



Educate  
Together

Harold's Cross Educate Together National  
School  
School Roll Number: 20520o



**Harolds' Cross Educate Together National School**

**Attendance Policy**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022

## **Introduction and Rationale**

This policy was formulated in order to provide information, guidelines and good practice regarding pupil attendance at Harold's Cross Educate Together National School. This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, Board of Management and the parent body. It follows the template for the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance as set out in Tusla – Child and Family Agency's guidelines for schools (2015, p. 42).

## **School's vision and values in relation to attendance**

The Board of Management of Harold's Cross Educate Together National School recognizes the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. We recognise that high attendance is linked to pupils staying at school and doing well in throughout their education. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and to learning (McCoy et al, 2007). The Board also recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).

In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management views each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. The Board of Management is committed to striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by students, and the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

School starts at 8:30am for all pupils and ends at 1:10pm for Infant classes and 2:10pm for 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class. The school follows the standardised school year as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills and is open for 182 days of the year.

## **Aims:**

- To foster an appreciation of learning by having good attendance practises.
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems/ leaving early
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation
- Develop links between school and families of children who are at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance

## **Our school's high expectations around attendance**

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. In this regard, the Board of Management of Harold's Cross ETNS has a high expectation of pupil attendance. Pupils are encouraged to come to school every day and the school's approach to, and promotion of, attendance is outlined below. Tusla and the Board of Management of Harold's Cross ETNS strongly advise that parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. Holidays should be taken during the allocated holiday time as outlined in the school calendar.

The Board of Management acknowledges that there are cases where a child has a genuine reason for absenteeism, including; illness, urgent family reasons, expulsion, suspension, or transfer to another school.

### **How attendance will be monitored**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for them not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000).

All class teachers take a daily roll call which is recorded on the school's data software programme 'Aladdin'. If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open, their absence will be recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin. When a student is absent from school during part of a school day or for a school day or for more than a school day, Section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a legal duty on parents to notify the principal about the reasons for the child's absence. Parents should record any absence and reason for absence on the school platform Aladdin. Absences should be recorded on or where applicable before the first day of absence. If the teacher has been made aware of the reason for absence, this is also recorded on Aladdin. Otherwise, the absence will be reported 'unexplained'.

If a teacher is concerned about student absences, they alert relevant staff; i.e. the Deputy Principal or Principal. The roll call is taken at 9:10am each morning. The annual attendance of each pupil is recorded by Aladdin and is printed in the end of year school reports.

Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged unless absolutely necessary. All late arrivals will be recorded on Aladdin. For early departures, a parent/carer must notify the school secretary and sign the child out.

### **Removal of a Pupil during the School Day**

Pupils are expected to remain in school for a full school day. Pupils should only be removed early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.

### **Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick child from school**

If a pupil needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter should be sent in prior from his/her parents. If a child is sick during the school day, the secretary or class teacher will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. Ensure all phone numbers are up to date. When collecting the child, the parent should report to the school office. No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless written communication has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.

### **Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency**

Our school day begins at 8.30am. If a child has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, the school should be notified beforehand from parents/carers.

### **Emergencies**

The parent should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The secretary can then have the child collected from the class and ready to meet the parent. The child will be signed out. No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless the parent themselves has been in an accident. In such cases, the child will only be released to an immediate family member known to the Principal; staff, as named as the Emergency contact person.

### **ABSENCES DUE TO TERM-TIME HOLIDAYS**

Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time. Schools should strongly discourage parents from taking students on holidays during term time and this should be documented in the school's communication to parents. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the parent should provide this information in writing to the school. Where there are regular holiday absences, the school should remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time.

### **How punctuality will be monitored**

School begins at 8:30am for all pupils. Children are expected to be supervised by parents and lined up outside the classroom from 8:25. All pupils and staff members are expected to be on time. Rollas will be called at 9:10am. After this time children arriving at school will be considered late. All pupils arriving late to school will be recorded on Aladdin.

Parents are expected to inform the school of late arrivals/ early departures. Estimated time of arrival/ departure and reason should be recorded on Aladdin Notice. Where possible the school should be informed on or before the day of late arrival or early departure.

