



## Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School

### Attendance Policy

An Educate Together second-level school will be guided by the four core principles as laid down in the Educate Together Charter (1990):

- 1) They will be **equality based** in character, ensuring that children and young people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have equal access to and rights within the school;
- 2) They will be **co-educational**, thereby encouraging children and young people to learn and live together;
- 3) They will be **child-centred**, respecting individual students' abilities to learn in unique ways;
- 4) Finally, Educate Together schools will be run on a **democratic** basis, encouraging active participation by parents and students in the daily life of the school whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.

#### Mission

*Blackrock ETSS is a student-centred, democratic school community that celebrates difference and creativity in a dynamic and vibrant learning environment defined by equality, integrity, and respect.*

#### Vision

Educate Together is working towards an Ireland in which all people have access to an excellent education that is inclusive of all, irrespective of belief system, race, ethnicity, class, culture, gender, language, lifestyle and ability.

## Values & Commitments

Educate Together is committed to:

- Placing the child and young person at the centre of the educational process;
- Respecting and celebrating the different and unique identities of all;
- An educational philosophy that promotes the values of justice, equality and human rights for all children and young people, and challenges injustice and unfair discrimination;
- Providing children and young people with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that they need, enabling them to make informed moral decisions and preparing them to become caring members of society;
- Empowering children and young people to take an active role in society and in the stewardship of the environment;
- Working in a democratic way that embraces the input from children, parents, teachers and supporters to enable the highest level of partnership and participation;
- Working together and with other educational partners in a consultative and collaborative way;
- Building school communities which engage with, and work meaningfully with, the local community;
- Ensuring that this type of education is provided by the State and available to all families who wish to access it.

These commitments are reflected in the following mottoes: “Learn Together to Live Together” “No Child an Outsider”

Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School seeks to educate the whole person as a responsible member of society, confident of personal worth. Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School implements policies and practices which further the development of self-discipline and enable students to take progressive responsibility for their own lives and actions. It is within this framework that the Attendance Policy is enacted by the stakeholders.



## Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools: Key Areas

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Curriculum, Teaching &amp; Learning</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide a curriculum and learning environment that equips students for the challenging world of the 21st century. The school will ensure that students are supported to take responsibility for their own learning, their physical, personal and social wellbeing, their relationships with others and their role in their local, national and global communities.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>By integrating 21st century teaching and learning strategies comprehensively and purposefully into the curriculum, and by assessing not only what students learn but how they learn, schools will nurture critical thinkers, problem solvers, effective communicators, creators and innovators.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Ethical Curriculum</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school will provide an ethical curriculum that focuses on the ethical, moral and social development of young people. It will provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that young people need to enable them to make informed moral decisions and prepare them for life in a pluralist society which embraces diversity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>The ethical curriculum will be part of the daily life of the school, part of every subject, visible in curriculum resources and woven into the very fabric of all school processes, policies and practices.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leadership, Management &amp; Structure</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>In an Educate Together second-level school the inclusive and democratic principle will extend to the various sets of relationships in the school. Schools will promote collective responsibility for the development of a shared vision and purpose. Underlying every decision taken in the school will be the need to provide the best learning environment, where all students can achieve and become enthusiastic, independent lifelong learners.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>The fullest participation by parents, students and teachers in decision-making processes will be developed. The management of the school will reflect the belief that leaders come from many places in an organisation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Built Environment</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>An Educate Together second-level school community will consider how the built environment influences students' academic performance and well-being in school. The learning environment will express the Educate Together ethos and the physical setting will enhance and support the way students learn, teachers teach and the wider school community interacts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">▼</p> <p>The Educate Together ethos and principles in school building design will address such issues as efficiency and sustainability, functionality and flexibility, building in context, accessibility, democratised spaces and aesthetic quality.</p>

## Attendance Strategy

### Rationale

- Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, schools are obliged to prepare and submit to TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students.
- Under the Act every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post-primary school, whichever comes later.
- In September 2023, Tusla Education Support Service (TESS), in partnership with Department of Education and Youth (DEY), launched a nationwide campaign to encourage regular school attendance in primary, post-primary and special schools.
- It is envisaged that by 2028, Blackrock ETSS will be using the ANSEO framework to plan and implement responses depending on the severity / scale of absenteeism: universal (whole-school), targeted (groups / classes), and individual interventions.
- Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School encourages, in a positive way, regular school attendance and participation in school life as consistency in these leads to:
  - continuity of knowledge to enhance results and attainments
  - better career opportunities
  - better understanding of material being taught in class
  - increased confidence and self-esteem.

