



**Letterkenny  
Educate Together**  
National School  
ag fás le chéile - ag foghlaim le chéile

# Attendance Policy

# Attendance Policy

## Title

Letterkenny Educate Together National School Attendance Policy.

## Introductory Statement

The policy was formulated the Principal and Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal has specific responsibility to all records relating to attendance in the school. The draft document was circulated to a number of parents for their consideration and was presented to the Board of Management for ratification.

## Rationale

The policy was drafted at this time:

- To ensure strategies are in place to encourage pupil attendance
- To ensure the school complies with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000
- To support staff with guidelines in the management of pupil attendance
- To give parents clarity regarding their responsibilities in this matter.
- To implement suggested procedures following a visit from the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB).

## Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Equality based: Parents are made aware of need to let the school know when absences are related to religious observance.

Child-centred: to allow children to make progress in all aspects of their development.

Democratically run: To involve parents in attendance strategies. To facilitate co-operation between staff, parents and pupils.

Co-educational: The attendance of both boys and girls will be equally monitored and supported.

## Aims

With this policy the school hopes:

- To foster an appreciation of learning.
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance.
- To identify pupils at risk of school leaving early.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To ensure that the system of rules is implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines form NEWB
- To encourage parents and teachers to work together to minimise child absences.

### **Defining and Recording Non-Attendance**

- ‘A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at “a national school or other suitable school” on each day that the school is open for instruction’. Non-attendance is when a pupil is absent for a full day of instruction or part of a day of instruction.
- Class roll books are kept and updated daily by class teachers and information is transferred to the Aladdin Schools system for the whole school. Patterns of absences are identified.
- The school send standard electronic reports to the NEWB at five stages during the school year.
- Parents are reminded on an annual basis to send written explanations regarding their child’s absences and informed of NEWB regulations regarding children’s attendance.
- The act also obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the principal of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence.
- Schools must report certain non attendance matters to NEWB, pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil’s attendance
- Standard notes are sent to parents after 10 and 20 days absent.
- The non-attendance of pupils and the effects that it has on pupil learning is communicated to parents
  - At regular parent-teacher meetings
  - At additional individual parent-teacher meetings as necessary
- The Education Welfare Act requires a parent to notify the school when a child is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day in the manner prescribed by the school.

### **Whole school strategies to promote attendance include:**

- **Environment:** We create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents in both classrooms and the school as a whole.
- **Late arrivals** are welcomed. Patterns of late arrival are discussed with parents.
- **Early intervention:** At group enrolment meetings new mothers/fathers are informed of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- **Homework:** Homework policy to be drafted in consultation with whole school community.
- **Code of dress:** Code of dress to be drafted in consultation with whole school community.
- **Transport:** The school facilitates parents in addressing any transport issues.
- **Assessment:** Testing is explained in advance to both children and parents and a safe environment is created for testing.
- **Recording Attendance:** Attendance is recorded by the class teacher on a daily basis.
- **Equality of Participation:** Sensitivity is required when charges are made for any school activity. It is recognised the child is not responsible for such payments and is not made feel different or excluded due to non-payment of the charge. The principal meets with parents who appear to be under financial strains in an effort to see how the school might support them. Parents are also informed of grants and supports available from other statutory bodies. The Board of Management has a contingency fund to ensure full participation for children from necessitous families in school activities.
- **Equality issues:** The multi-denominational, co-educational and democratic ethos of the school is made very clear to parents at enrolment. Our anti-bullying policy will provide safeguards for pupils or parents or staff who feel excluded from the community on racist, sexist and other grounds.
- **Reports:** The school reports the total amount of days missed in a year to parents in the end of year reports and parent teacher meetings. Attention is drawn to the proportion of the school year as a whole the child has missed. A copy of the individual attendance record for the child accompanies their end of year report.

