Carrigtwohill Community National School (CNS)

Attendance and Participation Policy

Introduction

Changing social habits and patterns, together with national guidance, have necessitated the development of this Attendance and Participation Policy for Carrigtwohill Community National School. This policy was developed through a collaborative school process involving staff, parents, and the Board of Management.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy can be summarised as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- Legislative requirements, including the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998.
- The role of the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), Educational Welfare Service (EWS), and Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).
- The diverse nature of our school community, and the range of circumstances that can affect attendance.
- Changing attitudes to education, including a greater awareness of pupil wellbeing and reluctant school attendance.

Aims and Objectives

This policy is geared towards:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Encouraging full attendance where possible.
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Promoting a positive learning environment.
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of.
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Fostering an appreciation of learning.
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of relevant legislation.
- 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.
- Ensuring undue pressure is not placed on individual children who are unwell to come to school, including through the careful use of any attendance rewards.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the ethos of Carrigtwohill CNS as a Community National School — Ní neart go cur le chéile, there is no strength without unity — nurturing potential in an inclusive, caring

environment where the welfare of every child is paramount, regardless of background, home language, or circumstance.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of this policy.

- Class teachers record attendance daily and note individual patterns of attendance or lateness.
- The deputy principal is responsible for the making of returns to the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).
- The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining oversight of attendance records on Aladdin and acts as the school's primary point of contact for attendance matters.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the Board of Management.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly and for notifying the school of the reason for any absence.

Punctuality

School begins at 8:40am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Where a pupil arrives after 8:40am, this is recorded on Aladdin and factored into total learning time missed over the school year. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of a pupil being consistently late. The Principal may, under the Education (Welfare) Act, report children who are persistently late to the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).

Recording and Reporting Attendance

Attendance is recorded daily in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Rules for National Schools (1965). Roll call is taken by the class teacher using the Aladdin system by 9.20am.

Attendance data is maintained accurately and securely and is made available to the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) as required. Parents/guardians are made aware that the school has statutory reporting obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. They are notified in writing, via the end-of-year report, of the total number of absences recorded during the school year. Where non-attendance is a concern, parents/guardians are invited to meet with the Deputy Principal or Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.

Reporting to Tusla (TESS)

In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school will notify the Tusla Educational Welfare Service where:

- A pupil has been absent for 20 school days or more in a school year.
- A pupil is suspended for a cumulative period of not less than 6 school days.
- The school is concerned about a pupil's attendance, participation, or retention.
- A pupil is removed from the school roll.

Such reports are made using the standard Tusla reporting mechanisms and within required timeframes, via the Tusla Portal, in line with current Tusla procedures. An Annual Report is submitted, detailing overall attendance levels for the school year.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment for every pupil and family.
- Ensuring children are happy, supported, and know who to talk to if something is worrying them.
- Displaying kindness, compassion, and understanding.
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance — such as disadvantage, bullying, or reluctance to attend — are identified early.
- Using any available attendance-related grants or resources effectively, in consultation with staff and pupils.

The Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), Educational Welfare Service (EWS), Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Why Attendance Matters

Recent Irish research, "The long-term outcomes of school absence (Smyth, Moya and Darmody, 2026)," found that missing school is linked to poorer outcomes later on, including lower Leaving Cert results, less chance of going on to higher education, and poorer wellbeing in early adulthood. The study was carried out by the ESRI as part of a research programme with the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), and draws on data from Growing Up in Ireland, which is funded by the Government of Ireland and managed as a partnership between the Department of Children, Disability and Equality and the Central Statistics Office. The full study is available here: https://doi.org/10.26504/rs220

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Carrigtwohill CNS endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing school policies, with the aim of promoting a high level of co-operation across our diverse school community. Staff collaborate in the planning and implementation of the primary curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

The staff remains vigilant so that pupils at risk are identified early. A pupil is generally considered at risk where they miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians, either via email or a phone call, when this occurs. A meeting between parents/guardians and the Deputy Principal or Principal may be arranged if deemed necessary. Absences of 20 days or more are referred to the Education Welfare Officer in line with Section 21 of the Act.

