



Introduction

The **Attendance Grant** is a once-off payment to all schools to promote and support regular school attendance of children and young people.

Latest published school attendance data indicates that approximately one in five children and young people in recognised schools are missing a month or more of their school year. The 2023/24 school year data indicates that while non-attendance is decreasing it is still significantly greater than pre-pandemic levels. [Analysis of School Attendance Data 2023-24.pdf](#)

This attendance grant, provided by the Department of Education and Youth (DEY), is closely aligned with the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) school attendance campaign '*Every School Day is a New Day*' which seeks to help address absenteeism by encouraging everyone involved in the lives of children and young people – including parents, guardians, teachers, and communities – to support and prioritise regular school attendance. This campaign is part a wider body of work which TESS, through its Five Year Plan for School Attendance [TESS 5 Year Plan for School Attendance 2023-2028.pdf](#) and the DEY have developed to reduce non-attendance.

Further information and resources on school attendance for schools and parents may be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/campaigns/school-attendance/>

Schools are asked to utilise this grant to reach and engage individual students and/or groups of children and young people identified as being at risk of educational disadvantage as a result of poor attendance.

Where appropriate, schools are strongly encouraged to establish local clusters (to include early years settings, primary and post primary schools) to work collaboratively to encourage regular school attendance and to provide cohesive supports at significant transition points.

Schools may use this grant in this school year (2025/26) or over a longer period.

Annual Attendance Returns

Every recognised school has a legal requirement to submit their annual student attendance returns to Tusla within six weeks of the end of the school year. By doing this in a timely fashion schools provide valuable evidence that enables



TESS and the Department to plan supports and engagement with schools, parents and students.

Student Absence Report

Every recognised school also has a legal requirement to submit student absence reports to Tusla. These reports provide data on those students aged over six and under 16 years, absent for a cumulative total of 20 or more days in the school year, by the recorded reason for their absence,

The Period 1 report should include students who have reached 20 days absence or more from the beginning of term to the Christmas break. This report should be completed and submitted as soon as possible thereafter.

The Period 2 report should include students who have reached 20 days absence or more from Christmas to the end of the school year. This report should be completed and submitted as soon as possible after the school closes for the summer break.

If you have any queries about these returns, please contact school.return@tusla.ie and a member of the TESS team will make contact as soon as possible.

Improving School Attendance: Strategies and Interventions

Deciding how to use the grant

Schools are best placed to understand the needs of their own community and identify how best to address these needs at a local level. Therefore, this funding is being provided directly to schools to allow the flexibility of utilising the funding to best suit locally identified needs of the most at-risk children and young people and developing strategies and targeted measures to improve overall levels of school attendance.

A broad understanding of attendance

In considering how best to support regular school attendance, each school has a rich data source in the information that they gather on the attendance levels of children and young people, with a particular focus on those most at risk of early school leaving. In gathering data on attendance, schools can combine data on lateness for school, morning and afternoon attendance and partial attendance



as well as absence from school for a full school day. This can be important, as lateness and partial attendance are usually precursors to more significant attendance issues and can typically be part of a pattern that leads to early school leaving.

Devising interventions for improvement

Once the attendance data has been gathered and analysed, schools should develop interventions designed to bring about improvements in attendance levels, particularly for those children and young people whose attendance levels are a cause of concern.

Root causes for any trends should be probed through engagement with families and other stakeholders. Based on these insights, schools should develop targeted interventions, such as awareness campaigns or partnership programs with parents.

These interventions should, where possible, be integrated into the School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan. In DEIS schools these interventions should be reflected in the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement and monitored for effectiveness in the normal way. Examples of initiatives that Anseo schools have implemented and evaluated, using funding, and which have demonstrated a positive impact on attendance are included in Appendix A.

Guiding Principles and examples of initiatives to improve attendance

In considering appropriate interventions, it is critical that schools see promoting attendance as centrally linked to:

- School culture and environment.
- The quality of relationships between children and young people and their peers and between children and young people and school staff.
- The extent to which children and young people find classroom experiences engaging, interesting and relevant.
- The extent to which children and young people experience success in their learning.
- The extent to which children and young people experience high-quality and inclusive teaching and learning.
- The quality of the links between home and school.



In general, therefore, this grant should be used to support the implementation of initiatives that will focus on one or more of the elements above and that have already proven successful in engaging children and young people in meaningful, challenging learning activities.

