

Attendance Strategy

Attendance Strategy

As per the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Section 22(1) and 22(2) the school has drawn up a Statement of Strategy with regard to attendance and participation.

The purpose of the Strategy is to promote strong attendance and participation. The Strategy provides for:

- The development of whole school structures in a positive and proactive attempt to deal with the issues of attendance and absenteeism, supported by the Student Support programme in the school.
- Recording and monitoring attendance
- Communication with parents
- The rewarding of students regarding good and improved attendance and participation
- Early identification of “at risk” students
- Establishment of close links with the homes of “at risk” students.
- Fostering, promoting and establishing contact by the school with other agencies to support students

Registration

Registration takes place twice daily; 8.47am- 8.55 and class teachers record attendance during period 7.

Students are required to attend registration on time in their tutor class with their tutor at these times. The tutor records the attendance and absence of students on the student database (VShare) and in the official class register. The tutor also collects notes from parents explaining reasons from any previous day's absence.

The necessary data on absenteeism from the student database is provided to the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla on 4 occasions during the year.

Subject Class Registration

Each subject teacher in each class throughout the day also records the attendance and absence of students on the student database (VShare) and in their own Class Register.

Communication with parents/guardians

At the core of all relationships in the school is mutual respect and understanding, supported by good communication. Our School Attendance Policy works most effectively when there is good communication between home and school.

Notification to parents/guardians of cumulative absence

Unexplained Absence after 3 days

If a student has been absent for 3 three days with no explanation, the Tutor will contact the parent/guardian to ascertain the reason for the absence.

10 days Absence

If a student has been absent for 10 days, a letter is sent home by the tutor to parents/guardians of the student. The purpose of the letter is to advise parents of their child's absence and to encourage improved attendance.

15 Days Absence

If a student has been absent for 15 days, the Tutor will inform the Year Head. The Year Head will contact the parents. The purpose of the contact is to advise the parent of their child's absence and encourage improved attendance. A letter will also be sent home advising the parents of absence.

20 Days Absence

If a student has been absent for 20 days, a letter is sent home to parents of the student. The purpose of the letter is to advise parents of their child's absence and to encourage improved attendance. Parents will also be notified that details of the absence will be forwarded to the Education Welfare Services of Tusla.

Students who are absent from Registration due to participation in extra-curricular activities or other school activities will be credited with attendance on the student database.

Concerns regarding Student Absenteeism

Should a subject teacher have concerns regarding the absenteeism of a student, the subject teacher will, in the first instance, discuss the matter in a pastoral manner with the student. If there is no improvement in the student's attendance, the subject teacher will write a note to parents in the student's journal outlining the concern and refer the matter to the student's tutor.

Should a tutor have concerns regarding the absenteeism of a student or be notified of the concerns of a subject teacher regarding the absenteeism of a student, the tutor will, in the first instance, discuss the matter in a pastoral manner with the student.

If there is no improvement in the student's attendance the tutor will telephone the parent/guardian to discuss the matter. After this, if there is no improvement in the student's attendance the student will be referred to the Year Head.

Referral to the Year Head

The Year Head supported by a team of tutors is responsible for monitoring patterns of attendance and punctuality across their year group. The Year Head will liaise with the student and parents/guardians where a pattern of absence or lateness to school emerges.

In some instances the Year Head may refer the case for discussion at a Student Support team meeting. A decision will be taken on the nature of the intervention to support the student.

In addition, the Year Head supports the tutors in ensuring that all absences are explained by a note from parents. In a minority of cases the tutor may have difficulty in accessing a note from home. If appropriate the Year Head will intervene to ensure that these absences are explained.

Referral to HSCL

The school is fortunate to have a full-time Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator. Her main duties are to:

- Work in an enabling way with parents to develop their capacity as a key resource in their children's learning.
- Become familiar with attendance patterns, in order to maximise student attendance, participation and retention.
- Support children at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of family-based issues, which adversely affect pupil attainment and school retention.
- Work in a supportive and purposeful way with parents and facilitates communication with class teacher, tutor, year-head, and school management, when required.
- Visit families. Home visitation is a central component of the work of the Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator. The home visit is crucial to developing empathy with families in their efforts to engage with the education system. It essentially builds a bridge between the home and the school. Information about the school and other services in the community is offered, and in turn, parents' views and opinions are invaluable to the school.

Referral to the Educational Welfare Officer or the School's School Completion Programme (SCP) Co-ordinator

The HSCL Co-ordinator may, on a case-by-case basis, seek the support of the Educational Welfare Officer or the School's School Completion Programme Co-ordinator in relation to concerns regarding a student's attendance.