- **Welcome meetings**: These are held for every child at the start of each school year, at which the school's policies and procedures relating to attendance are explained, with a focus on the value of regular attendance and on building good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

- **School Calendar:** The school calendar for the coming year is published annually and made available on the website, to help parents/guardians plan family events around school closures and minimise non-attendance related to family holidays during term.
- **Uniforms**: Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform, but not having it should never deter a pupil from coming to school.
- **Snack/Lunch:** Parents/guardians are informed where a child does not have a snack; Ashdale provide hot lunches for every child. The school is mindful of equality of access in all aspects of school life.
- **Breakfast:** Breakfast is available for children who arrive without it, so nobody starts the day hungry or has a reason to stay away.
- **Soft starts:** A calm, flexible start to the day, so children who find the morning rush hard can settle in gently and ease into the routine of the day.
- **Colouring club:** A relaxed, low-pressure activity to come in to in the morning, giving children something to look forward to and a way to settle in with friends.
- **Ozzy greetings:** Ozzy, our school therapy dog, welcomes children in the morning. For many children, especially those who feel anxious about school, a friendly greeting from Ozzy is a lovely reason to come in.
- **Nurture:** Nurture supports are available for children who need a bit of extra care, a trusted adult or a quiet space to help them feel safe, settled and ready to learn.
- **Morning meetings:** Class teachers start the day with a morning meeting, giving every child a chance to connect with their teacher and classmates, share how they're doing and feel part of the class from the first minutes of the day.
- **Collection supports from the door:** Where a child finds it hard to separate from a parent or guardian, a member of staff will meet them at the door and walk them in. This helps make drop-off smoother and builds the child's confidence over time.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day.' Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent for more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases, the Education Welfare Officer — following all reasonable efforts to consult with the child's parents and the Principal — may serve a School Attendance Notice on a parent who is found to be failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend school. A successful case taken against a parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Carrigtwohill CNS follows a graded, supportive approach as attendance concerns develop, summarised below:

Attendance Checklist

This checklist summarises, at a glance, the graded response set out in 'Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance' above:

Absence reached	Action taken
Out 3 days in a row	Class teacher/office rings home on day 3 to check in and offer support, if absence is unexplained.
Out 15 days (cumulative)	Class teacher informs Deputy Principal, who makes contact with parents offering support and informing them of next steps if a child reaches 20 days of absence.
Out 20 days (cumulative)	Included in the school's next Student Absence Report (SAR) to Tusla — a statutory requirement under Section 21.
• Once a concern about attendance has been established by the school, parents will be invited to meet with the deputy principal and an attendance support plan will be agreed between the school, parents, and, where appropriate, the pupil, with a date set for review.	

Reasons for absence are recorded on Aladdin. Reports are submitted via the Tusla Portal in line with current Tusla procedures. An Annual Report is submitted, not more than six weeks following the end of the school year, detailing the overall level of attendance at the school; this information is communicated to the school community through the school newsletter.

Supporting Reluctant School Attendance

Carrigtwohill CNS recognises that some children experience genuine reluctance or anxiety about attending school, and that this is best addressed through early, calm, and collaborative intervention between home and school, in line with Department of Education/NEPS guidance.

Early Signs

Parents and staff are encouraged to be alert to early signs such as a child frequently complaining about going to school, being very upset on school mornings, struggling to attend after weekends or holidays, being reluctant to separate at the school gate, or frequently complaining of illness that resolves once they are allowed to stay home.

The School's Approach

- Where reluctance is identified, the school will nominate a key contact — usually the class teacher or SET in the first instance, or the Deputy Principal for more established difficulties — for the family.
- The key contact will meet with parents to gather information and understand any barriers to attendance, and will engage sensitively with the pupil to hear their views.

