



## Errigal College Letterkenny

### Attendance Policy

*May 2025*

Proposer:	Tomas Sean Devine
Seconder:	Paul McLaughlin
Chairperson of the Board of Management:	Donal Coyle
Principal:	Danny Mc Fadden
Date of Approval:	21/5/2025

## 1. Mission Statement

### Our Mission Statement:

*To enable each student to achieve their educational potential, in partnership with parents, based on the principles of caring, dignity, mutual respect and equality.*

We are an ETB school, state, co-educational and multi-denominational, underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



## 2. Introduction

Errigal College is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the patronage of Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). The school offers a broad and inclusive curriculum designed to meet the diverse needs of its student population. Programmes include Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and a range of QQI-accredited courses. A strong emphasis is placed on both academic achievement and personal development, providing students with the skills and knowledge necessary for further education, employment, and active participation in society.

The school fosters a supportive and respectful learning environment, encouraging high standards of behaviour, responsibility, and engagement. Staff are committed to delivering quality teaching and learning across a range of subjects, while also promoting student wellbeing and positive relationships within the school community. Facilities are modern and well-equipped, supporting both academic and practical learning experiences.

Regular attendance is considered essential to student success at Errigal College. Consistent participation in school life contributes not only to academic progress but also to the development of social skills, discipline, and a strong work ethic. The school recognises that attendance is a key factor in achieving long-term goals and encourages students and families to prioritise it as a vital component of the educational journey.

### 3. Aims of Attendance Policy

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To set out the expectations for attendance and punctuality in Errigal College.
- To clarify the roles which parents, teachers, year heads, management and the students themselves have in the area of attendance.
- To clarify procedures for recording attendance.
- To increase awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality in school.
- To liaise closely with the Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL) School Completion Programme (SCP), Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and TESS.
- To support students and parents where there are attendance challenges.
- To allow for self-evaluation and review of attendance procedures at regular intervals.

### 4. Legislation

The legislation governing school attendance in Ireland is the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Under the Act the minimum school leaving age is 16 years, or the completion of three full years of post-primary education, whichever is later. Parents are required to ensure that their children from the age of 6 to 16 attend a recognised school or receive a certain minimum education.

#### **The Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency - Tusla**

This the national agency established to ensure that every child attends school regularly, or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education. It also advises the Government on school attendance and education provision. The agency's emphasis is on helping schools, families, and children, rather than imposing penalties for nonattendance at school. It employs educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country to provide support and advice to parents and schools and to follow up in absences from school. They also help to co-ordinate all policies concerning attendance and educational welfare and provide assistance in helping schools coordinate school attendance policies. Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must

prepare and submit to Tusla a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance. Section 22(1) of the Act states that:

*"The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students."*

## 5. Strategies to Encourage Attendance

- The identification and intervention of students who are at risk of disengaging from education and leaving early.
- Various incentives to be implemented throughout the year that reward positive attendance.
- Posts on social media and on school noticeboards to increase the awareness of the importance of good attendance and attendance drives being run in the school.
- The promotion of sports and extra-curricular activities to encourage greater participation in school life.
- Reward students who have full attendance and improved attendance records throughout the year and at the end of year prize-giving ceremonies.
- "Drop Everything and Teach" whole school activities to increase the awareness of our school's attendance procedure.

## 6. Attendance Procedure

Our school has a range of procedures and processes to support good attendance and punctuality.

### Attendance Monitoring:

- The 1st class each day is designated as “Bell Time”. This is the point in the day that is used to report student attendance on the VSware system.
- A roll call is taken by subject teachers in each class.
- VSware sends an automated text message each day to the parents/guardians of students who are absent from school.
- Students away from school on outings/activities authorised by the Principal will be recorded as such and not marked absent.
- Parents/guardians are expected to upload a reason for each absence on the iClass app or supply a note in the school journal.
- All absences are monitored and collated on the VSware system.
- An attendance support procedure is in place to support students and families with ongoing poor attendance.
- The school liaises with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) in cases where a student has missed a significant number of school days (20+).

### Late Arrivals:

- Year heads are on duty at the student entrance from 9:05 to 9:20.
- Any student who arrives during that time period is recorded as late by a Year Head.
- A student who arrives to school after 9:20 must sign in at the main office with the attendance tracker.
- Parents can upload reasons for lateness on the iClass app or supply a note in the student journal.
- A student who has 3 unexplained lates is issued with an evening detention.

### Leaving School Early:

- If a student is leaving school early for an appointment/other reason, an iClass note or a written explanation must be presented to the school and verified by the Year Head.

- Students who are leaving school early must present to the reception to sign out at the stated time.
- Students who are returning to school after leaving for an appointment must sign in upon their return to the school.

