

# Attendance Policy

## DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.

This Policy was agreed on:

29/4/2025

Signature:

(Chairperson to the Board of Management)

M. Farrell

## **Donabate Community College**

Donabate Community College is a post primary college, which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

### **College Mission**

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instill integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

### **Policy Review and Ratification**

Donabate Community College is committed to ongoing policy review to ensure clarity, relevance, and compliance with current legislation and best practices. Where amendments to a policy are of a minor or administrative nature and do not alter its overall meaning, purpose, or intent, the school may proceed to seek ratification from the Board of Management without further consultation with stakeholders. However, where substantive changes are proposed that impact the policy's intent, scope, or application, appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken before submission to the Board of Management for ratification.

## **School Ethos and Philosophy**

Donabate Community College is a member of Dublin Dun Laoghaire Educational Training Board. All ETB schools are state, co-educational, multid denominational schools underpinned by five core values: Excellence in Education, Care, Equality, Community and Respect. ETB schools are under the patronage of the local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) who are the largest provider of multid denominational education in Ireland. ETB schools give equal opportunities to all students in the communities they serve and strive to provide high-quality education through respectful, positive, supportive and responsive learning environments.



Our Education Philosophy at Donabate Community College is to create a safe learning environment within the community which acknowledges diversity, inclusivity, fosters mutual respect, celebrates achievement, recognises the needs of the individual, challenging all to reach their potential.

## **General Overview**

Donabate Community College is committed to ensuring that all students benefit fully from the education provided by regular and punctual attendance at school. In Donabate Community College punctual attendance at school and class is considered central to learning. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must encourage their students to take responsibility for their own learning and achieve their full potential.

## The Education Welfare Act 2000

The main provisions of the Education Welfare Act are as follows:

- Schools are required to establish and maintain a school register, showing attendance or non-attendance for each student.
- Every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years of education in post primary, whichever comes later.
- The act established a National Educational Welfare Board. The NEWB has appointed Educational Welfare Officers to work with schools to encourage school attendance.
- The act stipulates that the school is obliged to report to the NEWB every time:
  - The Board of Management decides to expel a student
  - A student has been absent for 20 days or more cumulatively
  - A student's attendance causes concern for the school
  - A student's name is removed from the school register for whatever reason
  - A student has been suspended for six days consecutively
- Schools must prepare a student absence report. This information must be submitted twice a year in summary format on those students with serious attendance issues that have been identified during the current academic year i.e. students that have been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more falling within the following categories (<https://www.tusla.ie/tess/tess-ews/reporting-absenteeism>):
  - A. Illness
  - B. Urgent Family Reason
  - D. Suspended
  - E. Other
  - F. Unexplained
  - H. Holiday

The Education Welfare Act 2000 places a statutory responsibility on schools and parent(s)/guardian(s) to provide for the optimum attendance of every student. Under this act, Education Welfare Boards have been established to oversee school attendance nationwide and

each school has been assigned an Educational Welfare Officer whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge.

### **A Positive Approach to Attendance**

Good attendance in Donabate Community College is fostered by encouraging each student to take responsibility for his/her own learning and to achieve full potential through regular attendance and presence in class.

Throughout the academic year, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance and continual lateness.

### **Procedures for Managing Attendance**

The attendance system used in Donabate Community College is the VShare School Management Information System, in conjunction with the VShare Request and Absence system.

- Students arriving late and leaving early are monitored by the school office.
- Students leaving early must have completed the online form by a parent(s)/guardian(s). The school office will verify this and permit the student to leave.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will submit absences/late notes electronically through VShare. Each morning at 9:30am all notes submitted will be approved by administration staff. This in turn updates the roll on VShare automatically. This includes absence requests for future dates.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) of each student with an unexplained absence from the 8:30am class will receive a text to state that their child has not presented to school on that date.
- Class teachers take the roll at the beginning of each class using the VShare attendance system.