- **Curriculum:** Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their child from RSE lessons on specific sensitive topics. It is recognised parents keep their children at home on ethical grounds. Such absences will be treated in the standard manner.
- **HSCL Teacher:** The Home School Community Liaison teacher provides a vital link between parents and the school. The HSCL meets with parents to provide support in ensuring that their children attend school and home visits are arranged if appropriate. The HSCL teacher visits all Junior Infant Parents at home in the first term of their school career.
- **Parents:** We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents. Copies of *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) to be kept in the school.
- **Support:** parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns relating to attendance with the child's class teacher and/or principal.
- **Learning Needs:** We plan to adequately cater for the learning needs of "at risk pupils". The curriculum is differentiated to meet individual need.
- **Travelling Community:** Close links are kept with the visiting teacher for travellers.
- **Staff development:** Policies relating to attendance are explained to new members of staff by the post holder with responsibilities for recordkeeping of attendance.

### Communication with other schools/other providers

- Transfer letters are sent to the old primary school when a pupil changes primary school and attendance history is sought. Other primary schools receiving a transfer from our school will be furnished with an attendance history.
- Pupils' attendance history is forwarded to post primary schools on transfer.
- Links are kept with the local EWO Lynn Bovaird.
- The Principal reserves the right to contact the EWO to seek advice about any attendance matters.
- **Strategies in event of non-attendance**  
*(The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register)*
  - Parents are made aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act in relation to causing their children to attend school. Copies of *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) to be available in school.
  - Parents are made aware of the schools duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer, of the serving of a "school attendance notice" by the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the principal of the school) on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment).
  - Parents are reminded on a regular basis to send written explanations regarding their child's absences. The act also obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the principal of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence.
  - Individual pupil records are kept of reasons for absences and the NEWB coding for absences is used.
  - Sensitivity regarding parental literacy difficulties is advised. Such parents are given the option of using the telephone to explain pupil absence.
  - Unexplained absences are recorded using NEWB coding system.
  - Individual and class records are monitored on an ongoing basis by the principal. Class teachers and the post holder with responsibility for attendance recordkeeping bring matters of concern to the attention of the principal.
  - Standard texts are sent to parents after 10 and 20 days absent. The non-attendance of pupils and the effects that it has on pupil learning is communicated to parents

- At regular parent-teacher meetings
  - At additional individual parent-teacher meetings as necessary
  - Electronic forms on the secure NEWB website are used to inform the Education Welfare Officer of non-attendance. If the principal has particular concerns a meeting may be set up with the EWO.
  - Approaches will be made to other agencies in the context of a family /pupil having difficulties, for example: The Visiting Teacher Service, Social Services, Public Health Nurse, Special Needs Counsellor.
  - We support the child to “catch up” on work missed by summarising for parents topics covered in the class during the child’s absence. In the event of a long-term absence temporary learning support may be offered.
- **Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school**  
*A principal may only remove a pupil’s name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school, or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.*
- The school will inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing or electronically of
    - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
    - intended expulsion of a child.
    - the enrolment of a child in a special school.
  - Notification by the Education Welfare Officer that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) will be acknowledged in writing.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from a school the principal will give them and the new school a certificate stating child’s record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.
  - Transfer from another school: The principal of our school will notify the principal of the child’s last school attended using a standard letter that the child is now registered in Letterkenny Educate Together National School “as soon as may be”. *(When a principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the principal of the pupil’s new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil’s former school and of such matters relating to the child’s educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.)*

### **Annual Report**

- The board will inform the Education Welfare Officer electronically of the level of attendance at the school for each school year within six weeks of the end of the school year. The post holder for record keeping and attendance will co-ordinate this report.
- Parents’ Association will be informed of the level of attendance at the school for each school year at the first meeting of the subsequent school year.

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| <b>Success Criteria</b> |
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Practical indicators of the success of the strategies in this policy include:

- Increase in attendance levels of pupils
- Rolls, registers etc will be kept up to date
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils
- Procedures set up in the policy are adhered to
- Good communication between EWO and the school personnel
- Parents feel supported in addressing attendance difficulties
- Timely and appropriate feedback to parents, Board of Management and NEWB on attendance on a yearly basis.

## **Roles and Responsibility**

The following have particular responsibilities for aspects of the policy as outlined in the document:

- Principal
- Post holder
- Class teacher
- Support Personnel
- Parents
- Pupils
- Education Welfare Officer
- Board of Management
- Visiting Teacher for Travellers

## **Implementation Date**

The policy is operational following ratification by the Board of Management.

