relevant support services and professionals, including the special educational needs organiser (SENO) where appropriate, and have developed and implemented a student support plan for an appropriate period of time.
- b) Need to have clear evidence-based reasons for considering a reduced school day as a relevant and appropriate intervention with the best interests of the student at the core of the decision.
- c) Shall have the written consent of the parents/guardians of the student and must also document if parental consent is subsequently withdrawn.
- d) Shall notify Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) of the decision to place a student on a reduced school day no later than the first day of the commencement of each episode of a reduced school day.
- e) Should notify the NCSE (Local SENO) of the decision to place the student on a reduced school day where the student has special educational needs (SEN).
- f) Should formulate and agree a plan for the reduced school day intervention which will specify the following:
 - start, review and end dates;
 - any educational supports or interventions to be provided for the student during the period of the reduced school day;
 - the actions required to support the student's return to school and reintegration to a full-time school day.

The plan with respect to the reduced school day intervention and return to school will have regard to any relevant medical reports or other relevant information held in the student's support file. The intervention and return to school plan must be discussed and agreed in collaboration with the parent/guardian. Ideally, the period for which the student is on a reduced school day, should not



exceed six school weeks. A reduced school day cannot be carried forward from one academic year to the next.

g) Must include in the plan of action outlined in (f), the name of a contact person in the school with whom the parents/guardians may communicate with, and, where appropriate, any work plan for the time during which the student will not be in attendance at the school.

h) Shall provide the parents/guardians, with a copy of the agreed plan, signed by parents/guardians, and the school principal, and retain a copy which must be given to the Educational Welfare Officer or a member of the DE Inspectorate if requested. A copy should also be retained on the student support file.

i) Should consider a graduated regime of school attendance which increases steadily and incrementally towards full attendance.

j) Will arrange for a review with the student and their parents/guardians, if a student is still on a reduced school day as the time limit of the plan approaches.

k) Should consider an extension only in exceptional circumstances and only with the further written consent of parents/guardians

l) Shall submit a new notification form to TESS when the period during which the student has been on a reduced school day is extended no later than the first day of renewal of the plan.

m) Shall keep a record of all instances of students being placed on a reduced school day and access to this list should be made available to TESS educational welfare officers and the Department of Education Inspectorate if requested.

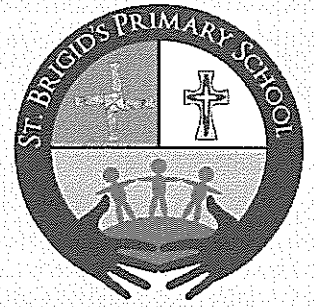
n) Shall inform the parents/guardians, of their right to withdraw consent at any time.

o) Should inform the parents/guardians that TESS educational welfare officer can provide assistance and advice if required.

Over sight

The Board of Management is mindful that where parental consent is not given or subsequently withdrawn, the processes applying to suspension apply including recourse to section 29 appeals. Accordingly, the Board has put in place appropriate oversight by requiring a report on all pupils currently on a reduced School Day to be included on Principal's Report at Board Meetings.

ST. BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL



Supports available to schools

Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs.

The Department of Education has provided significant additional resources such as special education teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support the inclusion of students with SEN.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) provides continuing professional development (CPD) and support for teachers in the area of special educational needs (SEN) and provides support and expertise to schools on issues related to behaviour.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) offers a support and development programme to build capacity in schools in relation to evidence-based practice in the promotion of academic, social and emotional competence, in addition to assisting schools to support individual students. NEPS, in consultation with parents/guardians, teachers and relevant professionals, may support a plan for a gradual reintroduction to school for children who are out of school due to school phobia or separation anxiety or other exceptional circumstances.

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) educational welfare officers operate under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. TESS is charged with ensuring that every child either attends school regularly or otherwise receives a minimum education. Educational welfare officers work with parents, young people, schools and other agencies to address barriers to attendance. The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 outlines responsibilities of all parties in relation to school attendance including parents, principals, boards of management and TESS educational welfare officers.

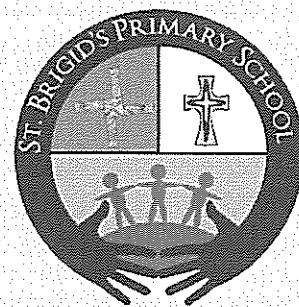
Appeals

As the use of a reduced school day should be mutually agreed between the school and the parent/guardian, the issue of appeal should not arise. However, schools must advise parents/guardians that they can withdraw their consent at any time while the student is on a reduced school day. Where parental/guardian consent is not given or subsequently withdrawn and the school proceeds or continues with a reduced school day, this is effectively a suspension and, in accordance with Tusla's Developing A Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (2008), the relevant procedures in relation to a suspension apply. The provision for appeals for suspensions and exclusions is set out under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

Dissemination of the Guidelines

A copy of the full guidelines must be made available to parents/guardians/ students on request and must always be provided to parents/guardians where a reduced school day is being put in place.

ST. BRIGID'S PRIMARY SCHOOL



Roles and Responsibilities –

The Principal will be responsible for consulting with Parents/guardians and drawing up plans when a reduced School Day is being considered. Relevant class teachers and SET will be consulted regarding this plan also. The Principal will also be responsible for notifying TESS or any Reduced Day Plans in place at a given time. The Board of Management will ensure oversight by including this item at BOM Meetings.

Ratification and Communication

This Policy was reviewed and Ratified by the BOM on 9th February 2022.

It was communicated to all staff via Staff Shared Drive. It is available on the School's website. It will be included in the next print run of our Information for Parents Booklet.

Chairperson: Kerw Duff

Date: 9/2/22