



Attendance Policy and Statement of Strategy

September 2024

Ennis National School

Attendance Policy

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Introductory Statement

Ennis National School recognises that there is a clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. Ennis N.S. is aware of its responsibilities to those pupils who experience difficulties and through encouragement and support will assist those pupils to reach their full potential.

We aim to ensure that the pupils in our school attend regularly and on time. The performance indicator by which we judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our average attendance figure. In the last three school years (2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24), our average attendance was



89.7%, 91.2% and 92.3% respectively. We are seeking to improve average attendance in this and subsequent years.

School starts at 8:50am for all children and ends at 1.45pm for Infant classes and 2.45pm for pupils in First to Sixth Class. Ennis N.S. follows the standardised school year as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills.

Aims

- To encourage consistent attendance at school by our pupils
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance
- To comply with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000, section 22 with regard to our school attendance strategy
- To support and sustain the positive attitudes to learning already evident in our school and to highlight their importance for all students
- To underpin the importance of school attendance and punctuality and their impact on children's wellbeing
- To clarify procedures around matters relating to registration, attendance, punctuality and recording
- To document our approaches to promoting and sustaining good attendance and addressing related matters

School Expectations of High Attendance

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2005, parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. In this regard, the Board of Management of Ennis N.S. has high expectations regarding attendance and punctuality. Children are encouraged to come to school every day and the school's approach to, and promotion of, attendance is outlined below. Tusla and the Board of Management of Ennis N.S. strongly advise that parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. Holidays should be taken during the allocated holiday time as outlined in the school calendar.

The Board of Management acknowledges that there are cases where a child has a genuine reason for absenteeism, including; illness, urgent family reasons, expulsion, suspension, or transfer to another school.

How Attendance is Monitored

At Ennis National School, we define non-attendance as not being present in school at roll call at 10.00am (Exceptions being made for absences authorised by the Board of Management e.g. school tours, religious services arranged through the school, participation in sports arranged by the school etc.)

All class teachers take a daily roll call which is recorded on the school's data software programme 'Aladdin'. The class teacher also records the reason for absence (as provided by the parent) in the



“Reasons for Absence” section of the school’s online roll book. Attendance returns are made to the TUSLA at the end of each reporting period by the designated postholder.

If a pupil is withdrawn from school during the school day the parent/guardian must sign out the pupil from the classroom and indicate the reason for the withdrawal.

If a pupil is not present by 10.00 a.m. and the school has received no notification from parents/guardians he/she will be marked absent whether or not the pupil arrives later. -If the school receives notification from parents/guardians that a child will be late for school, that child will be marked present.

If a pupil arrives in school on time and is subsequently ‘signed-out and later returns to school, -then the child will be marked present. If the school receives notification from parents/guardians that a child has an appointment with a doctor or dentist and will be late for school that child will be marked present as long as the child attends.

How Punctuality is Monitored

School begins at 8:50am. All pupils and staff members are expected to be on time. All pupils arriving late to school will be recorded on the Aladdin system. This will be inputted by the class teacher on their respective Aladdin system. The school will contact parents/carers in the event of children being consistently late. The school principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late to TUSLA Child and Family Agency. The annual punctuality of each pupil is printed in the end of year school reports.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance

Environment: The Board of Management strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents. Pupils who are late are welcomed by teachers and if any child is persistently late the issue is raised with the relevant parents. The pupil is not made to feel unwelcome if he/she arrives late for school. Parents are expected to have a note of explanation if a pupil is late.

Early intervention: Junior Infant teachers will speak to parents to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.

Uniform: Pupils who arrive to school without a uniform/complete uniform will still be welcomed and the issue of uniform will not be addressed upon arrival in the classroom.

Lunches: If a pupil arrives to school without a lunch, the class teacher will text the parents or arrange for the school secretary to contact the parents so that the lunch can be brought to school.

Assessment: If pupils miss school on a day when they know there is a test the test is given when the pupil returns to school.



Reports: The school reports the total amount of days absent in a year to parents in the end of year reports/parent teacher meetings.

Rewards: At the end of each term, all pupils with full attendance shall be congratulated in their class and shall have their photograph taken to be displayed for parents/teachers/pupils in a communal area, thus encouraging full attendance amongst the rest of the school. At the end of the school year, there will be a presentation of a certificate to all pupils who have had full attendance for the academic year.

Parents: The school communicates the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents annually.

Communication: Parent Newsletters will contain an update on average school attendance for the year to date. It will also detail classes with the highest average attendance.

Learning Needs: The school provides a comprehensive support service to cater for pupils experiencing learning difficulties.

Strategies in event of non-attendance

Parents are made aware of the school's duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to the TUSLA.

When a pupil is absent from school parents are expected to contact the school as soon as possible to inform the school as to the reason for the pupil's absence. The reason for absence will be recorded by the class teacher. Any attendance which is not explained is recorded as 'unexplained'.