## **Timetable for Review**

The policy will be reviewed as necessary and in line with any new legislation.

## **Ratification & Communication**

The Board of Management officially reviewed and ratified the policy on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

Key points of the policy will be distributed to parents in a future school booklet. Parents of currently enrolled pupils were informed of key points at the December Parent-Teacher meetings. Efforts will be made to make the school booklet accessible to parents whose first language is not English.

## REFERENCE (ATTENDANCE)

### <sup>1</sup> Solas (March 2001)

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Schools will be required to prepare and submit to the Education Welfare Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt to foster an appreciation of learning among the pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school. Such strategies would include rewarding pupils with good attendance records and identifying at an early stage pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.

Further guidelines are expected from the Education Welfare Board (when established).

### <sup>1</sup> Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

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**18.**—Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she is registered during part of a school day, or for a school day or more school than a school day, the parent of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the code of behaviour prepared by the school under *section 23*, notify the principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

**20.**—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after the commencement of this section, cause to be established and maintained a register of all students attending that school.

(2) The principal of a recognised school shall, on the day on which the child first attends that school, enter the child's name, the date of his or her first so attending and such other particulars as may be prescribed by the Minister, in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school, and the child concerned shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed, as on and from that date, to be registered in that school.

(3) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after entering in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school the name of a child who is registered in another recognised school, so inform by notification in writing the principal of the second-mentioned school.

(4) The principal of the second-mentioned school referred to in *subsection (3)* shall, on receipt of a notification under that subsection, remove the name of the child concerned from the register maintained under this section in respect of the said second-mentioned school except where the child continues to receive part of his or her education at that school.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on receiving a notification under *subsection (3)* in relation to a child, notify the principal of the school first-mentioned in that subsection of—

(a) any problems relating to school attendance that the child concerned had while attending the second-mentioned school referred to therein, and

(b) such other matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.

(6) The principal of a recognised school shall not remove a child's name from the register other than—

(a) in accordance with *subsection (4)*, or

(b) where he or she has received a notification in writing from the Board that the child concerned is registered in the register maintained under *section 14*.

**21.**—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall cause to be maintained in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school.

(2) A record maintained under *subsection (1)* shall specify the following, that is to say:

(a) where a student attends at the school concerned on a school day, the fact of his or her attendance, or

(b) where a student fails to so attend, the fact of his or her failure and the reasons for such failure.

(3) A record to which this section applies shall be maintained at the recognised school concerned and shall be in such form as may be specified by the Board.

(4) Where—

(a) a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days,

(b) the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20,

(c) a student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register referred to in *section 20* by the principal of the school concerned, or

(d) a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly,

the principal of the school concerned shall forthwith so inform, by notice in writing, an educational welfare officer.

(5) On receiving a notice under *subsection (4)*, an educational welfare officer shall—

(a) consult with the student concerned, his or her parents, the principal and such other persons as he or she considers appropriate, and

(b) make all reasonable efforts to ensure that provision is made for the continued education of the child and his or her full participation in school.

(6) The board of management of a recognised school shall, not later than 6 weeks after the end of each school year, submit a report to—

(a) the educational welfare officer who has been assigned functions under this Act in relation to that school, and

(b) the parents' association of the recognised school concerned established under section 26 of the Act of 1998 (where so established), on the levels of attendance at that school during the immediately preceding school year.

(7) A report under *subsection (6)* shall be in such form and comply with such requirements as may be determined by the Board.

(8) An educational welfare officer may during any school day enter a recognised school and inspect the register maintained at that school under *section 20* or a record to which this section applies, and take copies of extracts from such register or record.

(9) For the purposes of this section a student shall be deemed not to be absent from school where any period of absence is authorised by the principal and relates to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved.

**22.—**(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students (hereafter in this section referred to as a “statement of strategy”).

