



Coláiste Pobail Acla

## **Attendance and Participation Policy**

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# 1. Background

## 1.1. Rationale

*“Students are obliged by law to attend school regularly”*

Education Welfare Act 2000

*“Every day counts in a child’s education”*

TUSLA (formerly National Education Welfare Board)

The rationale underpinning the formulation of this policy is as follows:

- to form habits of regular and punctual attendance by our students
- to discourage absenteeism, lateness and unwarranted withdrawal of students during the school day or term
- to develop a sense of personal responsibility in our students
- to make all school partners aware of the links between school attendance and academic achievement
- to enable us to identify at risk students and put supports in place to assist them
- to comply with Circulars and Guidelines the DES disseminates from time to time
- to adhere to the guidelines of TUSLA (formerly the NEWB)
- to adhere to the requirements of the Education Act
- to comply with the Education Welfare Act 2000

## 1.2. Link with School’s Mission Statement

Full attendance, and good habits of punctuality and participation, are important for the overall development of our students to which our school community aspires as set out in our mission statement.

## 1.3. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- encourage students to attend school regularly and punctually.
- ensure that the school has procedures and strategies in place to promote attendance/participation.
- identify students who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- develop links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

The school will ensure that:

- the importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- students are registered accurately and efficiently.
- student attendance is recorded twice daily.

- Parents/guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- student attendance and punctuality is monitored.
- school attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to TUSLA

## **2. Procedures**

### **2.1. Punctuality**

School is open from 8.30a.m. Students are required to be in class no later than 9.00a.m. and to attend morning roll call to be taken during 1<sup>st</sup> class. All students and teachers are expected to be on time. Students who arrive late must provide an explanation, sign in at the Secretary's Office and proceed to class immediately.

- Roll call is taken during every class.
- Punctuality issues come under the school's Code of Behaviour, and are also referred to TUSLA.

### **2.2. Attendance Records**

- Attendance records are kept in hard copy in the Roll Books. These are held in the Secretary's Office.
- Roll call is also taken on VSware.

## **3. Promoting Good School Attendance & Participation**

Coláiste Pobail Acla is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere, which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- Creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming environment is very important to us
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the students.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- An effective mode of communication exists between teachers and parents. Regular contact on issues regarding homework, uniform, curriculum areas etc. ensure these issues do not contribute to the non-attendance of pupils
- New parents/guardians to the school are made aware of attendance requirements and the importance of attendance on Enrolment Evening for First Years, and on Enrolment for students enrolling during the school year
- School communications (letters, texts, etc.), first year induction, meetings with parents/guardians, assembly, and other occasions will be used to communicate to

parents/guardians and students the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of unwarranted absences.

- The school endeavours to facilitate programmes which enhance student participation eg. Homework Club, After School Study, extra maths tuition
- An Awards Programme is in place for promoting good attendance at school.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The Attendance Coordinator will monitor the attendance rates of pupils in the first instance, consult the HSCL Coordinator, and may notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- The School Completion Officer has a role to play in promoting good attendance (See “Roles & Responsibilities” for further details).

#### In order to encourage good student attendance:

- Each student’s attendance record will be clearly stated on their school reports.
- At the end of each term students are presented with a statement of attendance if they have achieved full attendance that term.
- Teachers acknowledge improved attendance and punctuality on an ongoing basis.
- Students with full attendance at the end of the school year will be presented with a Certificate of Full Attendance and Prize at our Awards ceremony.
- Students who have missed one day only at the end of the year will be presented with a Certificate at our Awards ceremony
- Students who have had improved attendance will also be recognised and rewarded.
- The importance of attendance particularly on days prior to school breaks will be highlighted

## **4. School Code of Behaviour**

- Under Health and Safety Guidelines any student who arrives late to school must present an explanation and sign the Late Book at the Office and then join their class immediately.
- Students must not leave the school grounds during the school day without a written request from their parents/guardians. As the school cannot guarantee a student’s safety once they leave school grounds Parents/Guardians must collect their child(ren). When a student is found to be absent without permission Parents/Guardians are notified. Responsibility for students in this instance transfers back to the Parents/Guardians.
- Parents/Guardians or a person nominated by the Parents/Guardians on the student’s Registration Form, must present themselves at the School and sign the Office Sign Out Register when a student is withdrawn from the School during the school day, and may present a written notification of withdrawal.
- All students leaving the school early must have permission from the Principal, Deputy Principal or an Acting Principal to do so.

