



**Pelletstown Educate Together National School**

# **Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023  
Review due: June 2024

# Pelletstown Educate Together National School

## Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

### Introduction and Rationale

This policy was originally formulated in October 2017, in order to provide information, guidelines and good practice regarding pupil attendance at Pelletstown Educate Together National School. This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, Board of Management and the parent body. It follows the template for the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance as set out in Tusla – Child and Family Agency’s guidelines for schools (2015, p. 42). This policy was reviewed and updated in January 2020 in line with Tusla’s guidelines regarding review timeframes, and again in June 2023 to reflect updated practices at the school.

### Our school’s vision and values in relation to attendance

The Board of Management of Pelletstown Educate Together National School recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. We recognise that high attendance is linked to pupils staying at school to complete and do well in the Leaving Certificate and further studies. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and to learning (McCoy et al, 2007). The Board also recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student’s life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).

In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management views each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. The Board of Management is committed to striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by students, and the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

School starts at 8:30am for all pupils and ends at 1:10pm for Infant classes and 2:10pm for 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class. The school follows the standardised school year as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills, and is open for 182 days of the year.

### Our school’s high expectations around attendance

- Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. In this regard, the Board of Management of Pelletstown ETNS has a high expectation of pupil attendance. Pupils 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 Pelletstown ETNS 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.

Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: **“A pupil’s absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved”**.

Therefore, the school principal cannot and will not authorise a child’s absence for holidays during school time. Homework will not be provided for children absent from school on holidays.

If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, they are requested to provide written notification on Aladdin, stating they are doing so and are aware of the educational and social implications of their child missing out, as well as acknowledge that they understand that the school will not provide homework or their child during that time.

Where there are regular holiday absences, the school will remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing pupils from school for periods of time.

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 will be monitored**

All class teachers take a daily roll call which is recorded on the school's data software programme 'Aladdin'. If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open, their absence will be recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin. If the teacher has been made aware of the reason for absence, this is recorded on Aladdin. If a teacher is concerned about student absences, they alert relevant staff; i.e. the Deputy Principal or Principal. The roll call is taken by 9:30am each morning. The annual attendance of each pupil is recorded by Aladdin and is printed in the end of year school reports.

Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged unless absolutely necessary. All late arrivals will be recorded on Aladdin. For early departures, a parent/carer must inform the school in writing via Aladdin and provide a reason.

Following the monitoring of attendance, The Deputy Principal and/or the Secretary will communicate with parents regarding rates of absence, and referrals to Tusla (see Appendix 1 and 2)

### **How punctuality will be monitored**

School begins at 8:30am for all pupils. All pupils and staff members are expected to be on time. All pupils arriving late to school will be recorded on Aladdin. A pupil is considered to be late for school if they enter the classroom 10 minutes after the doors are open (8.30am). The school (Principal/Deputy Principal/member of Senior Management with responsibility for attendance and punctuality) will contact parents/carers in the event of pupils being consistently late. The school principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report pupils who are persistently late to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

### **Our school's approach to attendance**

#### **● Targets**

The average attendance in the 2021/2022 school year was 89.5%

The average attendance in the 2022/2023 school year was 91.6%

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

1. To improve student attendance by 2%
2. To continue to reduce absenteeism in the month of December and June by reminding parents that holidays are not to be taken during term time (data from Aladdin shows a drop in student attendance for these months).

#### **● Our whole-school approach**

At Pelletstown Educate Together National School, pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management work in partnership to provide the best education for our pupils, and believe that consistent attendance is necessary to facilitate the education of the pupils. The whole-school approach to attendance is as follows;

- promoting a positive learning environment
- promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- encouraging punctuality
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- raising everyone's expectations of our school attendance

- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identifying pupils at risk
- developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- implementation of a nurture breakfast to ease the transition for targeted pupils to come into school
- implementation of nurture groups to provide targeted social and emotional support for identified pupils
- rewarding good attendance and improvements in attendance

- **Promoting good attendance**

The following are strategies employed by the school to promote good school attendance; promoting a positive learning environment

