



THE COMMONS NATIONAL SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Our Attendance Policy was reviewed in October/November 2022 by the whole school staff when we were assigned to the DEIS programme to bring about an improvement in educational and social outcomes for those pupils considered to be “at risk” due to disadvantage.

Every child to whom the School Attendance Act applies is obliged by law to attend school every day the school is in operation, unless there is a reasonable/valid

reason for not attending. The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 provides a framework for promoting regular school attendance, tackling the problem of absenteeism and early school leaving. All parents have a duty to have their children at school every day and on time in accordance with Section 17 of the Education Welfare Act (2000).

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy are as follows:

- To promote, encourage and maintain regular attendance and punctuality as an essential factor in our pupils’ learning.
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998.
- The role of TUSLA and Education Welfare Officers (EWO)
- Levels of disadvantage.
- Maintain very good attendance amongst our students.
- Changing attitudes to education.

Aims

The aims of the School Attendance Policy of The Commons N.S.

- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- 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.
- 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, in so far as practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

The school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored.
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to: (a) TUSLA. (b) The Education Welfare Officer. (c) The Board of Management.

Defining and recording non-attendance.

“A parent is obliged 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.” Education Welfare Act 2000.

The following applies:

- A child is expected to attend each day.
- Non-attendance is recorded in the roll book on Aladdin.
- A letter is provided by parents explaining the absence in accordance with the Education Act 1998.
- All explanatory notes are kept on student’s file.
- The category of absence is also identified and recorded.
- If a note/letter isn’t forthcoming the school secretary will contact the parents requesting a letter of explanation. If not supplied after this request the absence will be recorded as unexplained.
- Children are expected to be at school at 9.20.
- All children are expected to complete a full day at school.

If there is difficulty with poor attendance:

- Class teacher will talk to parent about the matter and remind them of their statutory duty as to ensure that their child is sent to school and to see if the school can assist.
- When a child has missed 10 days a standard text will be sent as a reminder, highlighting this, regardless of absence.
- If there is no improvement after this communication the principal along with class teacher will have further discussion with parent.
- A formal letter will be sent when a child is 15 days absent to highlight this and encourage improved attendance.
- The principal may formally contact a parent if improvement is not seen following this communication.
- A letter will be sent to parents of pupils who have missed 20 days or more, regardless of reason for absences, informing them that this information will be reported to TUSLA and the Board of Management.
- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO -TUSLA) and principal will work together to support families of children with particularly poor attendance if necessary.
- All attendance will be reported to parents half way through the school year and on the end of year school report.

Punctuality

- School receives children from 9.00 am when gates open for start at 9.20 am
- All gates are locked for security reasons at 9.30 am
- Anyone arriving after 9.30 am should be accompanied by a relevant adult and signed into school at reception.
- Appointments for students should be made outside of school time.

The principal will meet with the parents of children who are continually late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality. If following school intervention and strategies punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

Removal of a pupil during school day

It is expected that all pupils remain in school for a full school day. It is also important so as to ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations.

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 beforehand from his/her parents or a phone call made to the school office.

If a child is sick during the school day, the secretary will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. Ensure all numbers are up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent should report to school office, sign out the child and wait in reception while the secretary collects the child from the classroom.

Arriving late to school due to an unavoidable medical appointment or emergency.

Our school day begins at 9.20 am. If a child has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment or emergency, a letter should be sent in beforehand or explanation given by way or phone call to the school. The school roll is taken daily at 10am. In this case the roll will be kept open for this child until 12pm (maximum). After this time, the child has missed half the school day and will be marked absent.

Emergencies

The parent should ring the school en route and explain the situation. The secretary can have the child collected and ready for class and ready to meet parent.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the School and TUSLA to resolve any attendance problems.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.

- Refraining, from taking holidays during school time as per TUSLA recommendation – see TUSLA website.
- 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.
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school. (Notes found in back of school homework journal - 2nd – 6th class)
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

The Board of Management:

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, in so far 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 children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills Guidelines.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised, if necessary.
- The attendance rates of the pupils will be monitored by class teacher in the first instance and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, in so far as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve poor attendance.

