



Esker Educate Together National School

Attendance Policy

Table of Contents

Introduction. 3

Rationale. 3

Aims and Objectives. 4

Compliance with School Ethos. 4

Policy Content. 5

School Strategies. 6

Communication with other Schools. 7

Promoting Attendance. 8

National Education Welfare Board. 8

Report at end of year. 9

Evaluation. 9

Implementation/Ratification and Review.. 10

References. 10

Introduction

This policy was reviewed and updated in the academic year 2023 - 2024. The BOM, principal, teaching staff and HSCL expressed concern at the amount of time that children were absent from school. Absenteeism had increased from 4216 days missed in 2018/19 to 7153 days missed in 2022/23. The number of children who had missed over 20 days of school per academic year had increased from 48 in 2018/19 to 144 in 2022/23. It was noted that attendance had been significantly affected by the pandemic in 2020.

Another major factor for our particular school is that the majority of our families travel to their home countries for extended periods of time for various reasons.

The teaching staff reported an increase in reluctant school attendance and school avoidance behaviours in some children.

The drafting of this policy was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management, following initial drafting by the principal, HSCL and ISM members.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy can be summarised as follows;

- The pupil profile of our school (i.e. 80% children from international families)
- The role of the TESS
- Levels of language deficit and the consequences of absenteeism to progress in this and other areas
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000
- Changing attitudes to education
- Supporting children with additional educational needs
- Supporting children who have increased school based anxiety.
- As a neurodiversity affirmative school, we endeavour to create a welcoming space for all of our pupils in a way that is supportive and responsive to the individual needs

of all children to help encourage their full participation in school, whatever that may look like for them.

Aims and Objectives

The policy is geared towards;

- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Fostering an appreciation of learning

- Fostering a sense of belonging in the school community

- Fostering a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities.

- Systems are place so that the voice of the child/ young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in attendance

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of all children is paramount and at the centre of any policies pertaining to the children in our school.

Policy Content

Recording:

- Individual school attendance is recorded daily online on Aladdin.
- Consistent late arrival is recorded on Aladdin.
- An explanatory note on Aladdin from parents/guardians is required online

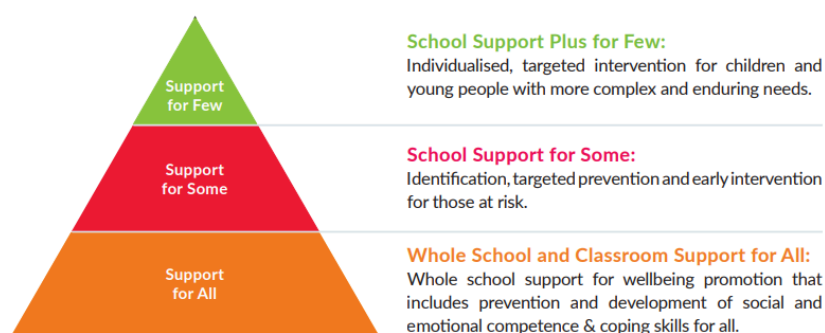
Absences will be characterised as follows:

- Irregular Absentee: 5/10 days absent in a 20-day period *without a valid reason on return.*
- Seriously Irregular Absentee: Over 10 days absent in a 20-day period *without a valid reason on return.*
- Chronic Absentee: Over 20 days absent in a quarter *without a valid reason.*

Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children;

- HSCL will promote attendance throughout the school with students **(support for all)**
- Irregular absenteeism - the teacher will inform the HSCL and principal. The parents will be informed by email of the school's concerns. The HSCL will meet with the parent to support attendance **(support for some)**
- If matters persist with the same child, the HSCL will call out to the house to visit the family or invite them in for a meeting of support - a plan will be discussed on how to improve attendance. **(support for some)**
- If matters persist with the same child, the principal will invite the parents in for a meeting of support **(support for few)**
- For seriously irregular absenteeism, the Principal will write to the parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss possible solutions. **(support for few)**
- For chronic absenteeism the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify the parents of this by email/letter. **(support for few)**
- HSCL will encourage regular school attendance and will call out to parents of chronic attenders if there has been no contact from the parents. **(support for few)**

Table 1: Continuum of Support



Roles and Responsibilities:

- All members of staff have an input into the implementation of the policy.
- Class teachers record attendance at 10am each morning. Class teachers report irregularities to the HSCL.
- The HSCL and principal manage the Leabhar Tinreamh. This is printed off each month and signed.
- The school promotes strong home/school relations and hopes that parents will encourage their children to attend school, and to be on time.
- The BOM are informed of monthly attendance and are informed of increases or decreases from similar periods from previous year.
- The principal will take responsibility to liaise with TESS and to meet with parents of children with seriously irregular and chronic absenteeism.
- An attendance committee of principal, home school community liaison and a post holder will promote attendance and punctuality.

School Strategies

A) Communication with Parents:

The school will circulate the TESS information booklet *“Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out”* to all new parents with the Esker ETNS Welcome Pack. The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated every year at the new parent meeting, at curricular meetings for infant parents and at PTM meetings for all classes. 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 after a long absence.

