



Knocknacarra Educate Together  
National School

# Attendance Policy

*This policy has been formulated by Knocknacarra ETNS to provide guidance regarding attendance and punctuality to ensure maximum participation for the children in our learning community.*

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## **Introduction and Background:**

Knocknacarra Educate Together places great value on ensuring maximum participation of all students. One of the key aspects of ensuring the holistic development of the child is their participation to the fullest extent possible in all learning activities. Part of achieving this is directly linked to encouraging good attendance and punctuality among all children in the school community. This school policy on attendance was written in consultation with staff and approved by the Board of Management of Knocknacarra Educate Together NS in 2015. It was reviewed in 2019 and again in 2022.

## **Rationale:**

This policy on attendance is required for the following reasons:

- To explain how staff will follow mandatory requirements regarding the reporting of attendance to the Department of Education and Skills and Túsla (Child and Family Agency).
- To identify attendance reporting procedures in the school in the context of health and safety and child protection.
- To indicate proposals to encourage both good attendance and punctuality.
- To demarcate the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Management and school leaders.

## **Relationship to School Ethos:**

Knocknacarra ETNS values the holistic education of all children in the school and desires equal access for all children to educational opportunities. Therefore, the staff, with the support of the Board of Management and the cooperation of parents, endeavours to ensure maximum participation of all children by establishing procedures and incentives to encourage good attendance and punctuality.

## **Aims and Objectives:**

- To establish the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Management, school leadership and parents regarding attendance issues.
- To ensure procedures are in place regarding proper reporting procedures, both within the school and to outside agencies.
- To identify practical incentives that will encourage good attendance.

## **Policies and Procedures:**

### **School Hours and Calendar**

Supervision is provided from 8.40 in the morning and the day officially begins at 8.50. The day ends at 13.30 for infants and at 14.30 for other classes. A calendar of holidays is determined in May of each year for the coming academic year. It is distributed to parents and posted on the website. Parents are highly encouraged to take note of the holidays and endeavour to time family holidays as best as possible around these days.

### **Recording Attendance:**

All class teachers will take attendance formally during the designated roll time each morning, often used as an oral Irish language activity. This will be timetabled as Rolla. Teachers normally will complete the online rolla as soon as possible during the school day and no later than 11.00, and the school secretary will check with any teachers who have not completed it online. Unexpected absences, especially in 3<sup>rd</sup> Class and above where children are permitted to come independently to

school, will be reported to the secretary. Teachers take attendance using the online student management system Aladdin, recording the reason, if known, for the absence. Any late arrivals will also be noted, counting the number of minutes from 8.50 onwards. The principal and secretary are designated administrators on the Aladdin system and will approve any attendance changes, if required. The principal, with the assistance of the secretary, will assist with any queries or difficulties related to the Aladdin system. Paper roll books are no longer being maintained, in accordance with Circular 33/2015. Instead, the population of the Primary Online Database fulfils the requirements previously established for the Clárleabhair (Register), and the use of Aladdin will replace the paper Leabhair Rolla (Roll Books) and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil (Daily Attendance Book).

#### Keeping Records Regarding Punctuality:

Late arrivals are as equally disruptive as chronic absenteeism for children's successful participation in the life of the school. Therefore, parents are requested to ensure that children arrive by 8.50 each day to prevent disruptions and to maximise learning opportunities. Anyone arriving after 9.00 must sign in at the office. The secretary will note which children are arriving late, recording this using the Aladdin system including the number of minutes late and the reason for the late arrival, if known. This will be reported to parents at parent-teacher meetings, on report cards and at other times, particularly when there is a concern about punctuality. In cases of regular tardiness, the class teacher and principal will address the issue with parents, endeavouring to develop a plan to improve punctuality.

#### Procedures for Reporting Absences:

All parents and guardians are requested to report known absences as soon as possible to the class teacher and/or principal teacher. In the event that a child is unexpectedly absent, due to sudden illness or other reasons, parents and guardians are requested to phone the school as soon as possible (091 590627) or email the secretary, providing an explanation for the absence. Parents are able to use Aladdin to notify absences and provide reasons for the absences. Likewise, in the case of a late arrival or the need to collect a child early, parents are requested to follow the same procedures. Finally, while it may not always be possible to schedule family holidays during break times, the school encourages parents to take into account the scheduled breaks when planning holidays, recognising that lengthy absences can inhibit academic progress as well as social integration.

#### Procedures for School Officials in the Event of Unexplained Absences:

In the event that a child is absent and no explanation has been reported by parents or guardians from 9.30 onwards, the secretary, principal or class teacher will contact parents. This policy is intended to support the immediate welfare of the child, ensuring that all children who are expected to arrive in school are present and accounted for. This also ensures that the school is aware of the reasons for absences as soon as possible. It is essential that current contact details are on file. Therefore, parents and guardians are requested to update contact details as soon as they change. Parents are able to update these contact details in Aladdin at any time.