- Failure to comply with the above procedures for leaving the School during school hours is a serious breach of the School's Code of Behaviour.
- Students being taken out of school for a period during the school day must sign out at the Office accompanied by their Parent/Guardian and sign back in at the office on their return.

## **5. Guidance for Parents/Guardians**

- Should a student be absent, on the first day of absence the parent/guardian should contact the school Office by 9.40 am on 098-45139 to explain the reason for non-attendance.
- On return to school the student must present a written explanation of absence to their tutor or Attendance Co-Ordinator. Explanation notes which require parental/guardian signatures are available at the back of the Student Journal for this purpose.
- If a student is absent due to illness for three or more days a medical certificate is required.
- Planned absences should be notified in advance in writing to the school
- Parents/guardians are contacted by the school when there is no contact from home regarding absences (3 days)

*All notes and certs will be retained by the school in the individual student file. These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school.*

**Under the Education Welfare Act Coláiste Pobail Acla is legally obliged to inform TUSLA of any student under 16 who has missed 20 days or more in any given school year. The Education Welfare Officer will then contact the school and parents to discuss the matter and together plan for good attendance.**

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **6.1. Parents/Guardians**

- Ensure regular attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.
- Keep all family holidays within designated, official school holiday periods as designated by the Department of Education & Skills.
- Notify the school in writing of the reason for all student absences: such notice should be provided prior to the absence if possible or otherwise immediately afterwards. Telephone or oral messages relating to student absences must be confirmed in writing and indicating date(s) of absence, on return.
- Provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary.
- Adhere to the procedures set out in this policy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.
- Acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.

- Officially inform the school in writing when a student is being withdrawn from the school prior to completion of any cycle.
- In the event of student absence, students are required to familiarise themselves with the schoolwork and homework missed and to do the best they can to complete it. The onus will rest with the parent/guardian to ensure this work is done/that every effort is made to catch up.

## **6.2. School Principal and Management**

- Awareness and implementation of the policy.
- Appoint an Attendance Co-ordinator.
- Liaise with relevant personnel in relation to attendance, both in house as in HSCL and outside agencies.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer if a student is suspended from the school for more than *three* consecutive days
- Liaise with parents/guardians when necessary
- Send standard letters home at start of the school year regarding holidays during term time
- Support and encourage each student to attend punctually and daily
- Acknowledge students who have excellent attendance
- May issue a formal notification of deregistration of a student once the student is no longer on DES roll/record for Coláiste Pobail Acla

## **6.3. School Completion Officer**

Works with the school to:

- Track poor attendance patterns
- Promote good attendance
- Through his/her role as project worker, encourage students to complete the school cycle
- Facilitate induction programmes at times of transition eg. 1<sup>st</sup> yr., 5<sup>th</sup> yr.
- Have an input into preparation of the school's DEIS plan, re; attendance & participation
- Make applications for funding for school based programmes that enhance student participation

## **6.4. Class Tutors**

- Support the attendance policy in the school by encouraging good attendance and maintaining records
- Encourage students in their tutor group to have good attendance and punctuality
- May collect absence notes
- May write a note to parents/guardians regarding non-production of absence note
- Liaise with relevant personnel, i.e. Principal, Attendance Co-Ordinator, HSCL.

## **6.5. Class Teachers**

- Take a roll call in every class and enter roll call details in Roll Book and on VSware during the 1<sup>st</sup> class and 7<sup>th</sup> class

- Create a warm welcoming atmosphere in class for returning students eg. welcome them back, etc.
- Are mindful of students returning after absence who may need extra help
- Are encouraged and supported in forwarding classwork/homework to students absent for longer periods
- Discuss students' attendance records with parents/guardians at Parent/Guardian Teacher Meetings
- Impress on students the importance of regular attendance and ensure understanding of the links between academic achievement and regular attendance
- Make comments on report forms regarding positive and negative attendance

### **6.6. School Secretary**

- Supervise the Sign In/Sign Out process.
- Provide access to a record of students withdrawn during the school day and their return to school.
- Receive and pass on notes, re; Early leaving to the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Receive and pass on telephone messages, re; Absences and lateness to the Attendance Coordinator.
- Ensure that when a student is withdrawn from the school, a parent/guardian personally accompanies the student who is leaving the school and signs the appropriate record before the student is withdrawn.