### Aims

- To ensure that students attend regularly, are punctual and the school has a standardized response to non-attendance.
- To reduce absenteeism and to motivate students to take an active part in their education.
- To develop suitable intervention strategies to improve school attendance and punctuality.
- To develop in students an awareness of the importance of attending school and participating in school life as an important life skill.
- To achieve early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance.
- To create a culture of high expectation about attendance.
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and achievement through regular attendance in class.
- To make every reasonable effort to resolve the issue of persistent absenteeism through consultation with Parent(s)/Guardian(s), school staff and TUSLA.

## Procedures for Monitoring Attendance

A register of all students who have been enrolled in the school will be maintained on the VSware system.

### **Lesson Roll Call**

- The tutorial period each day is the designated roll call class in the morning session, and P5 is the designated roll call class for the afternoon session. Attendance or absence at these lessons is recorded in the student's official records using VsWare.
- Subject teachers also take attendance using the VsWare system at the start of each lesson and immediately inform the main office and the Senior Leadership Team if there are concerns around if they notice an unsanctioned absence from class.
- The Year Head follows up on students who are absent or late on a frequent basis.
- Parents/Guardians are informed of daily absence through the school app. If, on receipt of the message, a Parent/Guardian is unaware of their child's absence, they should contact the school immediately.

### **Monitoring absence from school**

- Tutors, Year Heads and the Deputy Principal monitor students' attendance at school through the attendance management system, VsWare, and the school app.
- When a student is absent, the parent/guardian received a report outlining the number of days the student has been absent so far that year. The Year Head will follow up with families should a student be missing several consecutive days with no explanation provided.
- When a student reaches 10 days absences (explained or otherwise), the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be contacted by the school and made aware of the concerns.
- When a student reaches 15 days absence, the family will receive a formal communication from the school outlining the school's concern regarding absences and invite the family to a meeting to discuss strategies to improve attendance.
- Continued poor attendance will be monitored and, in a situation where student(s) reach 20 days, the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will be contacted and advised contact will be made with TUSLA as per statutory obligations.
- Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve the issue of persistent absenteeism through consultation with Parent(s)/Guardian(s), school staff and TUSLA.
- Allowances will be made for children with serious illness and other such reasons at the discretion of the school.
- Year Heads or the Deputy Principal will contact Parents/Guardians if they have a concern regarding a student's absence from school.
- A student who was reported to TUSLA in the previous academic year shall be highlighted to the Year Head by the Deputy Principal for monitoring.
- If a student misses too much school, an Educational Welfare Officer from TUSLA will work with the school and the Parent/Guardian(s) to help support the student in attending school.

### **Students leaving school for appointments**

- Parents/Guardians and students are requested, where possible, not to make appointments (medical, dental, other) during school hours.
- Where this is not possible, the school has a set of procedures in place for students who, with their parent's permission, sign out early from school.
- The school app and the VsWare attendance system are used to facilitate these procedures.

- These procedures are shared with parents and students at the start of the year, and through the Parent Handbook.
- It is essential that parents communicate with the school in advance of a student leaving the school premises.
- Students are not permitted to leave the school premises until parental consent has been approved and confirmed by the school.
- It is essential that parents support this procedure as it ensures the safety and wellbeing of students.

## Strategies to encourage good attendance

The following strategies are employed to encourage good attendance:

- Acknowledging exceptional attendance as part of the School Awards System, while acknowledging the individual context of each student.
- Nurturing a welcoming, caring environment for all.
- Providing a wide range of extra- curricular and co-curricular activities to support participation.
- Dealing with all cases of regular non-attendance in a fair and sensitive manner.
- Students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance.
- Implementing a Wellbeing Programme involving daily contact with Tutors and regular contact with Year Heads.
- Providing relevant Information Evenings during which the importance of school attendance is discussed.
- Liaising with local primary schools to identify potential attendance problems and to receive information and advice which might help to develop strategies to improve attendance for students transferring to Blackrock Educate Together Secondary School
- Implementing timely monitoring and reporting systems to identify students who are likely to have school attendance problems and offer additional support via teachers, Student Support Teams and TUSLA.
- Organising meetings between the school and students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.
- Advising Parents/Guardians of the requirements of schools and parents under the Education Welfare Act on enrolling their child and clearly outlining these in the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Issuing a daily app report for absenteeism for each student.
- Issuing a breakdown of attendance, for the period in question, in end of term reports to Parents/Guardians.
- Issuing notifications to Parents/Guardians at different absence intervals including 10 days, 15 days, and 20 days
- Administrating a system of students signing in and out of school to reduce students missing class time unnecessarily.
- Advising Parents/ Guardians that they are not to take their child out of school for holidays during school time.
- Advising Parents/Guardians, as necessary, that contact will be made with TUSLA and inviting them to a meeting with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head to discuss strategies and identify issues leading to the poor attendance.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### **Student:**

- To punctually attend school and all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason not to.
- To follow the correct procedures when signing in late or leaving early.
- These procedures are shared with students at school.

