

# ATTENDANCE POLICY & STATEMENT OF STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE

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); Developing a Strategy for School Attendance 2015.

### Rationale

Enable Ireland Sandymount School decided to review its attendance policy in 2017 as it was a priority area as identified by the Department of Education Whole School Inspection Report 2017. It is also a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000. The school wishes to encourage and ensure that pupils are in attendance on each day the school is open for instruction. This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing children's potential in a caring environment where the welfare of each child is paramount.

### Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

According to our Mission Statement Enable Ireland Sandymount School strives to provide excellent educational opportunities in a 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 recognise that many of our pupils have complex disabilities that require ongoing medical and clinical interventions that can often prevent attendance at our school. In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management, from the beginning, views each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. By striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by our students and the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

The Board of Management of Enable Ireland Sandymount School 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 promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected and welcomed.
- To facilitating children to have a voice in school matters.

- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To promote positive attitudes to learning.
- To identify pupils at risk of early school dropout.
- Developing and maintaining 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.
- Rewarding good attendance and improvements in attendance.
- 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 before 11am each day 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’. Students who do not present for school without notification from the parent, bus escort, nurse or other professional are noted and parents receive a phone call before the end of the school day seeking an explanation.
- The Board fully appreciates that all children arrive and depart from school on Department of Education funded school transport. The Board employ Bus Escorts who accompany the pupils and ensure the Boards statutory obligations under Child Protection Legislation. The parents may choose to inform the bus escort of the child’s non-attendance and reason. The Bus Escort has a duty to inform the school secretary and the class teacher of the non-attendance and the reason for the absence.

- 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 pupil's communication notebook 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.

### Communication with parents

- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.
- When a pupil has accumulated 10, 15 or 20 absences in any one school year, a standard email informing the pupil's Parents/Guardians is sent automatically. This states the school's obligation to inform TUSLA Child and Family Agency of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year. The Board is mindful that these emails can often disturb parents because the child's nonattendance is because of acute medical or clinical interventions. Parents are welcome to contact the school principal about their concerns.
- Parents are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings or at other times and are informed of the school's concerns.
- The Principal will have responsibility for all communications with Parents/Guardians re: attendance.

### Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance;
- working with the School and TUSLA Child and Family Agency to resolve any attendance problems;
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance;

- discussing planned absences with the child and school;
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time;
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework;
- encouraging them to participate in school activities;
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements;
- develop a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth for their children;
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence 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 ensuring that their child is ready for school transport.
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch, parents/guardians are contacted by phone. No child is denied or should forgo their food. The school will always and without question or comment provide food for any child.
- **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 Vincent Collins. Meetings are organised 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.

### Communication with other schools

- Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school, via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) 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 Enable Ireland Sandymount School, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., and appropriate records sought.

## 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 and the presence of happy confident and well-adjusted children’s presence in the school.

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: Jennifer Doyle, Deputy Principal.

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 January 2018 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 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

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



(Chairperson, BOM)

*Enable Ireland Sandymount School 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

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

**Jennifer Doyle**

Attendance Officer

## Appendix 2

### 15 Day Letter

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

**Jennifer Doyle**

Attendance Officer

## EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICES PRE-REFERRAL CHECKLIST

For School Referrals please complete pre-referral checklist and  
Sections 1 and 2

For Non School Referrals please complete Sections 1 and 3

Prior to submitting a referral form to the statutory educational welfare service, it is expected that the school has made attempts to resolve attendance issues. The purpose of this checklist is to note the actions taken prior to referral to the EWS. **This checklist should always accompany a referral form.**

To be completed in discussion with the Class Teacher (Primary)/ Year Head (Post Primary) or a nominated teacher/principal.

Child's Name	*	Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Home Address	*			
Date of Birth	*	PPSN	*	
Ethnicity	*	Language Spoken at Home	*	
School Name	Enable Ireland Sandymount School	School Roll No.	18370J	
School Telephone No.	01-261 5907			
Class/Year e.g. 1st class or 1 <sup>st</sup> year	*			
Number of school days absent this school year out of a possible number of school days open	_____ days absent out of _____ school days to date			
Number of unexplained absences year to date	*			
What is the presenting issue for this child	*			

Checklist actions to address poor attendance	Date of Action Taken	By whom
In-school discussion with pupil (where appropriate)		
Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern e.g.		

phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening		
Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions		
Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian		
Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (e.g. change of class, 'contact person' in school, support in class etc.)		
Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/ attendance report, incentives, rewards etc.)		
Other school interventions (e.g. care team, Pastoral care team, student support team etc.)		
Previous EWS involvement in this case		

<b>Does the school have....</b>	
.....Home School Community Liaison Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes please attach any additional supports given other than outlined above (on a separate sheet if necessary)
.....School Completion Programme Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Signature of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Principal:** ARTHUR FARRELL  
**(Capitals)**

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

**Section 1** (to be completed in the case of any referral)

*(Schools have already filled out child's details in the pre-referral checklist – no need to re-do)*

Child's Name	*	Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Address	*			
Date of Birth	*	PPSN	*	
Ethnicity	*	Language Spoken at Home	*	

**Family details**

Mother's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Father's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Details of Guardian/Carer if child is not residing with parent/s	*		
Relationship to the child	*	Tel No.	*
Are other siblings known to EWS	*		

**Section 2** (to be completed **only in the case of school referrals**)

Child's Name	*		
School Name	Enable Ireland Sandymount School	Roll No.	18370J
Address	Sandymount Avenue Dublin 4	Tel No.	01-2615907
Email	sandymountschool.off@enableireland.ie		

No. of school days absent this school year to date	*		
Total no. of school days absent last school year	*		
Date parents/guardian were informed of referral to EWS?	*		
If Post Primary – Year group of pupil	*	If Primary – Class group of pupil	*
Date pupil entered the school	*		
Summary or reason for referral to EWS	*		

Previous school/s	*
Does this child have special educational needs?	*
Has the child been assessed (or is assessment pending) by the National Educational Psychological Service?	*
What resources (if any) have been allocated to meet the child's needs?	*
Does the child have any health issues?	*
Does the school have knowledge of other agencies involved with the child or family? If so which?	*

Has the school referred the child or family to another agency? If so what agency?	*
Has the school made a referral to the Social Work Department of the Child and Family Agency in respect of child protection or welfare concerns?	*
Is there any additional information that you feel is relevant for this referral?	*

**Note:**

A referral received by the statutory educational welfare service does not replace the responsibility of the referring school continually to support the child as required and to work in collaboration with the service in that regard.

**Signature of Principal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Principal:** ARTHUR FARRELL  
**(Capitals)**

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

For EWS use only			
Referral Reference No:			
Allocated for Assessment?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Case to open?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
Reason for decision			
Signature of EWO		Date	
Signature of SEWO		Date	

**Section 3** (to be completed for referrals other than from schools)

Child's Name	*	
Name of person referring	*	
Name of organisation	*	Title
Address	*	
Telephone number	Landline	Mobile
Email address	*	
Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family	*	
Date of referral	*	
Reason for referral	*	
Signature of referrer	*	
Date	*	

**Note:**

A referral received by the statutory educational welfare service respects the responsibility of the referring agency continually to support the child as required and to work in collaboration with the service in that regard.

For EWS use only			
Referral Reference No:			
Allocated for Assessment?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Case to open?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Reason for decision			
Signature of EWO		Date	
Signature of SEWO		Date	