Initiatives which have the potential to link closely with the learning programmes of children and young people and which have achieved positive outcomes when used in schools before, include:

- Wellbeing focused initiatives consistent with the Department's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice¹. A range of wellbeing resources can be accessed at [gov.ie - Wellbeing in education \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)
- Creating a student-led initiative to address social issues in the community.
- Family focused initiatives, involving parents/guardians on school grounds such as the establishment of a school garden or other activities involving families.
- Partnering with local businesses to offer students internships, traineeships, apprenticeships, mentorships, and guest speaker sessions. Such activities as well as encouraging attendance can help to increase industry awareness and foster academic and career aspirations, to support retention through to Leaving Certificate.
- Purchasing additional equipment or engaging a local expert to offer activities that help engage children in music, sport, art, cooking etc. Some schools have engaged organisations or individuals who work with therapy dogs to encourage school attendance. The decision to introduce such supports should be carefully considered by the Principal and Board of Management in consultation with the school community.
- Schools that offered the summer programme over the past number of years may also find that many of the learning activities that children engaged during the programme have potential to be adapted for use within the school during the year. These activities include, for example, the development of literacy and numeracy skills through cross-curricular activities.

¹ Inputs from external providers should be in accordance with Circular 0043/2018 and 0043/2017. Best practice guidelines for primary and post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing.



Further information on examples on interventions that have proven to be successful to support attendance are contained in Appendix B.

Consulting with children and young people

Schools should also bear in mind the importance in consulting with children and young people about their learning activities and their views should be taken into consideration in an appropriate manner, when decisions about the use of this grant are being made.

Working with other schools

Schools are encouraged to cluster locally and work together to gain maximum benefit from the grant. This could involve, for example, early years settings, primary school and post-primary schools in a locality working together. Collaboration among schools can facilitate the development of impactful initiatives that address issues relating to attendance especially among children and young people at risk of educational disadvantage. It can also help build relationships which may ease the transition from early years to primary and to post-primary for children and young people.

For further collaborative opportunities, schools may also explore other Department-funded initiatives or whole-of-government funds that are pertinent to attendance.

Recording of interventions

Schools should ensure that the use of the funding supports any targets for improvement that relate to attendance that may be set out in their School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan. Schools in the DEIS programme are asked to ensure that the use of the grant is reflected in the actions under the attendance themes in their three-year DEIS Action Plan for Improvement.

Schools have the flexibility to utilise this once off funding allocation either within the current school year or to use it over a longer time period to align to their School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement Plan or their DEIS Action Plan For Improvement.

Monitoring the Attendance Campaign Support Grant

The DEY will gather information on the use of the funding and the effectiveness of the initiatives from schools to inform future policy in this area.

Schools are encouraged to submit best practices, case studies, or any other relevant information to TESS. These submissions will be used to inform the



development of the TESS school attendance conference to take place in September 2026. There may be an opportunity for some schools to share their practice supporting regular school attendance at the conference. Furthermore, submissions may be collated for distribution to schools in the 2026/27 school year to promote the sharing of good practice in this area.

Schools can submit examples of good practice initiatives to support regular school attendance to tessattendancecampaign@tusla.ie, including "School Attendance Initiatives 2025/26" in the subject line of the email.

Submissions should focus on strategies, interventions, and programmes that have proven effective in improving student attendance. Please include any metrics or KPIs that demonstrate the impact of the initiatives.

Please do not include any personal information related to individual students in the submissions and please ensure that all shared data is anonymised and aggregated to comply with data protection regulations.

Management and oversight of the Grant

Primary and Post-Primary Schools

In accordance with Section 18 of the Education Act 1998, schools are required to keep records of all activities undertaken and materials and resources purchased with grants. Income and expenditure accounts should be retained in the school and be made available if, and when, required by officers of the DEY and/or the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Schools must ensure compliance with Circular: 13/2014, Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds.² Schools should be aware that accounts are subject to audit. Schools should make every effort to ensure best value for money and adopt best financial practices in order to be compliant with the Act and relevant circulars. The services of the Financial Support Services Unit www.fssu.ie are available in this regard should you need their advice on such matters.

² [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - Government Accounting (www.gov.ie)



ETB Schools

In accordance with Section 51 of the Education and Training Boards Act 2013 the Department requests that ETBs' accounts of income and expenditure should be retained and made available from time to time to officers of the DEY.

Further Supports for Schools

School Attendance Webpage: [School Attendance](#)

A new webpage has been developed to act as a resource for schools and parents relating to school attendance, including school attendance campaign resources and webinars.

Webinar topics include:

- Evidence based strategies for promoting attendance
- Creating a culture of attendance
- Promoting Attendance to Parents

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development. Each psychologist is assigned to a group of schools. [gov.ie - National Educational Psychological Service \(NEPS\) resources and publications \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

Oide

Oide, the new integrated support service for teachers and school leaders, will continue to provide comprehensive support to schools including the DEIS Action Plan for Improvement and School Self-Evaluation (SSE) leadership programmes. These incorporate the theme of school attendance, amongst others.

SSE Advisory visits

Schools that have specific attendance-related targets in their School Self-Evaluation Report and Improvement plan or their DEIS Action Plan for Improvement and who wish to seek advice from the Inspectorate on using the



school self-evaluation process effectively to support their work on the review and promotion of attendance can apply for an SSE advisory visit via SSE@education.gov.ie

Queries

Queries in relation this guidance document should be e-mailed to the DEY at the following address: social_inclusion@education.gov.ie.