



Coláiste Éamonn Rís

Attendance and Participation Strategy

Background

Coláiste Éamonn Rís is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School for boys only, operating under the Trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school subscribes to the holistic vision expressed in the five key elements that constitute the Edmund Rice Schools Charter. These are:

1. Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values;
2. Promoting partnership;
3. Excelling in teaching and learning;
4. Creating a caring school community;
5. Inspiring transformational leadership.

The school's Attendance and Participation Strategy is informed by the Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter and is in keeping with the values extolled therein. We want to make school and school attendance a pleasant and positive experience for all our students. In this regard, a wide range of subjects are provided and a range of social and extra-curricular activities are on offer with a view to making our school as inclusive as possible, to encourage maximum participation and to provide chances for all to excel. See Admissions Policy for a more complete outline of courses/subjects and extra-curricular activities.

Rationale

Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, schools are obliged to prepare and submit to the TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students

Aims:

Poor attendance at school disadvantages students, and hinders academic performance and reduces social skills.

The National Wellbeing Policy Statement *“recognises the strong link between Student wellbeing and attendance. Promoting a sense of belonging, safety and purpose in school is essential in ensuring consistent participation”*.

We aim to ensure that the students in our school attend regularly and on time.

We are constantly seeking to improve our Attendance and Participation rates.

We regard attendance, which falls below 90% and where a student is known to be in reasonable health and there are no extenuating circumstances, to be “poor” and should give rise for concern.

In order to ascertain the levels of individual student’s attendance our records are updated on a daily basis.

Appropriate agencies such as the Inspectorate of The Department of Education and Skills and officers of TUSLA have a right to inspect school attendance figures of individual pupils. To that end, we aim to ensure that school registers are kept accurately.

Each Student’s attendance record is available to Parents/Guardians on the School’s VS Ware System.

A Curriculum which is relevant and flexible is taught and students work in an environment which is safe and secure and conducive to work. The school has a strong pastoral care setup and code of behaviour aimed at these ends. Any issue, such as bullying, which might inhibit school attendance, is dealt with expeditiously.

We aim to identify poor attendance at an early stage and to that end the following steps shall be taken:

1. Children who have been reported to TUSLA in the previous academic year shall be highlighted for the year head for monitoring.
2. As soon as any student reaches 10 days, the parents/guardians will be contacted by the school to make them aware of the concerns.
3. Continued poor attendance will be monitored and, in a situation, where attendance does not improve, the parents may be invited to a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principal//Year Head/Guidance Councillors/Attendance and Participation Co-Ordinator to discuss strategies and identify problems leading to the poor attendance.
4. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve the issue of persistent absenteeism through consultation with parents/guardians, school staff and TUSLA.
5. Allowances will be made for children with serious illness/specific reasons for poor attendance at the discretion of the school.

Role of the School:

Parents/Guardians are made aware of the official opening and closing time of the school.

Individual pupil attendance is recorded for each class on the VS Ware system.

Parents and students are made aware of the school’s expectations in the event of lateness and absence from school.

Text messages are sent when Students are absent or late after first classes in the morning and afternoon.

If a student is late for first class in the morning or afternoon, this information is returned to the office.

Students who are late for the first class in the morning may be required to do a period of “late detention” for 20 minutes on a day to be appointed during which they will be encouraged to catch up on missed work.

Parents/Guardians will be informed when students are required to do this detention.

Attendance for the whole school is monitored on a weekly basis.

The school is obliged to operate an attendance system and to report to TUSLA. The Educational Welfare Act 1998 obliges us to forward the names of any student when he misses 20 or more days (in a school year) to the Department of Education and Youth. Returns re attendance are made to TUSLA twice during the school year, with a final report made at the end of the school year.

Parents/Guardians:

Parents/Guardians need to be mindful of the educational importance of full attendance when scheduling appointments or other occasions including family holidays which may necessitate the withdrawal of a student from school.

Medical appointments and other arrangements should be made outside school hours, where possible. Otherwise a communication to the School via VS Ware or other means should be completed by Parents/Guardians to notify the school.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are discouraged from taking their son(s) on holidays during the school year as such withdrawals can have a negative impact on a student's academic progress.

It is of the utmost importance that parent(s)/ guardian(s) current contact details are in the school office.

In the event of a parent/guardian changing address, landline number or mobile phone number, he/she should contact the school with the amended information.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for providing an explanation of all absences.

Absences should be notified to the school through VSWare.

Notes in School Student's Journal can be shared with the School when necessary.

When Students are absent for appointments, Doctors's Certificates should be provided when possible.

Parents/Guardians must provide notes in VSware or otherwise explaining reasons for lateness.

Students will not be allowed leave the school for appointments or due to illness *without parental notification*.

Under these circumstances, a parent/guardian must collect the student.

If parents/ guardians are aware in advance that a student will be absent for any part of the school day they should notify the school immediately via VSware.

Students:

Students in Coláiste Éamonn Rís are active participants in promoting good attendance through Student's Council, Meitheal Programme and other student led campaigns.

In addition, Students are obliged to:

- Be in attendance in assigned classroom at **8.50am** in the morning.
- Be in attendance in assigned classroom and **on time** for the all classes.
- Submit a parental VSware explanation for absence on their return to school.
- Explain late arrival to relevant Teacher/Tutor/Year Head with a VSware notification.

Students who are late arriving in the morning or afternoon will need to check in at the office. They will also be marked late on the VS Ware system by the class teacher.

If a student feels unwell or has an accident during the day he must immediately inform a member of staff. There needs to be authorisation from the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head before he can be collected. He must wait to be collected by a parent/guardian and sign out before he leaves the school.