Once pupils have missed 15 school days, a text message will be forwarded to parents informing them of the total number of days missed. Once pupils have missed 20 school days, their parent(s) will be contacted by the principal (or the designated teacher with responsibility for attendance) with a view towards encouraging attendance. Where a child misses 20+ days, text messages will be sent to parents for every five additional absences.

Where appropriate, the school will liaise with the TUSLA to provide home tuition while the pupil is out of school.

The school must notify Tusla if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where absences/patterns of absence give rise to concern. If a child is sick or is absent for another explained reason, no action is likely to be taken by Tusla. However if there is a concern about a child's attendance at school or about the reasons given for absenteeism, families may be visited by an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss the situation. Unexplained absences are of particular concern to the school and to Tusla.



The school is obliged to report regularly to Tusla regarding attendance. There are two reporting periods each year. The report is generated by the school, based on the guidelines provided by Tusla. Any child who has missed 20 days or more, or any children about whom there are absenteeism concerns, must be reported to Tusla in these periodic reports.

The school will report to the TUSLA when:

- a pupil is suspended from our school for a period of not less than 6 days,
- the aggregate number of school days on which a pupil is absent from our school during a school year is not less than 20,
- a pupil's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register, or
- a pupil is, in the opinion of the principal, not attending school regularly

School Attendance Statistics & Targets

Attendance will be monitored with reference to the following Attendance Tiers:

Tier 1: Satisfactory/Regular Attendance

Attending: 95% or more of the time

Goal: At least 80% of students

Tier 2: At-Risk for Chronic Absenteeism

Attending: less than 95% but 90% or more of the time

Goal: No more than 15% of students

Tier 3: Chronic Absenteeism

Attending: less than 90% of the time

Goal: No more than 5% of students

The following data was collected from a review of the attendance figures for the previous two school years:

- The average attendance in the 2022-2023 school year was 91.2%.
 - Tier 1 – 34.8% of pupils attended 95% or more of the time
 - Tier 2 – 34.2% of pupils attended less than 95% but 90% or more of the time
 - Tier 3 - 31% of pupils attended less than 90% of the time.
- The average attendance in the 2023-2024 school year was 92.3%.
 - Tier 1 – 38.5% of pupils attended 95% or more of the time
 - Tier 2 – 36.5% of pupils attended less than 95% but 90% or more of the time



- o Tier 3 - 25% of pupils attended less than 90% of the time.

Upon reflection on these statistics, we have set the following targets:

1. To reduce the percentage of pupils in Tier 3 to less than 20% in 2024-2025, less than 15% in 2025-2026 and less than 10% in 2026-2027.
2. To reduce the percentage of pupils in Tier 2 to less than 27% in 2024-2025, less than 25% in 2025-2026 and less than 20% in 2026-2027.
3. To increase the percentage of pupils in Tier 1 to 50% of pupils in 2024-2025, 60% in 2025-2026 and 70% in 2026-2027.
4. To increase the overall annual attendance to 93% in 2024-2025, to 94% in 2025-2026 and to 95% in 2026-2027.

Roles and Responsibilities in relation to Attendance

Principal

- Overall responsibility for the promotion and implementation of the school attendance strategy in conjunction with the designated post holder and the Deputy Principal.
- Report on attendance to the Board of Management at each meeting.
- Maintain the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil (Daily Attendance Book)
- Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.
- Furnish pertinent attendance documentation to relevant government departments.

Designated Post holder with responsibility for implementation of Attendance Strategy

- View and monitor the attendance statistics on the Aladdin system each week
- Engage with parents/carers regarding attendance concerns.
- Responsibility for submitting the TUSLA Attendance Returns and for the promotion of whole school strategies to promote attendance.
- Arrange meetings with the local Education Welfare Officer to discuss attendance, to follow up on cases of concern and to flag pupils where intervention may be required.
- Contact the local Education Welfare Officer where there are concerns about a child's non-attendance.
- Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.



- Make periodic returns to Tusla and notify Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensure support for the work of the EWO with pupils who have chronic attendance difficulties.
- Responsibility for attendance assemblies, including certificates and prizes where relevant.
- Opportunities for staff to share experiences about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets

Teachers

Class teachers have responsibility for recording daily attendance and for inputting reasons of absenteeism on the Aladdin system. It is the responsibility of teachers to:

- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality in their classrooms
- Ensure attendance data is recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures, as set out above
- Alert relevant staff (i.e. Principal/Deputy Principal) if there are concerns about student absences ● Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis ● Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

Parents/Carers

The Board of Management acknowledges the important role of parents/carers in the attendance of their children at school. In line with Tusla's guidelines for school (p.44), parents/carers are expected to:

- Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality
- Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem
- Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time. ● Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason ● Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time.

Monitoring the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

The Principal and Assistant Principal with responsibility for Attendance will monitor the implementation of the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance on an ongoing basis.

Ratification and Review

The targets and actions outlined in the Statement of Strategy will be reviewed annually.



This updated policy will be implemented in the school from 28th August 2024. The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Ennis National School at its meeting held on 23rd September 2024.

Scheduled for review: June 2027

Signed:

Chairperson, Board of Management

3rd September 2024