- Should a student be marked present in the previous class and is not in class, and no note has been placed on VSware explaining the absence from class and where there is a genuine concern, the main office should be alerted. If the student cannot be located a phone call/text where appropriate is placed to their parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform them that their son/daughter is not on the premises.
- It should be noted that same day absence requests cannot be processed if they are not sent before 11.00am on any given day. They will read as an error on a parent/guardian's dashboard. A same day note may be processed later once the unexplained absence text has been issued from the office to parents.
- Spot checks are carried out on different occasions to check the validity of the system by the Attendance Coordinator/SMT.
- Each School Report to Tusla into the future will be automatically generated from the roll on VSware.
- Only students sitting in front of the teacher are marked present. It is the responsibility of the AEN/ECA and Substitute teachers to mark the roll of the students in their care. The guiding principle: If a student is physically present, they are marked present on your roll.

### **Consequences for Unauthorised Non-Attendance**

The sanction for a student who is absent without permission from school is a meeting with the Guidance Department and/or Year Head for a restorative approach. The Principal retains the right to impose a suspension where such a sanction is deemed necessary. The duration is commensurate with the time absent without permission and may result in a report being sent to the local Education Welfare Officer.

### **Procedures for Students Who Feel Unwell During School Time**

- A student who feels unwell during class must report to the school office, having first sought permission from his/her class teacher, or if illness occurs during lunch break their

Year Head. If the student is unable to return to class, the Secretary will telephone their parent(s)/guardian(s) and make arrangements to have the student collected. Students who feel unwell may only leave the school in the company of his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) or a nominee of their parent(s)/guardian(s).

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must provide the school with emergency contact numbers and ensure that there is always someone available for the school to contact, should it be necessary.
- Should the student need to leave the school, they must present themselves at the school office and print their name in the early departures book.

**Note: In the case of a medical emergency, if the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) cannot be reached, the school will call an ambulance. A member of staff will accompany the ill student in the ambulance.**

### **Lunchtime Arrangements**

All students are required to remain in school at lunchtime and have their lunch in the area designated for them by the school. Failure to follow these requirements may result in a sanction in line with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The entire school community in Donabate Community College plays a vital role in the successful implementation of the attendance policy. The roles and responsibilities of each individual is set out below.

#### **Students:**

- To punctually attend all classes.

- All students must attend scheduled classes every day and on time unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- If leaving school, students must have a note submitted electronically through VShare by parent(s)/guardian(s). Students must sign out using the attendance book at the school office, giving the time of departure and the reason for leaving.
- In cases of absence students must catch up on the work missed at the earliest opportunity.

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s):**

- The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parent(s)/guardian(s) as per The Education Welfare Act 2000.
- Will share responsibility and support the school procedures on Attendance.
- Will make whatever arrangements necessary to ensure that their son(s)/daughter(s) attend school punctually each day during the school year.
- Will notify the school of reasons for absence when a student is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day. This should be done electronically through the VShare Request and Absence System. Parent(s) and guardian(s) will submit absences/to leave at/late notes electronically through VShare.
- <https://support.vshare.ie/en/a-parent-sending-an-absence-request>
- Have the responsibility of monitoring their son/daughter's attendance and ensure that any unexplained absences are accounted for (through VShare), in the understanding that absences of 20 days will be notified by the school to Tusla.
- Should not withdraw students from school during the academic year, unless for extraordinary reasons. Where possible, parent(s)/guardian(s) should ensure that medical, dental or other appointments and family holidays take place outside school hours/the academic year.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should monitor attendance at school by regularly checking VShare

for late attendance and absence. They will be able to see notes on the attendance roll, unrecorded class rolls, present roll calls and unexplained absence from class.

- Highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensure that students' part-time work doesn't affect his/her progress.
- Ensure all home contact details are up to date.
- Contact the school if they are concerned that their son/daughter may be reluctant to attend.
- Ensure that their son/daughter does not arrive in school sleep deficient.
- Avoid collecting their son/daughter from school during school hours, unless pre-arranged as this causes significant disruption to teaching and learning.
- Be aware that students who are late for school miss out on valuable teaching and learning.