- A support plan will be agreed between the school, parents, and, where appropriate, the pupil, with a date set for review.
- Where difficulties persist despite school-level support, the school may involve the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) psychologist or the Education Welfare Officer, and may signpost families to services such as Primary Care Psychology or CAMHS.

Full guidance for parents is available in the Department of Education/NEPS publication Supporting your Child when they are Reluctant to Attend School: Guidance for Parents and Guardians of Primary School Children, which the school will share with relevant families and make available on request.

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.

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 relating to attendance at the pupil's former school, and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as considered appropriate. This applies to pupils transferring between primary schools and to pupils transferring from primary to second-level education.

Communication

The school maintains a good working relationship with the local Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)/Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), with ongoing communication in relation to pupils who are at risk. The school also maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools, to make transitions for pupils as smooth as possible.

Communication with Other Schools

- When a pupil transfers from this school 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 pupil transfers into this school, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the pupil's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from this school to a post-primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school circulates the link to the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) information booklet Don't Let Your Child Miss Out and our Carrigtwohill CNS Parent Explainer on attendance to all parents/guardians. The school also informs parents/guardians of the implications of non-attendance under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, disseminated through regular school circulars and information leaflets. Parents/guardians of new pupils are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school via Aladdin if their child cannot attend for any reason.

- Working with the school and, where relevant, Tusla Education Support Service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand that parents/guardians support good school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school in advance.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and homework.
- Encouraging participation in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements, and fostering a positive sense of self-worth.
- Ensuring, insofar as possible, that children's appointments (dentist, doctor, etc.) are arranged for times outside school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately if they have concerns about attendance or other related school matters.
- Notifying the school in writing (via email to class teacher) if a child, particularly in junior classes, is to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Participation

Tusla's own framing for TESS explicitly includes attendance, participation, and retention. Carrigtwohill CNS's participation expectations include:

- Engagement supports, including links via TESS to Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) and School Completion Programme (SCP) services where applicable.
- Responding sensitively and promptly to school refusal or avoidance (see Supporting Reluctant School Attendance above).
- Addressing inclusion and access barriers, including those related to special educational needs/disability, disadvantage, trauma, or accommodation issues.
- Early-intervention pathways, so that barriers to participation are identified and addressed before they affect attendance.

Data Protection

Attendance records are personal data and are handled in accordance with the ETB's Data Protection Policy and GDPR obligations. Further information is available in the Data Protection Commission's Schools Toolkit and/or the ETB's Data Protection Policy.

Evaluation

The success of this policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels, as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns.
- Happy, confident, well-adjusted pupils.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher vigilance and early identification of pupils at risk.

Implementation, Ratification and Review

The Board of Management of Carrigtwohill Community National School reviewed this Attendance and Participation Policy at its meeting of 10/11/2026.

The policy was updated to:

- Reflect current statutory obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Align with current Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) terminology and procedures.
- Incorporate a clear focus on pupil participation and engagement.
- Ensure compliance with Department of Education circulars and the relevant legislation.
- Clarify attendance recording procedures in line with the school's 8:40am start time.
- Incorporate guidance on supporting pupils who are reluctant to attend school.

The Board approved the updated policy and confirmed that it will be implemented from 10/11/2026 and communicated to parents/guardians via the school website. It will be reviewed every 3 years.

Signed: ___Liam Ahern__ Date: _____10/11/26_____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: _____Joanne Dillon_____ Date: _10/11/26_____
(Principal)

References

- Don't Let Your Child Miss Out — Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), Educational Welfare Service (EWS), Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), 2004.
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Revised).
- Education Act 1998.
- Rules for National Schools (1965) — Rule 55.
- Tusla TESS/EWS "Reporting Absenteeism" guidance.
- Supporting your Child when they are Reluctant to Attend School: Guidance for Parents and Guardians of Primary School Children — Department of Education/NEPS.
- gov.ie School Attendance information (national messaging/campaign context).
- Circular 0028/2013; Circular 0033/2015.

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