




Westport Educate Together National School

Attendance Policy

“The parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day”

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Signed by Principal	
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1. Rationale:

The National Educational Welfare Board, (EWB, now part of Túsła), requires all children to attend primary school from the age of six. However, Westport Educate Together National School encourage all of its enrolled children to attend school every day whatever their age. The EWB also requires the school to report children who are frequently absent and this includes those that are under six years of age. 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.

2. Aims:

The aims of our attendance policy are:

- to ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- to record and report attendance
- to identify pupils at risk of poor school attendance
- to raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- to ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- to ensure that the school has strategies in place to promote attendance
- to develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- to identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- to develop strategies in the event of non-attendance

3. Túsła and absenteeism:

Túsła is the board responsible for ensuring that all children in our school are being looked after. They work with our school to ensure that children are not neglected or abused. Absenteeism is one of the most common issues that the organisation deals with. Mayo Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is available at 094 925 0199. Schools are responsible for reporting absenteeism to Túsła. When a child misses 20 school days, Túsła may become involved in investigating the cause.

Education Welfare Services – Túsła

The Education Welfare Office is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days

The Education Welfare Services section of Túsła is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.



4. Structures in Place:

4.1 Structure of Recording Attendance

Every day in school, children's attendance is recorded by the class teacher, on our online roll book before 10.10am. This is an important document and, when transferred into the rollbook, it can be used in legal cases. When a child is absent when the roll is called, he/she is marked absent. A child is marked absent even if they arrive after the roll call. This roll call should take place around 10:00am but must be taken before 11.00am. An exception to this rule is outlined in parts 5, 6 and 7. If the roll call is taken later than 11am, a teacher must explain why this has occurred.

When a child is absent, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to write a note to explain the absence. It is not sufficient to telephone or text the school. However, our online form, email or written notes are acceptable. These notes are stored in the child's file until June 30th of each school year. After this, all notes are archived.

By law, parents are required to submit a written explanation outlining the reason for their child's absence. Usually notes are received within three days of the child returning to school following the period of absence. Every term, the school reports all absences to the EWB. In this report, every child's absence is recorded online with a reason. There are 6 criteria for absence in the report. Any absence, without a written note, will fall under the category "unexplained".

If a child is absent for 10 days or more, an automated text message is sent to the families of the child. After 15 days, a second text message is sent to families to inform them that they have missed 15 days. If a child has 20 or more unexplained absences, a final text message is sent and pending an attendance meeting, a letter may be sent out to the family. It is our legal obligation to report any child missing 20 days or more to the EWB in the termly returns.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually before the end of June and a reminder is published in September. The parents/guardians also receive a more detailed calendar which is updated regularly during the year. Our calendar and events are also on our website, and parents/guardians receive regular email and text reminders. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

5. What to do if your child is absent:

If your child is absent, please write a short note explaining the reasons for the absence. Filling out the online form, written notes and emails are the only acceptable forms of communication.



Although planned holidays and other absences are not encouraged by the school, a note, online form or email must be sent in to explain the absence from school. Please note that the teacher will not provide schoolwork for children for any planned absences.

The Board of Management agreed that any absence due to illness must be accompanied by a doctor's certificate if a child has missed 20 or more days.

6. Lateness and the Roll Book:

School starts at 8.30am in Westport Educate Together NS. Lateness is damaging for the child. A child who arrives only 10 minutes late for school misses over 30 hours of tuition per annum. The first ten minutes of our school day can be the most important time as it helps the child to settle in to his/her routine.

Class teachers will monitor punctuality on a daily basis. Classes begin at 08.30am sharp. If a child arrives at school after this time, the class teacher will record the amount of minutes the child has missed. This information will be communicated to parents if and when the need arises. Any child who arrives later than 10.00am (when the roll is called) will be marked absent even if he/she arrives to school. There are exceptions to this rule outlined in the next two sub-points.

6.1 What to do if you know your child will be excessively late

If the child is going to be late for school, a phone call to the school before 10:00am will be accepted and the child will not be marked absent in the roll book. Failure to produce the above will warrant the child being marked absent for the day.

6.2 Planned Lateness

If a child has a morning appointment, e.g. doctor, dentist, etc., it is acceptable to write a note or simply tell the teacher of the appointment. In some cases, a certificate may be asked for.

7. Lateness After School:

School ends at 1.10pm for infants and 2.10pm for other classes in Westport Educate Together NS. Being late to collect your child can cause undue stress for the child as well as inconvenience for the teacher. While teachers will in general act "in loco parentis", in unforeseen circumstances, continuing or excessive lateness may result in further action from the school. This may be in the form of contact with the gardaí or social work team.

Although school ends at 1.10pm/2.20pm, teachers are responsible for the supervision of children until they are collected by an adult. Should a teacher be unable to supervise a child for any reason, it is their responsibility to ask a colleague to supervise that child and ensure that the child is aware of this situation.

8. Communication with other schools:

The school maintains communication with local primary and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.



- When a child transfers from our school to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer. Under Section 20 on the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of the 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 at the pupil’s former school 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.
- When a child transfers into our school, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from us to a post-primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

9. References:

‘Developing the Statement of Strategy for Schools Attendance’ – Guidelines for Schools – TUSLA
Education (Welfare) Act 2000: III;22.1
Education (Welfare) Act 2000: III;22.4
Education (Welfare) Act 2000: III;20.5
Education (Welfare) Act 2000: III;20.3
Education (Welfare) Act 2000: III;22.5
DES Circular 28/2013
“Empty Desk”, C.D.U. Mary Immaculate College



Appendix 1



Date

Dear _____,

It has come to my attention that _____ has missed _____ days. We are legally obliged to report absences of 20 days or over to Túsla. Please contact the school so that we can discuss strategies and supports to improve attendance.

Please sign this letter and return to school.

Niall Quinn
Principal

Signed _____