

# **TUSLA GUIDELINES FOR School Attendance – what every parent needs to know**

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. The law also says that every child between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school or otherwise receive an education. Most children attend recognised schools although some are educated at home or in non-recognised schools

The majority of children in Ireland start school at either 4 or 5 years of age. Your child must be at least 4 years of age at the start of the school year (September) to enrol in primary school. Here is what you need to know about your child's school attendance.

## **What should I do if my child cannot go to school?**

You must tell the school that your child cannot attend and say why. Write a short note to the school to explain why your child was out of school and send it in with your child when they go back to school. Generally, there are good reasons why a child is missing school (e.g. illness).

Keep in regular contact with your child's school to explain why your child is absent and, where appropriate, provide medical certificates.

## **What will the school do if my child misses a lot of school?**

The school must tell the statutory Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency if your child has missed 20 days or more in the school year, or if it is concerned that your child is missing too much school.

## **What we must do if your child misses a lot of school?**

If a school tells us that your child is missing too much school, an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with the school and may visit you to see how we can help to make sure that your child attends school more often.

## **Can I take my child on holidays during term time?**

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on. As a result, they may fall behind with school work and lose confidence in their abilities. We strongly advise parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

## **Can I be taken to court if my child doesn't attend school?**

If you are a parent or guardian of a child aged between 6 and 16 you have a central role to play in ensuring that your child does not miss out on his or her education. Under Irish law you must ensure that your child attends school or otherwise receives an education.

We will help parents in whatever way we can to ensure your child gets an education. However, parents who refuse to co-operate with the EWO regarding their child's school attendance (or fail to register with the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency if they are being home educated or in receipt of an education in a 'non-recognised school) can be taken to court and fined or imprisoned. Legal action of this kind only takes place in exceptional circumstances and forms a very small part of the Board's work.

## **At what age can my child leave school?**

The minimum school leaving age is 16 or after three years of post-primary education, whichever is later.

## **My child is refusing to go to school. Where can I get help?**

Sometimes young people refuse to attend school despite the best wishes of their parents. There are often underlying reasons behind the young person's decision not to attend school and parents often feel powerless to help their child.

If your child is refusing to attend school and you need support, contact us and an Educational Welfare Officer will get in touch with you.

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Scoil Íde's Attendance Strategies and Attendance Policy can be found under School Policies on this website.

From 18<sup>th</sup> September 2018, a text will automatically be sent out when a child is absent from school 10 mins after roll call. This message informs the parent that the child is absent and states that a note must be produced for each school absence.