#### Reporting Attendance to Outside Agencies

As explained previously, all teachers will maintain their attendance records using Aladdin. They will be presented to Department officials, including Inspectors, when requested. These records, maintained using Aladdin, will be stored securely, with adequate security and encryption. The

maintenance of these records follows all requirements specified in Circular 33/2015. In addition, as mandated by law, reports to Túsła (Child and Family Agency) will be completed by the principal, as required. This will be facilitated by using the Aladdin management system to create reports to be uploaded on the Túsła Online Portal. A copy of the submitted reports will be kept indefinitely.

#### Methods to Encourage Good Attendance and Punctuality:

Individual class teachers may choose to operate some form of positive incentive to encourage good attendance and punctuality that is age-appropriate. On an annual basis, the principal will recognise those children with excellent attendance and punctuality at the end-of-year assembly by presenting them with certificates. Of note, if and when there is a fee for certain events, no child will be excluded due to non-payment, with their participation supported by the general funds of the Board of Management.

#### Responding to Long-term or Chronic Absenteeism

In the event that a child is absent for a lengthy period or chronically over time, there are several actions that the school may take in order to improve attendance. Firstly, letters will be sent out to parents/guardians when children have missed 15 days, informing them that the names of children who miss more than 20 days will be reported to Túsła. When 20 absences have been recorded, the child's name is added to the quarterly Túsła report and a letter is sent to the parents/guardians informing them of this action. It is acknowledged that in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of absences increased due to new requirements that mandated absences either due to infection of being a close contact, and this will always be taken into account when addressing ongoing absenteeism. In the event of suspension or expulsion, the Túsła will also be informed. These procedures are outlined in the parent handbook.

If absenteeism remains chronic, especially without explanation, the class teacher and principal will arrange a meeting with the parents/guardians to collectively develop a plan for attendance improvement. Likewise, the principal will liaise with the Educational Welfare Officer from Túsła assigned to the school in developing such plans.

As part of the Principal's Report at the Board of Management meetings, information on attendance will be presented, including the number of children that have exceeded the 15 and 20 absence marks as well as efforts by the school and Túsła to address cases of chronic absenteeism. This information will be presented without reference to individual children's names. The Board, in their capacity as the responsible party for the care of students, will review general attendance figures, as necessary, to ensure the school is following best practice to improve attendance rates.

#### Transfer to/from the School

When a child enrolls, the principal will notify by letter the principal of the school where the child last attended. When the principal receives notice that a child has enrolled in another school, he or she will discuss any matters related to the child's attendance and educational progress as well as furnish reports after receiving parents' permission to forward them. This process will be completed on the Primary Online Database.

### **Summary of Roles and Responsibilities:**

#### Board of Management

- To monitor the attendance of the school children through the provision of a regular report made by the Principal at each Board of Management meeting.
- To provide tools, such as Aladdin, to support the keeping of attendance records.
- To review efforts to address chronic absenteeism on a regular basis to ensure good practice is being followed.
- To review this policy regularly.

#### Principal

- To ensure systems are in place regarding the recording of attendance.
- To make mandatory reports to Túsła regarding attendance.
- To liaise with Túsła, as required, to encourage good attendance.
- To send notification letters to parents/guardians after children have missed 15 days and an additional letter to parents/guardians when children have missed 20 days informing them that this has been reported to Túsła.
- To put in place plans for attendance improvement with parents and guardians.
- To recognise children with good attendance and punctuality on an annual basis.
- To inform the Board of specific cases and how any chronic absenteeism is being addressed.

#### Class Teachers

- To record absences and late arrivals using the Aladdin system by 11.00 each day.
- To record any reasons for absence reported by parents.
- To retain written excuses for the remainder of the academic year.
- To develop with parents and the principal plans and strategies to improve attendance and punctuality, as required.

#### Parents and Guardians

- To support your child's good attendance and punctuality so that they are present for as many learning opportunities as possible.
- To inform the school of any absences or late arrivals as soon as possible.
- To phone the school in the event of unexpected absences.
- To submit in writing, in all cases, an explanation for the absence, preferably using the forms found in the school homework diaries.

#### Children

- To endeavour to be on time and at school as much as possible.

### **Implementation and Review:**

This policy was originally ratified in 2015 and was reviewed in 2019 and 2022. It will be reviewed no later than 2025.

### **Ratification and Communication:**

The revised policy was ratified by the Board of Management on the date below. It will be posted on the school website in due course.