The school will contact parents/carers in the event of pupils being consistently late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality. The school principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report pupils who are persistently late to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

A copy of this policy will be given to members of staff, Board of Management, and available to parents to view in the school and will be available on our website.

### **School approach to attendance**

#### **Our whole-school approach**

At Harold's Cross Educate Together National School, pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management work in partnership to provide the best education for our pupils, and believe that consistent attendance is necessary to facilitate the education of the pupils. The whole-school approach to attendance is as follows;

- promoting a positive learning environment
- promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- encouraging punctuality
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- raising everyone's expectations of our school attendance
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identifying pupils at risk
- developing, subject to available resources, 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

## Promoting good attendance

The following are strategies employed by the school to promote good school attendance; promoting a positive learning environment

- Staff meet and greet with families in the yard every morning (Principal and Deputy Principal)
- Discussion about attendance at PTA meetings, annual parent-teacher meetings, class meetings at the start of the year and information evenings with new parents.
- Regular updates on the school's attendance or punctuality in the school newsletter/other mediums of communication
- Positive affirmation of attendance when the roll is being taken
- Highlight the importance of attendance during school assemblies
- Record of attendance in pupil's annual school report
- Distribution of Tusla's Educational Welfare Services' leaflet entitled '*Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*' at new parents' information evening.
- Provision of after school care
- Provision of extra-curricular activities after school
- Sporting activities throughout the school year, e.g. GAA training with Games Development Officer.
- Parental involvement in school in delivery of paired reading, Learn Together lessons, art lessons and sporting events.
- The school calendar for each academic year is distributed the previous June to make parents/carers aware of school holidays, to avoid holidays being taken during term time.
- At the initial meeting of parents of any new pupils, the "Don't Let Your Child Miss Out" leaflet will be distributed.
- Responding to poor attendance
- The Board of Management acknowledges that despite the best efforts of the school and of families, some pupils will need extra support to prevent patterns of poor attendance developing. The following are strategies employed by the school to respond to poor attendance;
- Working with groups or individuals who may need additional support (Guidelines for Schools, p.30)
- Tailoring whole-school approaches to group or individual needs
- Engaging in early dialogue with parents and students
- Using internal school processes to provide individualised support
- Using school-led, multi-agency support processes
- Referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services

## Approach to attendance concerns – School-based

- Where there is a concern regarding a pupil's level of attendance or pattern of absenteeism the Deputy Principal or Principal will speak to the parents/carers about the matter and remind them of their statutory duty as parents to ensure that their child is sent to school.
- A text message will be sent to parents/carers informing them when their child has reached 10 days of absenteeism and encouraging improvement.
- When a child has missed 15 days an email will be sent to parents/carers informing them of absenteeism and encouraging improvement.
- When a child has missed 20 days or more a letter will be sent to parents informing them of absenteeism. The principal would formally meet the parent outlining that the Board of Management of the school will be informed about the poor attendance, and/or the Welfare board office will be contacted.
- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents.

- Approach to attendance concerns – Tusla
- The school must notify Tusla if a pupil is absent for 20 days or more, or where absences/patterns of absence give rise to concern. If a pupil is sick or is absent for another explained reason, no action is likely to be taken by Tusla. However if there is a concern about a pupil’s attendance at school or about the reasons given for absenteeism, families may be visited by an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss the situation. Unexplained absences are of particular concern to the school and to Tusla.
- The school is obliged to report regularly to Tusla regarding attendance. There are four reporting periods each year. The report is generated by the school, based on the guidelines provided by Tusla. Any pupil who has missed 20 days or more, or any pupils about whom there are absenteeism concerns, must be reported to the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla – Child and Family Agency are clearly outlined at:  
<http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-schools-inc-absencereporting/download-reporting-documentation>
- Parents/carers will also be informed when the school has made a referral to Tusla regarding attendance.