#### **Students not Attending School:**

Errigal College understands that in some cases, a student may be unable to attend school for specific reasons. In these situations, the school liaises closely with the student and their family in trying to determine what support we can best provide. The school may look at the following as possible supports:

- Home School Liaison Coordinator
- School Completion Programme
- Education Welfare Officer
- Educational Psychologist

The school in conjunction with the above statutory supports may refer students to alternative education provision such as:

- Youthreach
- Online learning/iScoil
- Homeschooling/Home Tuition
- Reduced timetable

## 7. Role of Attendance Team

- Attendance team meets once every 2 weeks.
- Attendance team consists of the school principal, deputy principal, School Completion Team, attendance tracker, Home School Community Liaison Coordinator and attendance coordinator.
- The year head of the relevant year group being discussed at a meeting will also attend.
- To monitor and update attendance policies and to offer incentives to help improve attendance in the school.
- To identify and discuss students with poor attendance and to take the relevant steps to address this issue.
- To liaise with form teachers, year heads and parents on student attendance.

## 8. Attendance Support Procedure

An attendance support procedure is in place with various steps to intervene in cases of students with ongoing poor attendance. The steps are as follows:

- All student absences are monitored by the school.
- 10 days absent: An attendance letter is issued. A member of the attendance team/class tutor will follow up in-school with the student.
- The HSCL may follow up with a phone call/home visit.
- After 20 days absent: 20 day attendance letter from school is issued. Following this, students and parents/guardians are invited to an attendance clinic with the school principal, the HSCL, School Completion Programme and/or the EWO.
- A referral will be made to TESS for further action by the EWO.
- All of the actions taken for each student are recorded on the Attendance monitoring Excel Sheet.

## 9. Role of Parents/Guardians

1. The Education (Welfare Act) 2000 legally obliged Parents/Guardians to:
  - *Ensure that their children attend school and all timetabled classes.*
  - *To submit a written explanation to the Principal/Vice-Principal via the office if a student arrives late or wishes to leave early.*
  - *To notify the school of the reasons for all absences. (This can be written in the space provided in the Student Diary).*
2. If a student is absent because of a medical problem, medical certificates from the Doctor/Hospital should be submitted on the iClass app or a hard copy provided.
3. A detailed explanation of any absence must be provided on the iClass app.
4. Taking students out of school for holidays has the potential to damage their education and should be avoided where possible.

## 10. Role of the School

The key roles of our school includes:

- To set up the required structures and procedures required under the policy.
- Encouraging students to attend school regularly and to explain the importance of full attendance.
- Maintaining a register of all pupils and their attendance regardless of age.
- Recording attendance in each class
- Recording and filing explanations for absences and providing an App to do the same.
- Informing parents/guardians of opening/closing times, break-times, holidays, staff days etc.
- Complying with current and evolving legal requirements
- Promoting communication and partnership in practice, through the work of the Student Support Team and the HSCL Coordinator.
- Providing a positive school environment that promotes good attendance.
- Identifying the causes of absenteeism/early school leaving and developing measures for improvement.

## 11.Related Policies

Our school has a range of policies and guides that complement and support student attendance and ensure that barriers to regular attendance are removed so that access to the school curriculum and the student experience is available for every student. Such documents include:

- Code of Positive Behaviour
- Student Support Team guidelines
- Admissions Policy
- Transfer/Induction programme
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEN Policy
- Wellbeing Policy

## 12.Monitoring and Review

The school will review this policy on a regular basis in order to keep up to date with changing information, legislation and feedback from relevant stakeholders.

## 13. Appendix

### Attendance Letter Template

Date:

Parents/Guardians of {Student Name}

AddressLine1

AddressLine2

AddressLine3

AddressLine4

County

Re: FullName

No of Absences:

No of Lates:

Dear (insert name),

{Student Name} has been absent from school for (insert number) days. Under the Education Welfare Act 2000 section 18 and 21(students under the age of 16), it is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that students attend school. Students under the age of 16 who are absent for over 20 days, are automatically reported to the Educational Welfare Officer.

If this pattern continues, it will be necessary to meet with you to discuss the matter further. I must point out that there are no exceptions made by the Department where absences are due to, for example, holidays, minor illnesses or dental appointments. These days are included in the total absences for the year. If you wish to discuss the details of this letter, you may contact the school.

Thank you for your support and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

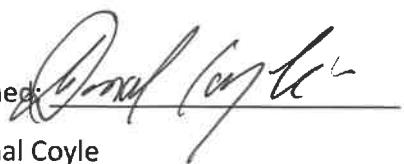
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Danny Mc Fadden

Principal

CC Lynn Bovaird, Tusla

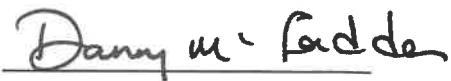
Signed:



Donal Coyle

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Signed:



Danny McFadden

(Principal)

