



**PROMOTING POSITIVE
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
IN DONEGAL**



PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTENDANCE

Consistent school attendance is key to developing a love for learning in your child. When children are in school they have a real sense of belonging. This helps them to learn and succeed.

The aim of this booklet is to help parents and teachers support positive school attendance. We have also highlighted what to look out for when concerns arise and where you can seek help. We in this working group are parents as well as educators, and therefore have a real understanding of the challenges that parents / guardians can experience from time to time.

According to the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, a child should attend school every day that the school is open. There are very few reasons why children should be absent from school.

REASONS YOUR CHILD MAY STAY AT HOME

- **Sickness**
 - Very high fever/vomiting/diarrhoea/difficulty breathing/any illness that prevents the child from functioning normally at home or at school
 - The child may have a contagious illness or rash
 - The child is not well enough to participate in class
- **Critical family circumstances e.g. bereavement**
- **Medical appointments that cannot be held outside of school hours**

REASONS YOUR CHILD SHOULD NOT STAY AT HOME

- **Holidays**
- **Shopping**
- **Birthdays**
- **Babysitting other children in the house**
- **Attending events/shows during school time**
- **Sleeping in – it is better to come to school late than not to come at all**

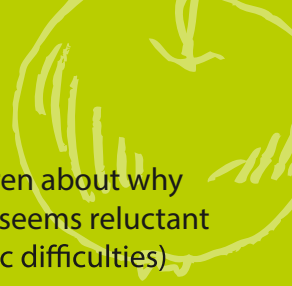


Please note that classroom-based assessments are now part of the final grade for the Junior Certificate.

It is vital your child attends school!

TOP TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Highlight the importance of attendance. Talk to children about why going to school is important for their future. If a child seems reluctant to go to school, find out why (i.e., bullying or academic difficulties) and work with the teacher to find a solution.
- Set a weekday routine. Have regular bedtimes and wake-up times so children develop good habits. Be prepared the night before e.g. lunches made, uniforms ready, PE gear ready.
- Create a backup plan. Find a relative, friend or neighbour who can take children to school if something affects your normal routines (e.g. illness or car troubles).
- Encourage your child to get involved in after school and extra-curricular activities.
- Praise. Keep a record of attendance to encourage and praise good attendance.
- It is strongly encouraged that all children have a balanced lifestyle including good attendance, opportunity to exercise and eat well, family time and extra-curricular activities.



SCHOOL REFUSAL

What can cause school refusal?

Triggers:

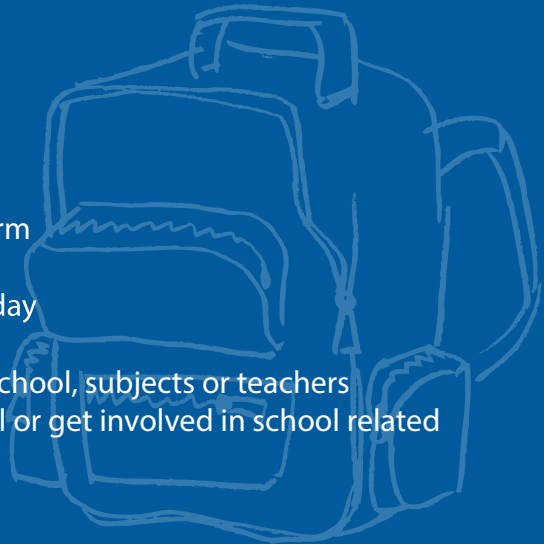
The following factors may cause school refusal:

- Transitions such as moving to a new school, primary to post-primary, returning to school after a long absence or moving house
- Poor organisational skills, being late, not having bag ready, not having homework done etc.
- School issues such as workload, academic pressures or fear of failure
- Poor relationships with peers, school staff, siblings or parents
- Parental separation / marital problems
- Traumatic events within the family
- Anxiety about social situations or activities within school
- Anxiety around being separated from parents or carers
- Attention seeking from a parent or caregiver
- Rewards gained from staying at home: such as spending time with a parent, watching TV or playing video games

WHEN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BECOMES AN ISSUE

Common behaviours that children display when they are not happy in school:

- Feeling sick on a Sunday night
- Phantom pains
- Difficulty sleeping at night
- Frequent tummy aches
- Crying, being anxious or fearful
- Refusing to get up
- Not wanting to put on the uniform
- Delaying tactics in the morning
- Putting off going until the next day
- Bargaining
- Excessively complaining about school, subjects or teachers
- Not wanting to talk about school or get involved in school related activities



WHAT CAN YOU AS A PARENT / GUARDIAN DO TO HELP?

- Talk to your child about school and listen to what they are saying
- Praise them for making an effort to go to school
- Create good routines for bedtime, getting up, breakfast, getting organised i.e. uniform, schoolbag and equipment
- Limit screen time, especially before bed time
- Ensure home life is less enjoyable than school during time of absence
- Encourage relationships outside of school with peers; this builds a sense of belonging with school
- Try not to ask leading questions. Instead of asking “Are you worried?” ask “How are you feeling?”
- Set a good example for your child
- Be consistent and present a united front from a parenting / guardian perspective
- If the situation is not improving, seek help from the school or family members

WHAT CAN YOU DO AS A PARENT OR GUARDIAN TO HELP IF IT GETS TO THE STAGE WHERE A CHILD REFUSES TO GO TO SCHOOL?