**Class teacher:**

- To monitor and record the attendance of all students through the VShare system at the beginning of every lesson.
- To communicate any discrepancies to the Year Head and/or Main Office/SMT as appropriate.

**Tutor:**

- In Donabate Community College the caring atmosphere nurtured by the tutor aims to encourage full attendance and participation in all areas of school life.
- The tutor is supported in their pastoral role by the Year Head and should report to the Year Head if they have concerns about a student's welfare.

**Year Head:**

- To be responsible for monitoring their year group for patterns of concern regarding a student's attendance and report these to the Student Support Team.

- Will liaise with parent(s)/guardian(s) where a pattern of absence from school emerges. In some instances, the Year Head may feel that referral to a member of the Student Support Team is an appropriate strategy for improving attendance.
- Communicate with the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) when issues arise. The school is sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of its students and is aware that some students need encouragement to attend school regularly. The Year Head plays a role in supporting students overcome difficulties relating to attendance. This can be done by liaising with relevant staff, working closely with parent(s)/guardian(s), initiating a referral to the Student Support Team and regularly reviewing strategies that have been put in place.

**School Office:**

- To accept authorised 'to leave at' notes from students. They will also maintain an early departures book.
- To assist students who are ill in ringing home.
- To maintain the VSware system of attendance as required.
- To provide data as required by Tusla.
- To provide data on attendance to parent(s)/guardian(s) when required by the school authorities.

**Attendance Officer:**

- To assist in the implementation of the school's Attendance Policy/Strategy/ Procedures.
- To monitor student attendance and work with school management to introduce measures to address any issues that may arise in relation to attendance.
- Liaise with front office personnel for the monitoring of student absences and early school leaving.
- Will run reports (once a month) on each Year Group to monitor all absences.

- Will notify Year Heads of those students who have been absent for 10-20 days all absence codes and seek clarification as to any relevant reasons for these absences.
- Will notify parents/guardians using the 10 days absence notification.
- Meet with Year Heads/Programme Coordinator/Student Support Team regarding students.
- Will in conjunction with the Principal report to Tusla (Child and Family Agency) absences of 20 days.
- Liaise with staff on the use of VShare for student attendance.
- Update staff where appropriate and report to staff meetings when required.
- When requested, will provide data on attendance to the Principal/Deputy Principal and Year Heads.

**Principal/Deputy Principals:**

- To be responsible for the implementation of the Attendance Policy and Procedures.
- The Principal will sign off on the names of those students who have 20 unexplained absences and are being reported to Tusla by the Attendance Coordinator.
- To notify the Education Welfare Officer in circumstances as outlined above.
- To review the attendance policy/strategy/procedures on a regular basis.

In implementing the procedures as outlined above the Board of Management endeavor to ensure that all students partake in and benefit from the education provided by regular and punctual attendance at school and class.

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are reminded that unauthorised absence from the school premises or from classes by students is a serious breach of Health & Safety Guidelines, Child Protection Guidelines and the School's Code of Positive Behaviour.
- The school authorities cannot accept responsibility for students who absent themselves from school or from a class for any purpose without prior permission.

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are responsible for students when they sign out during the school day.
- The Principal / Deputy Principal reserves the right to exercise discretion in the implementation of the sanctions in exceptional circumstances.

### **Strategies to Promote Student Participation:**

The school recognises that good attendance is achieved when students feel happy, secure and part of the school community. It is through encouraging the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life that Donabate Community College hopes to maximise attendance patterns. We aim to do this in the following ways:

- **Curriculum**

Donabate Community College offers a wide range of subjects at both Junior and Senior cycle. A comprehensive Transition Year programme is also offered. In addition, students are supported by the school Guidance Department. Where appropriate students are supported by the Learning Support anchor attached to their particular Year Group.

