

Limerick Educate Together Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated by the school staff, Parents Association and Board of Management. It was adapted to the current format in accordance with the guidelines of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and to comply with requirements under the Educational Welfare Act 2000 and the guidelines from the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA).

Rationale

Limerick East Educate Together School (LETS) decided to review its attendance policy as it was a priority area as identified by the staff, members of the parent body. It is also a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000. The school wishes to encourage pupils to be in attendance on each day the school is open for instruction.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

According to our Mission Statement LETS strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and safe environment for our pupils. In keeping with this philosophy our Attendance Strategy emphasises the importance of attendance of our pupils. The Board of Management of LETS recognises the importance of the Legislation enacted in the Education Welfare Act, 2000. Our objective is to promote our values of nurturing potential in a harmonious teaching and learning environment for all our employees and pupils. This requires the co-operation of staff, parents and pupils.

Aims

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of early school dropout
- 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 encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

- We define attendance as the obligation of a parent/guardian to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at “a national school or other suitable school” on each day that the school is open for instruction.
- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the Aladdin Schools System for each class on a daily basis. The monthly cumulative attendance is also recorded on Aladdin and this monthly record is stored in hard copy in the office. This system has replaced the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is also recorded on Aladdin together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil’s Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents’/guardians Names).
- 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 10.00am each morning and entered on Aladdin. Any pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day.
- Parents are requested to inform the school secretary in the event of their child being absent from school on the first day of the absence. The secretary will then inform the class teacher of this absence. The Class Teacher enters the reason for absence on Aladdin when one is provided. All other absences are recorded as ‘unexplained’
- When the child returns to school after an absence a note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. These notes can be written into the school Journal or in the case of infants can be placed into the homework folder. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher.
- Parents/guardians must also sign out a child if he/she departs early during the school day.

- We are also obliged to report certain non-attendance matters to TUSLA (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance) This is communicated to the parents, in written form after twenty absences as per TUSLA requirements. A copy of this standard letter is contained in Appendix 1. We appreciate that it can sometimes be difficult for parents to keep a record of attendance so it is school policy to send a reminder letter when a child has been absent for fifteen days. (Appendix 2)
- We also communicate the effects of non-attendance on pupil learning by means of Parent Teacher Meetings and School reports.
- Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin.
- Parents are also required to sign an early leavers book when collecting their child early from school.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance include the following:

- **Environment:** We as a school, and within the classroom, endeavour to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents with warm bright colours and a friendly atmosphere.
- **Late Arrivals:** In the case of late arrivals, times are recorded by class teachers on Aladdin and inform parents verbally when a full day has been arrived at.
- **Early intervention:** We target new mothers/fathers to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- **Communication:** We will communicate the importance of good attendance to our parent body through our newsletter, website and parents Association. Each year we will circulate literature on attendance from Tusla.
- **Transport:** Parents/guardians are responsible for bringing their children to school in a timely fashion
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch, parents/guardians are contacted by phone.
- **Assemblies:** We will promote and highlight the importance of good attendance during school assemblies
- **Equality of Participation:** All pupils are given equal opportunity in all aspects of school life.
- **Reports:** The total amount of days missed in a year will be reported to parents/guardians in

the end of year reports and parent teacher meetings.

- **Parents:** We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents by including ***Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*** (leaflet for parents TUSLA) in our enrolment pack. It is also available on the parents' section of our website. Our Attendance Officer liaises with families in regard to attendance issues.
- **School Calendar:** The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June on the school website. 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. We will include a note stating the importance of good attendance in the school calendar.
- **Learning Needs:** We cater for the learning needs of "at risk pupils" by adapting our curricular delivery to meet the needs of all pupils. Where appropriate the curriculum may be differentiated to meet the learning needs of individual pupils as specified in our Special Needs Policy.

Communication with other schools/other providers

- In the case of transferral to other primary schools, we provide attendance information by way of the school report.
- Post Primary schools may access attendance information on request.
- The local Education Welfare Officer is Ita Teehan 061 513024. Meetings are organised with her where deemed necessary.

Strategies in event of non-attendance

The school will inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register.

- Parents/guardians are again made aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act in relation to causing their children to attend school via the ***Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*** (leaflet for parents TUSLA).
- Parents/guardians are also made aware of the schools duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer, of the serving of a "school attendance notice" by 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) on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment).

- Parents/guardians are expected to communicate the reasons for the non-attendance of their child in the school by way of a written note from parent outlining, date of absence, reason for absence and parent's/guardians signature.
- If a parent/guardian has a difficulty with literacy, these details can be verbally communicated and recorded by the class teacher.
- If the parent/guardian refuses to explain the reason for the absence, this is documented and if repeated, reported to the EWO.
- Non-attendance of a pupil is communicated to the principal by the class teacher if there is cause for concern.
- We communicate the non-attendance of a child of 20 days to the Education Welfare Officer via the TUSLA reporting guidelines.
- Children First Guidelines are also adhered to in relation to concerns about non-attendance.
- Teachers support the child to "catch up" on work missed at home and/or during revision depending on the duration and nature of the absences.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school

The principal will only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.

- All communication with the Education Welfare Officer in relation to the following matters is by phone:
 - intended expulsion of the child,
 - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
 - notification by the Education Welfare Officer that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) or
 - has enrolled in a special school.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from the school the principal will, if asked, give them and the new school information in relation to the child's record of attendance

and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child. When the principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she will 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/she considers appropriate.

- Transfer from another school: Where a family make an approach to transfer a pupil to our school, the principal may contact the principal of the school that the child is currently attending and make him/her aware of the situation and may also ask for any relevant information pertaining to the proposed transfer. In cases where a transfer proceeds, we will communicate to the previous school that the child has been registered in this school by phone as soon as possible.

Annual Report

The level of attendance at the school for each school year is reported to the TUSLA via the standard report generated by Aladdin. This is done "*within six weeks of the end of the school year*".

Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use attendance data from Aladdin, staff observation and parental feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

Roles and Responsibility

Attendance Officer: Yvonne Briody/ Eilin Mulcahy

The Attendance Officer and the school principal will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received will be recorded and any problems that arise will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

Timeframe for Implementation

The policy will be implemented from Sept 2016 onwards

Timeframe for Review

The policy will be reviewed in June 2020 or when the need arises.

Responsibility for Review

The school principal and Attendance officer will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the 26.05.16

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

L.E.T.S. does not have adequate resources to disseminate **all** of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. However due to the important nature of school attendance and the impact it can have on children's learning. We will distribute this policy to all families when it is updated.

Appendix 1
20 day letter

Date

Dear Parents

I am writing to you regarding _____'s attendance at school. It has come to my attention that **he/she** has been absent for _____ **days**.

Because _____ has now been absent for 20 days or more, the school must pass the information to the National Educational Welfare Board.

An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

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

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter, should you feel you need to discuss the above situation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer

Appendix 2
15 Day Letter

Date:

Dear Parents,

_____ has been absent for 15 days or more this school year. This letter is to remind you that once a child has missed 20 school days we are obliged by law to pass on their names to the Education Welfare Board.

We recognise that children will miss school due to illness or other urgent family matters. We find, however, that children with high absence rates fall behind, and often struggle to catch up. This is disruptive for the class and the teacher, but most of all it is unsettling and stressful for the child.

Do not worry if your child's absence is for illness or urgent family reasons but in all other circumstances, we urge you to have your child at school.

Should you feel you need to discuss the above situation, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Attendance Officer