- Be firm but calm
- Both parents / guardians give the same messages
- Communicate with the school – Year Head & Home, School and Community Liaison
- Listen to and reassure your child
- Praise and affirm any little improvement
- Find things they enjoy doing
- Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities
- Restrict access to internet, gaming and social media during school hours
- Don't let them stay in bed, get them up and put uniform on and follow school timetable



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LIST OF LOCAL SERVICES

- **Child & Family Mental Health Service**
Ph: 074 91 20340
- **Community Clinical Psychology Service**
Ph: 074 91 04641
- **Jigsaw** (Youth Mental Health Service)
Ph: 074 97 26920
Email: donegal@jigsaw.ie
- **Pieta House** (Youth Mental Health Service)
Ph: 074 91 26594
- **Youth Talk Donegal – Donegal Youth Service**
Ph: 074 91 29640 / 074 91 29630
Email: admin@donegalyouthservice.ie
- **National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**
Ph: 076 1108878
- **Pastoral Centre** (*Offers Counselling Support*)
Ph: 074 91 21853
Email: pastoralcentreky@gmail.com
- **Youth Information Centre (YIC)** (Donegal Youth Service)
Ph: 074 91 29630
- **LOFT** (*Offers a variety of youth projects / youth café Donegal Youth Service*)
Ph: 074 91 29630
Email: loftstaff@gmail.com
- **BREAKOUT LGBTI Youth Project** (Donegal Youth Service)
Ph: 074 91 29630
- **Young Carers Project**
Ph: 074 91 29630
- **Teen Parents Support Programme** (Foreoige)
Ph: 074 91 90141
Email: www.foreoige.ie
- **Foreoige** (*Youth Support Organisation to include programmes such as Big Brother Big Sister*)
Donegal North Ph: 086 7808867
Donegal South Ph: 086 0484482
Email: infor@foreoige.ie
Head office number : Ph 01 6301560
- **Family Resource Centre's (FRC's)** (*Based in various locations in Co. Donegal and offering a various community / family supports*)
Cara House FRC Letterkenny
Ph: 074 91 23986
Donegal Town FRC Ph: 074 97 25337
Downstrands FRC Portnoo
Ph: 074 95 45879
Dunfanaghy FRC: Ph: 074 91 36548
Mevagh FRC Downings Ph: 074 91 55055
Moville FRC: Ph: 074 93 85548
The Forge FRC Pettigo Ph: 071 98 61924
Raphoe FRC Ph: 074 91 45796
St. Johnston & Carrigans FRC
Ph: 074 91 48551
Finn Valley FRC Ph: 074 91 31245
- **Springboard Family Resource Centre**
Ph: 074 91 73918
- **Parenthub Donegal** (provides parenting resources and information on Donegal-based support services)
www.parenting24seven.ie or www.parenthubdonegal.ie
- **Donegal Travellers Project** (Supporting Traveller Families and Roma Families)
Ph: 074 91 29281
- **LYFS** (Letterkenny Youth and Family Services) – *offering supports to parents and young people*
Ph: 074 91 23078

- **Donegal REACH Project** (*Supporting young people affected by parental Alcohol or other Drug use*)
Ph: 074 91 25596
- **Alcohol Forum**
Ph: 074 91 25596
- **Strengthening Families Programme**
Ph: 074 91 25596
Email: info@sfpnw.com
- **Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)**
Ph: 01 2342000
Email: info@ispcc.ie
- **Childline** (*24 hour national listening ear service for children and young people*)
Ph: 1800 66 66 66
Text : 50101
Chat online @ childline.ie
- **School Completion Programme – SCP** (*SCP Coordinators seek to improve a young person's retention and participation in school*)
Letterkenny/Milford Ph: 074 91 21047
North Inishowen (Moville & Carndonagh)
Ph: 074 93 74260
South Inishowen Ph: 074 93 61113
Stranorlar SCP Ph: 074 91 31246
Raphoe SCP Ph: 074 91 45493
- **Home School Community Liaison Coordinators** (HSCL's) – assigned to DEIS schools to offer support to assist in supporting positive outcomes for children and can be accessed through the school. Contact your school to clarify if there is a HSCL within your school
- **T.E.S.S. Educational Welfare Service** (Education Welfare Officers)
The aims and objectives of this statutory service are to ensure that every child either attends school regularly or otherwise receives a minimum education; to ensure and secure every child's entitlement to education. Educational Welfare Officers work with families and children in a child-centred way to overcome barriers to their school attendance, participation and retention; and work closely with schools, educational support services and other agencies to support school attendance and resolve attendance problems for the benefit of children and families
Ph: 091 385302
- **Social Work Child Protection & Welfare Service (Tusla)** *The Child and Family Agency has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children.*
Ph: 074 91 23672
- **Meitheal** (*Tusla led support plan bringing together a family and services who support a child or parent so that he/she can make changes to their life that they want and need*)
Ph: 074 91 23783
- **PPFS Programme** (Prevention, Partnership & Family Support Programme)
The best way to improve outcomes for children is to intervene at an early stage to resolve problems and prevent harm. The Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme is a comprehensive programme of early intervention and preventative work which has been undertaken by Tusla.
Ph: 071 98 22776

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