<b><i>School approach to monitoring and communicating pupil absenteeism</i></b>		
<b><i>Absence</i></b>	<b><i>Mode of Communication</i></b>	<b><i>Information to be communicated</i></b>
10 days	Text message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number days of absence reached</li> <li>● Support offered</li> <li>● Reminder of school’s expectations and attendance procedures.</li> </ul>
15 days	Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number days of absence reached</li> <li>● Support offered</li> <li>● Reminder of school’s attendance expectations and procedures.</li> </ul>
20 days	Letter and meeting with principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number days of absence stated</li> <li>● Support offered</li> <li>● Reminder of school’s attendance expectations and procedures.</li> </ul>

## **Implementation and Review**

### **School Community Roles and Responsibilities**

The Board of Management acknowledges a collective responsibility for the promotion of attendance. The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of people within the school community regarding attendance:

#### **Principal**

The school principal will provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance. It is the responsibility of the Principal to lead the development and implementation of this policy, under the guidance of the Board of Management.

The Principal will undertake the following responsibilities in relation to this plan;

- Engage with parents/carers regarding attendance concerns.
- Prepare a report on attendance for the Board of Management on a yearly basis, or as the need arises.

- Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.
- Furnish pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.
- The principal will put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- The Principal has responsibility for promoting attendance in assemblies.
- The Deputy Principal has responsibility for making the periodic returns to Tusla, and for notifying Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensure support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties.

### Teachers

- It is the responsibility of the class teacher to oversee the implementation of this policy within their own individual classroom.
- Class teachers (and substitute teachers where relevant) have responsibility for recording daily attendance and for inputting reasons of absenteeism on Aladdin. Class teachers must also record absences on the fire drill list. It is the responsibility of teachers to;
- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality in their classrooms
- Set example by their own punctuality
- Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures, as set out above
- Alert relevant staff (i.e. Principal/Deputy Principal) if there are concerns about student absences
- Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis
- Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

### Parents/Carers

The Board of Management acknowledges the important role of parents/carers in the attendance of their children at school. In line with Tusla's guidelines for school (p.44), parents/carers are expected to;

- Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality
- Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem
- Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time
- Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason
- Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time.

<i>Parents/ Carers responsibilities when communicating absenteeism/late arrival/ early departure</i>			
<i>Issue</i>	<i>Mode of Communication</i>	<i>Steps</i>	<i>Expected Time Frame</i>

Late Arrival	Aladdin Notice	Input estimated time of arrival and reason for being late.	Update Aladdin on or before late arrival.
Early Departure	Aladdin Notices	Input estimated time of arrival and reason for early collection.	Update Aladdin on or before the day of early departure.
Absence	Aladdin Notice	Input reason for absence and the duration of absence.	Update Aladdin on or before the day of absence.

### **Partnership arrangements**

The Board of Management acknowledges the importance of partnership arrangements and a multi-disciplinary approach, where relevant, in supporting the attendance and punctuality of pupils at school. In relation to attendance, the school community may involve staff members, parents/carers, students, other school, community groups and Tusla, among others.

### **Timeframe**

This whole-school policy will be implemented from 2 September 2022.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in September 2024. The policy will be reviewed before then, should a need arise.

### **Ratification and Communication**

The attention of all newly appointed staff will be drawn to this whole-school plan.

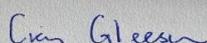
This policy will be published on the school website and a copy of this policy will be made available to the Department of Education and Skills and the Patron, if requested. Hard copies of this, and all school policies, are available at the school upon request.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on

Signature of Chairperson:



Signature of Principal:



Date: 28/09/2022

Date of next review: January 2024

Appendix:

10 Days Absence

15 Days Absence

20 Days Absence Letter

Dear Parents/ Carers,

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify Túsla if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where a child's absence gives rise to concern.

It is the school's policy to inform parents by letter of children's absences. You will have already received a text message when your child reached 10 days and an email when your child reached 15 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are legally obliged to report all absences of 20 days or more to Túsla. Following your notes, the categories of absence have also been recorded and Túsla may examine this data further.

This letter is to inform you that our records show that \_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school on \_\_\_ days.

One of the factors ensuring success in education is regular school attendance and habits of attendance are set in the early years of schooling. Hence it is a policy of Harolds' Cross Educate Together to encourage children to attend school every day. Parents can help to develop a positive attitude to school attendance by encouraging children to come to school every day and also by ensuring that all absences are explained in writing. Our Attendance policy is available to view on our website

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Principal

Deputy Principal