- A dedicated school notice board to promote punctuality and attendance
- Staff meet and greet with families at the doors every morning (Principal/Deputy Principal and Support staff)
- Discussion about attendance at PTA meetings, annual parent-teacher meetings and information evenings with new parents.
- Regular updates on the school's attendance in the school newsletter/other mediums of communication
- Positive affirmation of attendance when the roll is being taken
- Highlight the importance of attendance during school assemblies
- Termly "Attendance Assembly" where children with full attendance for that term are awarded certificates and a prize keyring. This did not take place during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 because of guidelines pertaining to illness and HSE directives for pupils to not attend school in particular circumstances, however it will be re-introduced to promote and reward attendance from September 2023. This will be done on a termly basis to give pupils a fair chance in case they miss school in one particular term – they know that the next term is a fresh start.
- Record of attendance in pupil's annual school report
- Distribution of Tusla's Educational Welfare Services' leaflet entitled '*Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*' at new parents' information evening. [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/english\\_leaflet.pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/english_leaflet.pdf)
- Provision of after school care and breakfast club (School Kids Aloud)
- Provision of extra-curricular activities after school
- Sporting activities throughout the school year, e.g. GAA training with Games Development Officer from Oliver Plunkett's GAA club
- Parental involvement in school in delivery of Power Hour, Ready Set Go Maths stations, Learn Together lessons, art lessons and sporting events.
- Support team meetings to support pupils with attendance difficulties
- The school calendar for each academic year is distributed the previous June to make parents/carers aware of school holidays, to avoid holidays being taken during term time.
- The attention of parents/carers is drawn to Appendix 3, which outlines when children may return to school following illness.



- **Responding to poor attendance**

The Board of Management acknowledges that despite the best efforts of the school and of families, some pupils will need extra support to prevent patterns of poor attendance developing. The following are strategies employed by the school to respond to poor attendance;

- Working with groups or individuals who may need additional support (Guidelines for Schools, p.30)
- Tailoring whole-school approaches to group or individual needs
- Engaging in early dialogue with parents and students
- Using internal school processes to provide individualised support
- Using school-led, multi-agency support processes
- Referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services

- **Approach to attendance concerns – School-based**

Where there is a concern regarding a pupil's level of attendance or pattern of absenteeism, the Deputy Principal or Principal will speak to the parents/carers. A letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them of when their child has reached 10 days, 15 days and 20 days of absenteeism. Parents/carers will also be informed when the school has made a referral to Tusla regarding attendance.

- **Approach to attendance concerns – Tusla**

The school must notify Tusla if a pupil is absent for 20 days or more, or where absences/patterns of absence give rise to concern. If a pupil 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 pupil'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. The school submits Student Absence Reports (SAR) twice a year and an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of each academic year. Educational Welfare referrals are also made for individual attendance concerns

The report is generated by the school, based on the guidelines provided by Tusla. Any pupil who has missed 20 days or more, or any pupils about whom there are absenteeism concerns, must be reported to Tusla in these periodic reports.

Tusla Child and Family Agency is also informed if a pupil is suspended for 6 days or more, or in the case of the expulsion of a pupil. All students who are on a reduced school day must also be reported to TESS (i.e. students who arrive after usual start time or leave before finish time, or students who do not attend school 5 days a week).

The accumulated days (20 or more re: absenteeism, 6 or more: suspension) are counted within one academic year.

### **School roles in relation to attendance**

The Board of Management acknowledges a collective responsibility for the promotion of attendance. The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of people within the school community regarding attendance:

#### **Principal**

The school principal will provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance. It is the responsibility of the Principal to lead the development and implementation of this policy, under the guidance of the Board of Management.

The Principal undertake the following responsibilities in relation to this plan;

- Engage with parents/carers regarding attendance concerns.
- Prepare a report on attendance for the Board of Management on a yearly basis, or as the need arises.
- Maintain the Leabhar Tinreamh and print hard copies of this monthly.
- 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 officers of relevant government departments.

The principal will put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.

### **Deputy Principal**

The Deputy Principal has responsibility for making the periodic returns to Tusla, and for notifying 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 students who have chronic attendance difficulties. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for attendance assemblies, including certificates and prizes where relevant.

### **Secretary**

The school secretary is responsible for recording student late arrivals and early leavers, who hadn't been documented on Aladdin by parents/carers.

### **Staff**

All staff have input into the implementation of this attendance policy.