- **Methodologies**

In teaching the curriculum DCC teachers use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. The school management provides and supports the professional development of teachers by facilitating their attendance at in-service sessions and by offering staff training days.

- **Extra-Curricular**

The school's programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities caters for a wide range of interests in order to maximize student participation. Activities range from sport, music, tours, language exchanges, charity awareness/events, and field trips.

- **Pastoral Care:**

The school's pastoral care allows for all students to participate in the life of the school in a way that promotes their personal and holistic development and educational enlightenment.

- **Class Tutor /Year Head:**

The positive atmosphere nurtured by the class tutor also encourages full participation in school life. The tutor, supported by the Year Head, plays a role in instilling a good class spirit to promote friendship and learning. This structure also provides a medium through which parent(s)/guardian(s) can contact and meet with teachers.

The Year Team is also responsible for ensuring that standards of attendance are a priority within the Year Group. This can be done through Year team meetings, assemblies, certificates, end of year prize giving, etc.

- **Care Meetings:**

Care meetings are put in place to support any student who is experiencing difficulty which may impact on their school life. Students identified are supported by the Guidance Department and Student Support Team who inform staff of the names of these students.

- **Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' Participation:**

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)' participation is encouraged through various opening evenings and meetings (e.g., parent/teacher meetings, Parent's Association meetings, etc) which are held throughout the school year.

## **Supporting Positive Student Attendance**

Donabate Community College present Attendance Rewards in the annual Awards ceremony.

Donabate Community College are mindful of the fact that some achieving in this space may have difficulty with the public recognition of their achievement.

## **Donabate Community College Attendance Rewards**

**Objective:** To encourage and recognise attendance across the school community while being sensitive to the challenges students face.

### **Key Principles**

- **Inclusivity:** Ensure all students feel their efforts are recognised, regardless of the rate of attendance achieved.
- **Motivation:** Foster a positive attitude towards school attendance without being punitive to students facing genuine challenges.
- **Transparency:** Clearly communicate the criteria for awards to students, staff, and parents.
- **Support:** Reinforce procedures through pastoral care and attendance interventions for students needing additional help.

### **Rewards**

#### **Excellent Attendance Award**

**Criteria:** Attendance of 95% or higher in a term.

#### **Rewards:**

- Certificate of Excellence.
- Prizes could include eg. book token, stationery set.

#### **Achievement Award**

**Criteria:** A significant improvement in attendance compared to the previous term (e.g., an increase of 10% or more).

#### **Rewards:**

- Certificate of Achievement.
- Prizes could include e.g. book token, stationery set.

### **Staff Nominee Award**

**Rationale:** Students who demonstrate a willingness to attend, but who may be unable to achieve 10% improvement.

**Criteria:** Nominated by teachers based on demonstrated effort, such as:

- Communicating reasons for absences responsibly.
- Attending school regularly despite personal challenges.
- Making an effort to catch up on missed work.

### **Rewards**

- Certificate of Resilience.
- Prizes could include eg book token, stationery set.

### **Implementation Steps**

#### **A. Communication**

1. **Launch:** Introduce the procedures to students and staff, with the assistance of year heads, explaining the objectives and reward categories.
2. **Parent Notification:** Send a communication to parents outlining the scheme, emphasising the value placed on both attendance and effort.
3. **Visual Displays:** Attendance figures to be displayed annually on our website.

#### **B. Data Tracking**

Use VSware to monitor:

- School attendance rates.
- Improving attendance rates.
- Digital record of those rewarded.

#### **C. Support Structures**

Support targeted interventions for students struggling with attendance.

#### D. Recognition Events

- Annual Prize Giving ceremony.
- Pastoral recognition from staff.

#### Evaluation and Feedback

- Conduct regular reviews of the procedure's impact on attendance rates.
- Seek feedback from stakeholders, in an effort to refine the program.
- Adjust criteria or rewards as needed to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness.
- Senior Management Team and Attendance post holder to review the schedule annually.