### **6.7. Attendance Coordinator**

- Coordinate the maintenance of attendance records e.g., Rolls, absence notes, etc.
- Fulfill the statutory role of the school by monitoring the number of absences of students and inform the education welfare officer if a student under 16 years of age misses *twenty* or more days in the same academic year.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer if a student is not attending school on a regular basis without sufficient reason.
- Liaise with the Principal/Deputy Principal on information regarding suspension.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer if a student's name, for whatever reason, is removed from the school register.
- Note trends in absence records of individual students, e.g. Monday or Friday absences and to bring this to the attention of the HSCLO.
- Liaise with the School Completion Officer.
- In conjunction with the Education Welfare Officer, HSCLO, student and parents/guardians set targets for good attendance, and develop positive strategies for encouraging full attendance.
- Liaise with the SEN Department, Pastoral Care Team, and School Support Services in implementing strategies for supporting at risk students.
- In consultation with the SEN Department and Student Counselling Service will encourage and facilitate regular attendance by children from families with special difficulties or needs.
- Recommend students to the Pastoral Care Team/School Support Services who are displaying at risk behaviours with regard to attendance.
- Liaise with Principal regarding notification of concerns to TUSLA where absences may be less than 20 days, e.g. Showing a pattern, etc.



### **6.8. Home School Community Liaison Officer**

- Liaise with parents/guardians and students in encouraging and supporting good attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with the Principal/Deputy Principal, Pastoral Care Team, and the Counselling & Careers Supports.
- Liaise with Education Welfare Officer and partake in the planning process for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Liaise with the School Completion Officer.
- Inform the relevant personnel of any issue that may be impinging on a student's attendance.
- Focus on patterns of long-term poor attendance.
- Send standard absence letters to parents/guardians where frequent absences occur.

### **6.9. Pastoral Care Team/School Support Services**

#### **(a) Pastoral Care Team**

- strives to support students showing patterns of extended absence
- suggests measures that may be put in place to support these students  
(See Pastoral Care Policy)

#### **(b) Guidance & Chaplaincy Services**

- provide counselling and advice to students in relation to their participation in school life  
(See Guidance Plan)

#### **(c) School Completion Service**

- The School Completion Officer:
  - meets with the Principal to identify students at risk of discontinuing school or of having poor attendance
  - works as Project Worker in a School Support Role directly with identified students

## **7. Declaration**

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with all staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents and the Student Council. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Pat Kilbane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Paul Fahy

Board Secretary & School Principal (Acting)

## Appendix 1 - Abbreviations

Below is a list of abbreviations used across several Coláiste Pobail Acla policies and documents.

ACE	Autism Centre of Excellence
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition
BOM	Board of Management
BSP	Behaviour Support Plan
CAMHS	<i>Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services</i>
CAT	Cognitive Ability Test
CPNS	Child Protection Notification System
CSPE	Civic, Social and Political Education
DDLDP	Deputy Designated Liaison Person
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Education in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science
DLP	Designated Liaison Person
EP	Education Plan
EPSEN	Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs
ETB	Education and Training Board
GRT	Group Reading Test
HSCLO	Home School Community Liaison Officer
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan
JCSP	Junior Certificate Schools Programme
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MUGA	Multi Use Games Area
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Service
NCBI	National Centre for the Blind Ireland
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NEWB	National Education and Welfare Board
NLN	National Learning Network
OT	Occupational Therapy
PC	Pastoral Care

PE	Physical Education
RACE	Reasonable Accomodations at Certificate Examinations
RE	Religious Education
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SCP	School Completion Programme
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENO	Special Educational Needs Officer
SESS	Special Education Support Service
SETS	Special Education Teacher Support
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
SSE	School Self Evaluation
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year