Legal Requirements:

The Principal must inform the Education Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:

- A student is suspended from school for more than six consecutive days
- The aggregate number of days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is more than twenty.
- A student's name for whatever reason is removed from the register by the Principal.
- A student who is in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly.

Role of the Education Welfare Service in TUSLA:

The Education Welfare Service has a range of functions assigned to it by The Education Welfare Act. The main functions of the Education Welfare Service are:

- To promote and foster in society, and in particular in families, an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education,
- To promote and foster an environment that encourages children to attend school and to participate fully in the life of the school,
- To assist children and parents of children who are not attending school on a regular basis,
- To assist schools in drawing up strategies and programmes aimed at preventing non-attendance in schools.

If the Education Welfare Service considers that parents/guardians are neglecting their obligations regarding school attendance, they may serve a "School Attendance Notice".

Parents/guardians will be required to send the named child/children to school and failure to do so will incur a fine of €635 or one month in prison or both.

The relevant section of the Health Service Executive will be informed if a parent/guardian is convicted.

Parents/guardians will also be liable for a fine of €254 for every day the notice is broken or ignored.

Monitoring Attendance

The monitoring of attendance is a key component of the Attendance and Participation Strategy. Attendance is recorded on a class by class basis. In the event of the student being absent without the consent of the parent(s)/guardian(s), the parent(s)/guardian(s) are expected to contact the school.

When a student returns to school after being absent, he is expected to have a VShare notification explaining his absence. These notifications will be visible to the Class Tutor and subject teachers.

Regular spot checks are carried out by the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Assistant Year Heads and Class Tutors to detect truant students. Students engaging in truancy are dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Subject teachers take individual class rolls for each of their classes.

Student attendance is monitored on a regular basis by Year Heads and Assistant Year Heads. Each Year Head and Assistant has access to each Student's Attendance record and will follow up with the school's Attendance and Participation Co-Ordinator where there is a persistent problem and/or where notifications are not being provided for absences.

Targeted interventions will be employed as a resource to students with persistent attendance and notification issues.

Participation Strategies

Coláiste Éamonn Rís has a framework of supports through which it promotes excellent attendance, including

- Universal supports: whole-school attendance promotion, positive climate, assemblies.
- Targeted supports: mentoring, restorative practices.
- Individualised supports: personalised attendance plans, multi-agency involvement.

We have many policies and practices in place to encourage a positive school climate which fosters participation and ownership in the school community. These include the following policies:

Code of Behaviour; Bí Cineálta Policy; Substance Misuse Policy; Child Protection Policy; Homework Policy and Acceptable Use Policy-IT Devices.

The school's Pastoral Care structure with Year Heads, Assistant Year Heads, Class Tutors, Chaplain and Pastoral Care Committee aims to create a caring community of learners where students can seek support in a safe and supportive environment.

In accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour, students who are absent from school or class for any reason are responsible for finding out details of work missed. This applies also to students who miss class due to sporting or other extra-curricular activities.

The importance of attendance will be reiterated in the school newsletter, placing focus on encouraging full attendance by all pupils.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is repeated on an ongoing basis at assembly by Year Heads.

The school has a Positive Affirmation Committee which seeks to affirm students who are making a positive contribution to school life in the following areas: Work Ethic; Extra Curricular; Good Deeds; Excellent Attendance. Students are nominated for commendation by the teachers (see Code of Behaviour).

Academic and extra-curricular excellence is acknowledged across the year groups at award nights and at assemblies.

Incoming First year students are supported by the Meitheal programme.

Behavioural plans are put in place for students with challenging behavioural issues.

Support for teaching and learning is given through school development planning and Inservice.

Hot food is available for students at break-time and at lunchtime.

There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities available to students in the areas of sport, music and debating.

There are opportunities for student involvement within the school through the Students' Council and Meitheal.

The school makes extensive provision for students with special educational needs (see Inclusion Policy).

The Principal reports attendance levels to the school's Board of Management on an annual basis.

The school has a Guidance Counsellor and a Guidance Plan has been drawn up in conjunction with the National Centre for Guidance in Education.

The School endeavours to maximise all Student's attendance and timekeeping through encouragement, through engagement with Restorative Practices (Appendices 1 and 2), and, through the School's Late detention scheme.

Information for parents at Parent Information nights, in Newsletters and on our website will highlight the impact of absenteeism, provide strategies for supporting morning routines, and encourage a shared responsibility for attendance.

Where attendance difficulties are linked to anxiety or emotional distress, the school will work with parents, devise Student centred plans, and, if necessary, will consult with TESS and NEPS for targeted support.

Excellent or significantly improved attendance will be recognised through termly awards and assemblies. Seasonal campaigns (e.g., Halloween, Christmas, Spring) will be used to promote attendance in a positive, fun way.

An evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy and policy regarding Attendance and Participation is held on a regular basis by the constituent elements of the school community.

Policy reviewed by the Board of Management 22-9-2025

APPENDIX 1:

ABSENCE RESTORATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. What happened to result in you being absent from school?
2. Was it 100% necessary that you needed to be absent from school during this period?
Could you have come to school?
3. What were you thinking about as a result of missing school?
4. What were your parents thinking as a result of you being absent from school?

- 5 How did your failure to attend school effect other people?

APPENDIX 2:

PUNCTUALITY RESTORATION SHEET:

1. What happened to result in you being late for school?

2. Is this an ongoing problem? Why?

3. Could you have come to school in time?

4. What were you thinking about as a result of being late for school?

5. What were your parents thinking as a result of you being late for school?
6. How did/does your failure to attend school on time effect other people?
7. What can the school do to help you to resolve the matter?
8. What can you do to help you resolve the matter?

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