### **Teachers**

Class teachers (and substitute teachers where relevant) have responsibility for recording daily attendance and for inputting reasons of absenteeism on Aladdin. Class teachers must also record absences on the fire drill list. 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
- Set example by their own punctuality
- Ensure attendance data are 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.
- Ensure that they update Aladdin with reasons for absenteeism, as well as reasons for late arrival and early collection of pupils.

### **Partnership arrangements**

The Board of Management acknowledges the importance of partnership arrangements and a multi-disciplinary approach, where relevant, in supporting the attendance and punctuality of pupils at school. In relation to attendance, the school community may involve staff members, parents/carers, students, other school, community groups and Tusla, among others.

### **Monitoring and Implementation of the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

The Deputy Principal, the Board of Management and the Principal will monitor the implementation of the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance on an ongoing basis by doing the following:

- Opportunities will be provided for staff to share experiences about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets (in the form of monthly staff meetings)
- The principal will update on attendance levels at each Board of Management meeting, with reference to the school's attendance targets.
- The Deputy Principal will monitor attendance at the school and will liaise with the Educational Welfare Officer where relevant. The Deputy Principal is responsible for submitting attendance returns to Tusla.
- The Deputy Principal will liaise with the Principal on the above matters.

### **Review Process**

A formal end-of-year review of the Statement of Strategy will be conducted annually as part of the preparation of the Board of Management's annual report on attendance (as per Section 21(6)(a)(b) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000) to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.

### **Date the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was approved by the Board of Management**

21<sup>st</sup> June 2023

### **Date the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was submitted to Tusla**

29th June 2023

Signature of Chairperson:   
(Ray Renaghan)

Signature of Principal:   
(Caitríona Ní Cheallaigh)

## Appendix 1



Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to tell you a little about the Education Welfare Act, 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) and about some of the responsibilities we share under the Act.

As you know, a good education gives your child the best possible start in life. A good education helps young people to obtain secure employment and develop into mature and responsible citizens. The purpose of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in education and training for as long as possible. It is desirable that every child stays in school and completes the Leaving Certificate.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school whichever comes later.

*As a parent, you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. It is school policy that reasons must be given in writing via Aladdin. The school will notify Tusla – Child and Family Agency if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise to concern.*

*If your child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by Tusla - Child and Family Agency. However, if there is concern about your child's attendance at school or about the reasons given, you may be visited by an Educational Welfare Officer who will discuss your child's education with you. The Officer will work with you and take full account of the circumstances of the child and the family before deciding what further action is necessary to ensure that the child receives his/her entitlement to an education.*

*Further information concerning the new service and about school attendance matters generally can be obtained from the national Lo-Call Education Helpline - 1890 36 36 66.*

Yours sincerely,

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## Appendix 2



### **Re: Attendance concerns**

Dear Parents/Carers,

I am writing to you regarding **<Insert name>** attendance at school who has been absent on the following days **<insert days>**.

Because **<insert name>** has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

OR

Because **<insert name>** has been absent through illness, the school will be reporting the absence in the normal way but will not be informing Tusla – Child and family Agency that it is concerned about your child's educational welfare.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss **< Insert name>** attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with **<name of teacher>** as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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# WHEN SHOULD MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL/ CHILDCARE?



Building a  
Safer Health  
Service

Samhla Stáin  
Mice Fear-  
& Forbairt



<p><b>Chicken Pox</b></p> <p>When scabs are dry</p>	<p><b>Conjunctivitis</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>	<p><b>Diarrhoea or Vomiting</b></p> <p>48 hours after the last episode</p>	<p><b>Flu</b></p> <p>5 days after start of illness</p>	<p><b>Glandular Fever</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>
<p><b>Hand, foot &amp; mouth</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>	<p><b>Head Lice</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>	<p><b>Impetigo</b></p> <p>When scabs are dry or 24 hours after starting antibiotics</p>	<p><b>Measles</b></p> <p>4 days after rash appears</p>	<p><b>Mumps</b></p> <p>5 days after swelling appears</p>
<p><b>Scabies</b></p> <p>After first treatment</p>	<p><b>Scarlet Fever</b></p> <p>24 hours after starting antibiotics</p>	<p><b>Slapped Cheek</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>	<p><b>Threadworms</b></p> <p>No need to stay out*</p>	<p><b>Whooping Cough</b></p> <p>5 days after starting antibiotics or 21 days after start of illness</p>

This information is based on the Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools guidance document.

\*No need to stay out if child is well but school or childcare provider should be informed.