### **Parent/Guardian:**

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000) whereby Parents/Guardians must ensure that children of compulsory school-going age attend school regularly and in a timely manner.
- To provide a written explanation or a doctor's/dentist's certificate as relevant, explaining the reason for each student's absence and date of absence.
- To provide a written note for student's absence as soon as possible for the attention of the Year Head.
- To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communication from the school in relation to attendance issues
- To comply with the school guidance not to take their son/daughter out of school for holidays during term time.

### **Board of Management:**

- To agree a School Attendance Strategy as contained with the Attendance Policy.
- To provide governance and oversight in the implementation of the School Attendance Strategy.
- To review the implementation of the School Attendance Policy (or aspects of it) in a timely manner.

### **Principal:**

- To ensure that the policy is implemented and that relevant procedures and systems are in place to record, monitor and review attendances and absences of students.
- To make provision for a register of all students who are present in the school at the start of each school year.
- To make arrangements to forward the details of all students on the school register on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, to the department data base (Esinet) as part of the October Returns.
- To review attendance records provided by the Year Heads and Deputy Principal periodically.
- To ensure that reports are made to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To remind students and Parents/Guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.
- To communicate with support agencies including TUSLA where students are not attending school as relevant and if a student faces expulsion from school.
- To inform the Board of Management of school attendance trends and matters.

### **Deputy Principal:**

- To oversee the implementation of the policy, procedures and systems and work in conjunction with the Year Heads in monitoring student attendance.

- To highlight to Year Heads students who have been reported to TUSLA in the previous academic year for monitoring.
- To inform TUSLA of students who are absent 20 days or more as required, and advise Principal of same.
- To inform parents/guardians if TUSLA has been informed about their child's absences.
- To complete all Attendance Reports and the End of Year Report for submission to TUSLA and review and discuss the same with Principal and management team.
- To act as the link between the Year Head Team, and the Student Support Team, in terms of monitoring and addressing high absences.
- To keep the Principal informed of any concerns relating to student attendance and prepare the relevant data for presentation to the Board of Management.

**Year Head:**

- To act in accordance with school policies, procedures and systems.
- To record and monitor student attendance using the attendance management system VsWare.
- To ensure, as far as possible, that notes from parents regarding student absences from school are submitted.
- To encourage students during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance, punctuality and participation in school activities.
- To maintain contact with home regarding student's attendance and welfare.
- To liaise with the Student Support Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.
- To communicate with the Deputy Principal, and as necessary the Principal, any concerns regarding student absences in their year group.
- To arrange meetings with students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.
- To organise the rewarding of students who have good attendance records e.g. School Awards/Achievement System.

**Tutor:**

- To act in accordance with school policies, procedures and systems.
- To liaise with the Year Head regarding problems arising in relation to attendance or punctuality.

**Class Teacher:**

- To act in accordance with school policies, procedures and systems.
- To record the attendance of every class every day in the school attendance management system, VsWare.
- To inform the Tutor and Year Head if they have a concern regarding a student's absence from their class.
- To impress on students and their parents/guardians the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.

## General Monitoring and Review and Procedures

- The Board of Management will review reports and progress at scheduled board meetings.
- The Principal will review implementation on a regular basis e.g. at Senior Management Team meetings, Year Head meetings, Student Support Team meetings, or discrete meetings organised about a particular student.

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- The Deputy Principal and Year Heads will monitor the implementation of the Attendance Strategy on a daily and weekly basis.
- The Deputy Principal will conduct attendance reviews on a term basis with support from the Year Heads and Tutors.
- The Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Internal Management Team and amended as deemed necessary.

## Review

This policy was formally adopted by the Blackrock ETSS Board of Management on 7th December 2023. It was reviewed during the school year, 2025/26 and adopted on December 2nd, 2025.

It is scheduled to be reviewed again during the school year 2028/29.

**Appendix 1**

**Letter template for Pupils missing 20 days**

**20 Days Absence**

Dear Parents,

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 20 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are just bringing the number of absent 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 of Blackrock ETSS 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 to view on our website [www.blackrocketss.ie](http://www.blackrocketss.ie) We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Deputy Principal**