



## Attendance Strategies

In Rathfarnham Educate Together National 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-fulfillment and their development into active and responsible adults.

Rathfarnham Educate Together National School decided to review its attendance and punctuality strategies because:

- Punctuality is a priority area identified by staff
- It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000

### Aims

In Rathfarnham Educate Together National School we aim:

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, staff remain vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Staff have identified the need to raise awareness of the importance of punctuality in our school.

### Strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality

- **Caring Environment** - Rathfarnham Educate Together National School, at all times, aims to ensure that children are taught in a safe secure and caring environment where their intellectual, physical and spiritual development are catered for
- We try to create a welcoming environment for pupils and parents. Teachers consistently model and try to encourage good attendance and punctuality in their respective classrooms
- **Special Needs** – pupils needing support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem
- **Lunches** - Emergency breakfasts and lunches are available if required. These measures enhance the school experience for those children who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance
- **Communication** - Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance and punctuality (i.e. newsletters, parent/teacher meetings, school reports etc.). An awareness of the importance of punctuality by the children is kept to the forefront in the classroom and at assemblies and children are encouraged to pass the messages on to parents.
- **Assemblies** – pupils are reminded of their responsibilities in getting themselves ready for school on time, not delaying the family, etc.

- **Walking Bus initiative** – children need to arrive at their 'bus stop' on time before the designated 'driver' for the week leaves.
- **Morning activities** – Some classes have special morning activities designed to encourage punctuality, particularly in cases where punctuality is a problem.

### **Parental Support**

It is the policy of Rathfarnham Educate Together National School to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents in their role as primary educators of their children. The Principal and teachers are available, on an appointment basis, to meet parents where there is a difficulty with attendance or punctuality

- The importance of good attendance and punctuality is one of the issues addressed at meetings for new parents when their child is enrolled in Rathfarnham Educate Together National School. It is also covered in the information pack given to all parents of Junior Infant children
- At the beginning of each school year, all teachers hold a general meeting of parents and one of the issues addressed is that of the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality, among a range of other topics
- Parents are made aware of the requirements of the Education Welfare Act at pre-enrollment information meetings.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- supporting the school's attendance strategies
- 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 good 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
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school
- 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
- notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher
- cooperating with the school in ensuring that in the case of collecting a child before the end of the school day, parent signs the child out in the classroom or in the school office. Teacher on yard duty is also notified if child is collected during yard time and class teacher is informed by parent.

## School Records

### Attendance

A roll call is taken every day and should a child be absent, they are required to have an explanatory note from their parents. This note may be recorded in the home school diary. The Education and Welfare act 'obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the school of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence'. Notes or record of non- attendances are duly dated and kept.

- When a child is approaching 20 days of absence the teacher informs the deputy principal, and/or the principal. The deputy principal/principal contacts the family to ascertain reasons for the absences. In cases where there are real concerns regarding a child's attendance the class teacher or deputy principal will inform the principal at an earlier stage.
- When a child has missed 20 days, the absence is reported to the EWO for the county and to Education Welfare Board as required by the Education Welfare Act. If the absenteeism persists, the school requests active intervention from the EWO.

### Punctuality

School begins at 8.50 am. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act to report children who are persistently late to the EWB.

### Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases 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) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to TUSLA five times during the school year through an online system. Each child's attendance is communicated to parents/guardians on their end-of-year report card.

In order to promote these strategies for attendance and punctuality parents/guardians will be re-directed to the link

[http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/EW\\_parents\\_leaflet\\_english.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/EW_parents_leaflet_english.pdf)

**Don't Let Your Child Miss Out** (Leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) through school newsletter and parent information on our school website.

This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was approved by the Board of Management on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.

## **School Attendance – what every parent needs to know**

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. The law also says that every child between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school or otherwise receive an education. Most children attend recognised schools although some are educated at home or in non-recognised schools

The majority of children in Ireland start school at either 4 or 5 years of age. Your child must be at least 4 years of age at the start of the school year (September) to enrol in primary school. Here is what you need to know about your child's school attendance.

## **What should I do if my child cannot go to school?**

You must tell the school that your child cannot attend and say why. Write a short note to the school to explain why your child was out of school and send it in with your child when they go back to school. Generally, there are good reasons why a child is missing school (e.g. illness).

Keep in regular contact with your child's school to explain why your child is absent and, where appropriate, provide medical certificates.

## **What will the school do if my child misses a lot of school?**

The school must tell the statutory Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency if your child has missed 20 days

or more in the school year, or if it is concerned that your child is missing too much school.

## **What we must do if your child misses a lot of school?**

If a school tells us that your child is missing too much school, an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with the school and may visit you to see how we can help to make sure that your child attends school more often.

## **Can I take my child on holidays during term time?**

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on. As a result, they may fall behind with school work and lose confidence in their abilities. We strongly advise parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

## **Can I be taken to court if my child doesn't attend school?**

If you are a parent or guardian of a child aged between 6 and 16 you have a central role to play in ensuring that your child does not miss out on his or her education. Under Irish law you must ensure that your child attends school or otherwise receives an education.

We will help parents in whatever way we can to ensure your child gets an education. However, parents who refuse to co-operate with the EWO regarding their child's school attendance (or fail to register with the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency if they are being home educated or in receipt of an

education in a ‘non-recognised school) can be taken to court and fined or imprisoned. Legal action of this kind only takes place in exceptional circumstances and forms a very small part of the Board’s work.

## **At what age can my child leave school?**

The minimum school leaving age is 16 or after three years of post-primary education, whichever is later.

## **My child is refusing to go to school. Where can I get help?**

Sometimes young people refuse to attend school despite the best wishes of their parents. There are often underlying reasons behind the young person’s decision not to attend school and parents often feel powerless to help their child.

If your child is refusing to attend school and you need support, contact us and an Educational Welfare Officer will get in touch with you.

## **A school has refused to enrol my child – what can I do?**

If a school refuses to enrol a child, for whatever reason, you have the right to appeal the decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

You can do this by filling in an Appeals Form, which you can get from the school or from the Department of Education and Skill’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## **My child has been suspended or expelled from school. What can I do?**

If a school decides to suspend or expel your child and if you are not happy with the school's decision, you can appeal it to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

You can do this by filling in an Appeals Form, which you can get from the school or from the Department of Education and Skill's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## **Other decisions taken by the school about your child**

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 allows parents (and students who have reached the age of 18) to appeal certain decisions made by a school's Board of Management. Appeals may be made about a decision to:

- refuse to enrol a student
- suspend a student from the school for more than a certain number of school days in any one school year
- permanently exclude (expel) a student

You can get more information about appealing decisions on enrolment in Primary Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 and in the Appeal Procedures document. See the parents' section of the Department of Education and Skills' site [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) for further information.

You can also contact us and an Educational Welfare Officer will offer you support and assistance.

Your appeal is heard by an appeals committee set up by the Department of Education and Skills. In most cases, appeals are dealt with within 30 days. The Department may give directions to the Board of Management of the school to resolve the matter. The appeals committee will issue a decision in all cases heard.

## Further Information

Click [here](#) to download 'Don't let your Child miss out' parent leaflet.

## Contact Us

Parents and schools can contact the EWOs directly if they have a concern about a child's education. Click [here](#) for information.