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Attendance Strategy

Wicklow Educate Together N.S. updated 17 October 2017

**Introduction**

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. The Board of Management, in consultation

with staff and the Parent Association Committee, prepared this policy on attendance in 2005. The Board updated the policy in 2010.

Following a review in September 2017 taking account of administrative changes (ICT development) within the school, this updated policy was implemented

**Rationale**

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:

* The Education Act, 1998
* The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
* The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils’ learning.

**Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

Wicklow Educate Together endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote cooperation amongst pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance throughout the school year.

**Aims**

* Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
* Encourage full attendance where possible
* Identify pupils at risk
* Promote a positive learning environment

**Compliance with School Ethos**

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

**Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance**

The annual attendance of each pupil is also recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register) Aladdin service. The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on a daily basis using the ‘Aladdin Schools’ online software service

Individual, class & whole school attendance data is also generated by this software service. (Hard copies of data, in traditional Leabhar Rolla/Leabhar Tinrimh, etc. format can also be generated.) If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken at 10.30am each morning. Any pupil not present when the roll is called may be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher until the end of the school year. At the end of each year, the Deputy Principal will arrange to dispose of these notes.

Parents/guardians are informed in writing (in their child’s end of year School Report of the total number of absences during the school year.

* When a child is absent for 12 days in the school year, a communication is sent to parents/guardians informing them of this and the fact that it is mandatory for the school to report to TUSLA , The Child and Family Agency if a child misses 20 days in the school year.
* When a child is absent for 15 days, a communication is sent to parents/guardians informing them of this.
* When a child is absent for 20 days, a letter is sent to parents/guardians informing them of this and that it is now mandatory for the school to report this to TUSLA.

The Deputy Principal will also contact parents by phone to see if the school can be of any assistance in enabling the child to attend. Parents will be reminded of the community support services should they need any additional support. Once a child has missed 21+ days, parents will usually receive the following text message from the school for each additional absence.

'Your child has missed \_\_days of school. This is of concern to us

Contact the Deputy Principal for info or assistance regarding School Attendance.’

The above letters are updated at each Tusla cut-off date (and if a pupil has missed 3 more days since a previous letter, another letter is sent.) The school must inform Tusla where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and/or where a child is suspended or expelled.

After submitting the Tusla returns, if there is a concern about a child's serious non-attendance the Deputy Principal will inform the local Educational Welfare Officer. (Usually, where a child has missed 25+days of school the Deputy Principal will seek the advice of the EWO.)

**Roles and Responsibilities**

All members of staff have a responsibility to implement this policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance, and the school’s Deputy Principal makes returns to Tusla. After submitting the Tusla return, if there is a concern about a child's serious non-attendance, the Deputy Principal will contact the local Educational Welfare Officer regarding this attendance. If a child's non-attendance is thought to be linked to Child Protection issues, the Designated Liaison Person will be informed and the school’s Child Protection Policy will be implemented.

**Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

Wicklow Educate Together NS endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies, with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation amongst the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the Primary School Curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school’s policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

**School Strategies**

**A) Communication with Parents**

* The school circulates the NEWB information booklet “Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out” to all new parents during an induction meeting
* The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000 (This information is disseminated at least once a year in the school newsletter)
* Specific reference is made to the consequences of long absences on children’s progress in language acquisition and general academic progress, and also to the fact that children can become unsettled and find it difficult to readapt to their class situation after a long absence.

**B) Early identification of children at risk**

The Deputy Principal will be vigilant, so that risk students are identified early. These pupils will be identified on receiving information from class teachers on the dates before the submissions are required. The actions to be taken are described above.

Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to

Educational Welfare Officers, (through the Tusla Quarterly Absence Returns.)

* Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Tusla five times during the school year through an online system.
* An annual report is submitted –not more than six weeks following the end of the school year -detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.
* This information maybe communicated to the school community through the school newsletter.

**School Reports: Guidelines for teachers**

Teachers are aware of the following attendance patterns when writing pupils’ end of year School Reports

0-4 days absent: Well above average

5-10 days absent: Above average

11-13 days absent: Average

14-19 days absent: Below average

20+ days absent: Well below average

**Transfer to Another School**

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child’s current school must notify the Principal of the child’s previous school that the child is now registered in their school. 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 and of such matters relating to the child’s educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. (This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.)

**Success Criteria**

The following will provide some indicators of the success of this policy:

An increase in annual attendance rates

Increased Board of Management, staff and parent/guardian awareness of

legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000

**Implementation**

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board

of Management, and communicated to the Parent-Teacher Association and wider school community.

Ratification and Review

This document was ratified by the Board of Management as school policy on ….

It will be reviewed in the academic year 2019-2020