School Principal:

The School Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.

- Inform the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA: (a) if a pupil is not attending school regularly. (b) When a pupil has been absent for 20 days or more during the course of the school year. (c) If a pupil has been suspended.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- In so far as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

The Class Teacher:

The Class Teacher will:

- Maintain a daily record of attendance and upload to Aladdin system weekly.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Ask the school secretary to contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the principal of concerns s/he may have regarding attendance of any pupil.
- Contact parents/guardians where punctuality and attendance concerns begin to arise.

Recording and Reporting Attendance.

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) on the "Aladdin" database of each class on a daily basis. This automatically updates the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) which is held on "Aladdin" along with the annual attendance of each individual pupil being recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register) which is also available and updated automatically on "Aladdin".

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 at 10 am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

The Commons N.S. endeavors to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

- Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary or a phone call when there is a concern regarding attendance. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if attendance does not improve after this time.
- New entrants to Junior Infants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance and good punctuality habits from Junior Infants onwards. See Appendix 1 -TUSLA -Don't let your child miss out.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. 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.
- Certificates will be awarded at Halloween, Christmas, Easter and end of June to promote good and/or improved attendance up to those dates. An overall certificate will be awarded to those who have not missed a day of school during the year.

Transfer to another School

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 that the child is now registered in their school.

A principal may only remove a pupil's name from the 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 or is in receipt of out-of-school education.

Communication

The school maintains communication with TUSLA the organization that monitors attendance in schools. The school maintains communication with

local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to outline patterns amongst other issues.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from *The Commons N.S.* to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers from another school into The Commons N.S. confirmation of enrollment will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from *The Commons N.S.* to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrollment - NCCA Education Passport.

Communication with Parents

The following applies in terms of communicating with the parents:

- Attendance Policy circulated to all families at the beginning of each school year.
- School calendar for next school year communicated in June of the previous year.
- Reminders of importance of punctuality and attendance in newsletter.
- When a child has missed 10 days of school a standard text, regardless of reason for absence, to notify and remind parents that their child has missed 10 days (2 weeks) of school is sent.
- 15 day absence letter– standard letter sent to parents, regardless of reason for absence, to notify them that their child has missed 15 days (3 weeks) of school.
- 20 day absence letter – standard letter sent to parents, regardless of reason for absence, to notify parents that the absence is now reported to TUSLA.
- Update on absence – standard letter to parents to inform all parents of number of days a child has missed in school, regardless of reason for absence, half way through school year.
- Parent Teacher Meetings are held in November of every school year. Parents will be informed of how many days a child has missed of school at this meeting.
- End of school report communicates the number of days missed in the school year.

- Pupil's teacher and/or principal will contact parents when appropriate and as outlined above in this document.

The school circulates this information regarding attendance at the induction meeting of the Junior Infants parents/guardians.

Communication with TUSLA/Education Welfare Officer

We are obliged to inform TUSLA if:

- A child is expelled.
- A child is suspended.
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

We are obliged to furnish TUSLA with numbers of pupils absent for 20 days or more on two occasions during the school year.

The Board of Management is also informed of the numbers of students who have missed 20 days or more at school.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Maintenance and improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar rolla. Records and statistical returns.
- Happy confident well-adjusted children.
- Positive parental feedback and cooperation with policy in its entirety.
- Teacher vigilance in terms of poor attenders.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in The Commons National *School since 2004* and was last updated in October 2022

Signed _____
Chairperson, Board of Management.

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

Empty Desks - CDU Mary Immaculate

Appendix 2 – 15 day absence letter

Dear

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify TUSLA 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 when these absences are 15 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are just bringing the number of days to your attention.

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 at The Commons N.S. 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 at www.commonsns.com

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

*Joe Cannon
Principal*

Appendix 3 – 20 day absence letter

Dear

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify TUSLA 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 letter 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 Tusla.

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 at The Commons N.S. 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 at www.commonsns.com

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Yours sincerely,

*Joe Cannon
Principal*