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of *subsection (1)*, a statement of strategy shall provide for—

(a) the rewarding of students who have good school attendance records;

(b) the identification at an early stage of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems;



(c) the establishment of closer contacts between the school concerned and the families of students to which *paragraph (b)* applies;

(d) the fostering, promoting and establishing of contacts by the school with—

(i) other schools that provide primary or post-primary education,

(ii) bodies engaged in the provision of youth work programmes or services related thereto, or engaged in the organising of sporting or cultural activities, and

(iii) such other bodies within the area in which the school concerned is situated as the board of management considers appropriate;

(e) in so far as is practicable, the development, following consultation with the bodies referred to in *paragraph (d)*, of programmes of activities designed to encourage the full participation of students in the life of the school;

(f) in so far as is practicable, the coordination with other schools of programmes aimed at promoting good behaviour among students and encouraging regular attendance at school by students, and the exchanging of information relating to matters of behaviour and school attendance with such schools;

(g) the identification of—

(i) aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of certain students, and

(ii) strategies—

(I) for the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school having regard, in particular, to the educational needs of students, and

(II) that will encourage more regular attendance at school on the part of such students.

(3) The board of management of a recognised school shall, in preparing a statement of strategy, have regard to such guidelines issued by the Board regarding the preparation and carrying into effect of statements of strategy.

(4) A statement of strategy prepared and submitted by the board of management of a recognised school, in accordance with *subsection (1)*, shall be carried out by that board of management in accordance with its terms.

(5) The board of management of a recognised school may, with the consent of the Minister, and for the purpose of giving effect to a statement of strategy prepared and submitted by it in accordance with this section, appoint such and so many teachers employed by it, as it considers appropriate, to liaise with the parents of students registered at the school concerned and to give such assistance to the families of those students as the board of management concerned considers appropriate.

(6) Two or more boards of management of recognised schools may, if they consider it appropriate, coordinate, and cooperate in, the carrying out of the statements of strategies prepared and submitted by them, in accordance with *subsection (1)*.

(7) The Board shall issue guidelines to boards of management of recognised schools for the purposes of this section.

(8) The statement of strategy prepared by the board of management of a recognised school shall be included in the plan prepared by it under section 21 of the Act of 1998.

**23.—**(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare, in accordance with *subsection (2)*, a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school (hereafter in this section referred to as a “code of behaviour”).

(2) A code of behaviour shall specify—

- (a) the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;
- (b) the measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;
- (c) the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
- (d) the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and
- (e) the procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child's absence from school.

(3) A code of behaviour shall be prepared in accordance with such guidelines as may, following consultation by the Board with national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations and trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, be issued by the Board.

(4) The principal of a recognised school shall, before registering a child as a student at that school in accordance with *section 20*, provide the parents of such child with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school and may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on a request being made by a student registered at the school or a parent of such a student, provide the student or parent, as the case may be, with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school concerned.

## **Education Act 1998**

### **15.—(2) FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD**

(c) consult with and keep the patron informed of decisions and proposals of the board,

(d) publish, in such manner as the board with the agreement of the patron considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students and admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs, and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected and such directions as may be made from time to time by the Minister, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned, are complied with,

## Additional reading

- Education Welfare Act 2000
  - “Empty Desks” 2000, Michael Finneran: Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
  - INTO Q&A booklet Education Act & Education Welfare Act
  - Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES website [www.irlgov.ie/educ](http://www.irlgov.ie/educ)). Also as Appendix 54 CPSMA Handbook
  - Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
    - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
    - (2) Suspension
    - (3) Refusal to enrol
  - Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d)) (DES website)
  - Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5) (DES website)
  - Management Board Members’ Handbook. Revised 2004. CPSMA.
    - (1) \*Appendix 42 p.171 Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools
    - (2) \*Appendix 54 p.164 Guidelines for School Behaviour and Discipline.
    - (3) \*Appendix 55 p.194 A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- \*These references apply until new guidelines are issued by the Education Welfare Board
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
  - Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
  - Discipline in the Primary School INTO August 2002
  - Enhancing Self Esteem INTO 1995
  - The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers INTO
  - The Principal’s Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
  - Quality Circle Time in the primary school. Jenny Mosley. LDA 2000
  - Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
  - Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
  - Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
  - Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
  - School’s own SPHE Plan
  - Anti Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
  - NPC website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)
  - IPPN website [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie)
  - INTO website [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)
  - SDPS website [www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie)