

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

The students, parents and staff of Danu Community Special School recognise the importance of school attendance. As a school community we endeavour to develop a supportive, positive, and welcoming school environment where the needs of every individual child are met. Our holistic approach to the development of our students as individuals underpins all our actions. To this end, Danu CSS aims to be a safe, caring and stimulating place of education for all students.

The school expects that in so far as is possible, all students will fully attend school in accordance with the Attendance Act. Taking into consideration Section 21(9) of the Education and Welfare Act 2000, only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal. Therefore, the school cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time. Danu CSS discourages parents from taking students on holidays while the school is in session. If a parent decides to do so, they are required to provide a written correspondence to the school (via email to school@danucss.ie) stating their intentions and that they are aware of the implications this decision will have for their child's education.

Children who are unwell are not expected to attend school. Parents/ guardians are required to update Aladdin explaining the absence to their child's class teacher. In exceptional circumstances a doctor's note may be required.

The school expects that students will remain in school for the entire school day, unless they have a valid appointment. Parents are requested to inform the school via Aladdin of any planned absence. Any last-minute absence should be communicated to the school via the school office phone, 01 8270755 and Aladdin filled in by Parents/Guardians. Parents/Guardians are discouraged from taking their children out of school for any other reason.

Aims

Attendance is monitored electronically on Aladdin (this is the school's database for recording attendance) each day by the class teachers. The roll call for attendance is taken each morning at 10.00 a.m. Students that are absent at the time of roll call (10am) are marked absent for the day. When a student misses 20 days in an academic year, a letter informing parents that their child has been absent from school for 20 days is sent home by the principal. Students who have been absent from school for 20 days are reported to TUSLA in accordance with the Education and Welfare Act 2000. Parents are contacted if their child has not return to school at the beginning of each term by the school.

The school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Students are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Student attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents/Guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Student attendance and lateness are monitored by the class teacher and the principal and/or deputy principal.
- School attendance statistics are reported regularly as appropriate to:
 - TUSLA
 - The Education Welfare Officer
 - The Board of Management

Punctuality

School is open from 9.00 a.m. each morning. Students are required to be in their classrooms no later than 9.10 a.m. unless specific arrangements are in place. All Students and teachers are expected to be on time. The class teacher monitors those that are late and are required to document lateness on Aladdin. The teacher/principal will contact parents/guardians in the event of Students being consistently late. The principal reports children who are persistently late to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Guidance for Parents

Section [(21) (9)] of the Education and Welfare Act 2000, states that: "a Student's absence

can only be authorised by the principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved". The school principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

Reasons for Students' absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school. To facilitate this, such communications should not be in the homework diary, but via Aladdin. If a child is absent, parents/guardians should inform the class teacher via Aladdin of the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These electronic notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school in writing if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their child understands that parents support and approve of school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's work.
- Encouraging their children 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.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contact the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- Notifying the school in writing if their child/children, are to be collected by someone other than the adult listed on the Emergency Information Form.

Students

- Students are supported to attend school regularly and on time, in line with their individual needs and abilities.
- Students are encouraged, where appropriate, to communicate with staff if they are experiencing difficulties that may affect their attendance.
- Attendance and punctuality are primarily the responsibility of parents/guardians, with the school providing appropriate support to Students.
- Students are supported by staff to develop awareness of attendance routines, in line with their developmental level.

Strategies for Promoting Good School Attendance

The Board of Management (BOM) is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance.

- The school curriculum, insofar as it is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote a safe school environment by promoting our Bí Cineálta and Wellbeing policies.
- The school will endeavour to support all the needs of the students in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of any personal circumstances relevant to the students' educational, behavioural, and sensory needs.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of students will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the principal/deputy principal of any concern regarding the attendance of any child.
- Students with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported to improve their attendance.

Schools' Roles in Relation to Attendance

School Principal/ Deputy Principal

The appropriate personnel will:

- Ensure that the school register of Students (both Aladdin and POD- the Department of Education's Student on-line database) is maintained in accordance with

regulations.

- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a student is not attending school regularly
 - When a student has been absent for 20 or more days during a school year.
 - If a student has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a student's name is removed from the school register
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a student.
- Insofar as is practicable, it promotes the importance of good school attendance among students, parents and staff.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Encourage students to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Maintain the school's online attendance system, Aladdin, in accordance with school policy and procedure.
- Monitor explained and unexplained absences on Aladdin and seek from parents to update Aladdin in the event of unexplained absences.
- Inform the Principal & Deputy Principal of concerns they may have regarding the attendance of any Student.

School Initiatives to Promote Attendance

Some of the initiatives used to promote attendance in Danu CSS are

- Individualised attendance supports
 - Use of visual supports
 - Provide transition supports
- Positive Reinforcement Systems
 - Use reward systems tailored to the Student (stickers, tokens, preferred activities)
- Strong Home–School Communication
 - Daily communication journals or apps (e.g. Seesaw or Aladdin Connect)
 - Early contact with parents when attendance drops (supportive)
 - Share strategies with parents for morning routines and transitions

- Predictable and Supportive School Environment
 - Maintain consistent routines across the school day
 - Use visual schedules and clear structure
 - Provide safe/regulation spaces for Students who may feel overwhelmed
- Sensory and Emotional Regulation Supports
 - Sensory circuits or movement breaks at the start of the day
 - Access to regulation tools (weighted items, quiet spaces, sensory rooms)
 - Staff trained in recognising anxiety-based school avoidance
- Flexible and Gradual Reintegration
 - For Students with significant absence
 - Start with shortened days or partial attendance
 - Gradually build up time in school
 - Use a step-by-step reintegration plan agreed with parents
- Relationship-Based Approaches
 - Key staff member assigned as a trusted adult for each Student
 - Warm, predictable greetings on arrival
 - Focus on making school feel safe and enjoyable
- Engaging Curriculum
 - Incorporate high-interest, motivating activities
 - Balance demands with success experiences
 - Use choice where possible to increase engagement
- Attendance Monitoring and Early Intervention
 - Track patterns (e.g., specific days, subjects, triggers)
 - Intervene early before patterns become entrenched
 - Work collaboratively with external supports if needed (e.g., Tusla Education Support Service)
- Whole-School Culture
 - Promote a positive message: “School is a safe, supportive place”

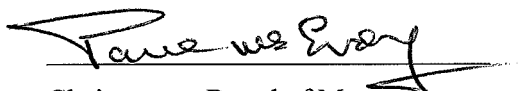
- Avoid punitive approaches; focus on understanding barriers
- Celebrate attendance in a way that is inclusive and not pressurising

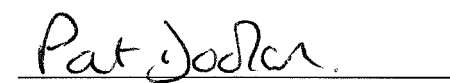
Review and Ratification:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Danu CSS on 17-5-26.

It will be reviewed in three years (May 2029) or sooner if required.

Signed:


Chairperson, Board of Management


Principal, Danu CSS