Parents who inform teachers that their child will be missing more than two week’s term time due to holidays or trips home should be referred to the principal, deputy principal or HSCL who will make them aware of the consequences for their child and whether it needs to be

reported to TESS. Parents will also sign a letter stating that this travel is against the advice of the HSCL and the letter will be scanned onto the child's file on Aladdin.

An automatic text will be sent to parents when a child misses 10 / 15 / 20 days. (for all)

Where a child falls into the "support for few" category, this method of communication will be disabled

B) Early identification of children at risk

Staff are asked to be vigilant so that "At risk" students are identified early. Appropriate contact takes place between the class teacher and parents/guardians either via email or a notice on Aladdin when the teacher deems a child to be at risk.

Identification of children at risk

- Children who miss over 20 days - data on Aladdin
- Children who are frequently late for school - marked on Aladdin / teacher observation
- Children who arrived dysregulated or distressed to school in the morning - staff observation
- Children who display symptoms of anxiety during the school day, often presenting as some sort of illness and request to go home from school - staff observation
- Children who display behaviours of concern
- Children who are reluctant to separate at drop off time
- Children who struggle to transition back to school following a school break (weekends/holidays).
- Children who miss Friday / Monday regularly
- Children who are regularly removed from school during the school day without an explanation.
- Children who are regularly not collected on time from school - marked on Aladdin
- Children who are distressed during unstructured times throughout the school day
- Unexplained absences on Aladdin

If a child is identified as being “at risk” according to, but not limited to the criteria above, they are referred to the HSCL and principal.

This child will fall under the **“support for some”** category in the continuum of support.

- A meeting between parents and the HSCL will take place. See pg 26 on Managing reluctant attendance doc
- A plan of support will be agreed between school and home to support the attendance of the child
- This plan will be communicated to the child
- This plan will be communicated to relevant staff
- Attendance will be monitored and the plan will be reviewed in 4 weeks.

If attendance / wellbeing has not improved after 4 weeks, the child will fall under the **“support for few”** category in the continuum of support.

- A meeting will be held with the parent, HSCL and principal to discuss support for the child.
- A meeting with the child and HSCL/SET teacher/SCP or appointed adult will take place - please see page 30 - 36
- A plan of support will be put in place for the child.
- Attendance / wellbeing will be monitored and reviewed after 4 weeks.

Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to TESS.

Neurodiversity

Esker ETNS promotes, supports and encourages full school participation through attendance. However, we recognise that sometimes school can be over stimulating, in particular for those children managing different Neurodivergences. We recognise that at times full participation can be overwhelming.

We aim to support and work with students to identify factors and triggers which cause stress in school. To foster a sense of calm, connectedness and self efficacy through co-regulation and collaboration.

Attendance strategies - Key Actions

Attendance actions for whole school - "for many"	Attendance actions "for some"	Attendance actions "for few"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal / DP / HSCI morning greeting with children in yard ● HSCL promoting attendance at assembly ● HSCL 'if you're in you can win' competition ● HERO class award initiative ● Roll at 10am - documented on Aladdin ● 10 /15 / 20 day communication text ● Punctuality improvement campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SCP attendance phone call ● SCP trips ● Targeted attendance chart ● Home visit by HSCL ● Recording data for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early collections - Late arrivals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Principal/HSCL attendance clinics ● Breakfast club/homework club/ECA's ● Referrals to TUSLA ● Set individual attendance targets ● SCP mentoring 1:1

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Esker Educate Together National School to another school, the records on attendance, academic progress will be forwarded (if sought) on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into Esker Educate Together NS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from Esker ETNS to a Post Primary school will have their records forwarded (if sought) on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by;

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Ensuring children are happy
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- HERO attendance week(s) programme in place in the school currently (Since Oct 2022). Class with the highest overall percentage attendance from Juniors and Seniors wins a prize.
- HSCL attendance strategy- 'If you're in you can win', weekly prize wheel spin in each class, if you're in and the wheel lands on your number you win a prize.
- Specific targeted interventions provided by the school to individuals to promote attendance include; Breakfast club, School Completion Project workers (TESS), school counsellor, homework club, mentoring by HSCL.

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if;

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended for more than three days
- A child has missed more than 20 days with no explanation

TESS is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Returns Report which is completed on-line at the end of the academic year.

Guidelines for teachers: Teachers may use the following language to describe attendance patterns for the individual report for children from 1st class to 6th class

- Over 20 days absent: Unsatisfactory, reported to the TESS
- 15-19 days absent: Unsatisfactory
- 10-14 days: Fair
- 5-9 days: Good
- 2- 4: Very Good
- Less than 2: Excellent

Infants : Can also use the same guidelines or simply satisfactory/ unsatisfactory

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance policy is measured through;

- Improved attendance levels
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance - attendance taken on time daily by teachers and any irregular attendance or reluctant school attendance behaviours reported to principal and HSCL.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy came was ratified by BOM on 13th March

It was discussed at a staff meeting on 13th March 2024 and will come into operation on 8th April 2024

This policy will be reviewed in March 2025.

References

Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour A look at the Good Practice Guide for Primary Schools, accessible [here](#).

Supporting your Child when they are Reluctant to Attend School, accessible [here](#).

Wellbeing policy statement and framework for practice, accessible [here](#).

Don't let your Child Miss Out - TESS 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Section 29 Education Act

"Empty Desks"- C.D.U. Mary Immaculate