Reintegration

The school recognises the key role it can play in ensuring successful reintegration of students returning after a long period of absence. We will provide support to assist a smooth reintegration back into school. The process of reintegration involves:

- A 'Welcome' meeting between the Tutor/Year Head. At this meeting the Tutor/Year Head ensures that the student has their timetable and all necessary books and equipment for classes that day and throughout the week. The student will also be able to express any anxieties they may have in relation to their immediate class participation and will be reassured of the school personnel and programmes that are there for support.
- Working in partnership with parents/guardians to ensure a flexible approach to meeting the student's needs.
- Involving the student's peers, where appropriate, to ensure they support the student's reintegration.
- Ongoing monitoring of attendance with feedback and affirmation provided to the student and parents/guardians
- Rewarding the student for improved attendance
- Weekly meetings between the student and Tutor/Year Head.
- Consideration will be given to exempting students, where appropriate, from specific subject requirements on a temporary basis whilst they readjust to normal school life.

Ongoing Attendance Monitoring

Student attendance is monitored on an ongoing basis. Procedures include:

- Regular spot checks are conducted by Year Heads to monitor attendance.
- Student attendance in each year group is analysed monthly as one of the criteria for the Student of the Month Awards.
- Year Heads and Tutors meet formally 3 times a year to compile an attendance report. This report highlights achievement and improvement in attendance and notes areas of concern in relation to full day attendance, half day attendance and students 'signing out' (leaving school during class time with parental and school permission). A list is compiled of students whose absenteeism is of concern. Year Heads will meet with these students to discuss their attendance and agree an action plan for improvement. Parents will also be involved in the action plan to support the student's attendance.

School Reports

Christmas and Summer academic reports will include a report on the student's attendance and punctuality.

Rewarding Attendance and Improved Attendance

A number of incentives are in place which recognise, encourage and reward excellent and improved attendance. These include:

- Student of the Month Awards
- Inter-class Attendance competitions
- 100% Attendance Awards every half term
- Graduation Awards
- Endeavour Awards

Year group assemblies further remind students of the importance of attendance and encourage excellent attendance

Signing out

Parents/Guardians should be mindful of the educational importance of full attendance when scheduling appointments for their child during the school day which may necessitate the withdrawal of a student from school.

Students may only leave the school during class time if they have permission from their parents. Permission notes must be signed by the parent/guardian and signed by the tutor/Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal. Upon receiving permission the student must 'sign out' the School Main Office.

Mitching

Any student leaving the building without permission and without signing out will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour. Similarly, any student who is absent from class without permission in the school will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour.

On no account is a student allowed to attend a school activity/event e.g. a football match without prior permission from the school. This applies even if the student states that he/she has parental permission to attend the activity/event.

Punctuality

Arriving on time is an important life skill and develops the student's ability to become a reliable and responsible member of the community. Arriving late to class has a negative impact on the school's teaching and learning environment. It is important that students are on time for registration and for class. The co-operation and support of our students and parents/guardians in relation to student punctuality is greatly appreciated. The school operates a Punctuality policy to deal with 'lateness' for school.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools)

In participating in the DEIS programme the school engages in a systematic planning and monitoring process at individual school level and at school cluster/community level. Staff, students, parents, local communities and agencies operating at local level are involved.

The school has developed action plans focusing on the following areas:

- Attendance,
- Retention,
- Educational progression,
- Literacy
- Numeracy,
- Examination attainment
- Partnership with parents
- Partnership with others (External community and support agencies)

The process of effective planning to enhance attendance involves:

- Analysis of data
- Setting specific and measurable targets
- Selection and implementation of appropriate strategies and learning activities to achieve the targets set
- Monitoring of progress
- Review of targets in the light of progress

DEIS planning takes place in 3 year cycles with an annual review of each area outlined above. The DEIS planning group to enhance student attendance is

comprised of all the Year Heads. DEIS planning to enhance student attendance informs the school's attendance strategy and policy.

School Completion Programme (SCP)

The aim of the School Completion programme is to increase the numbers of young people staying in school and in doing so improve the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or the equivalent.

SCP work focuses on targeting and providing supports to young people identified to be most at risk of early school leaving and includes identifying and supporting children at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of poor attendance.

School Completion Programme initiatives linked to attendance which operate in the school include:

- Identifying the students for whom attendance has been an issue in primary school with the aim of tracking their progress at Second Level and ensuring their inclusion in beneficial learning programmes
- Using an inter-agency approach to identify and continue from the primary schools to monitor and improve student attendance with the Education Welfare Officer
- Providing a breakfast club in the morning, a snack consisting of a sandwich, fruit and water at break time and a substantial lunch menu
- Supporting students who require an alternative educational programme on a temporary or longer basis e.g. One to One Tuition, Reduced Timetabling Arrangements, etc.

Student Supports

A number of provisions exist in the school to support student attendance and participation. These Supports will be offered and used as positive interventions to assist identified students in need to engage more fully in school.

These supports include:

- Meetings with the subject teacher
- Meetings with the tutor
- Meetings with the Year Head
- Parent and student meetings with school personnel
- HSCL home visits

Programmes and Initiatives

- Breakfast Club
- Lunch Club
- Support for first year students from Ember – Student Leadership programme

- Student Council
- Student of the Month Awards
- Attendance Awards
- Literacy and Numeracy Support programmes
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Extra-Curricular Activities (Lunch time and after school)

Short-term interim timetabling measures (In exceptional circumstances, subject to resources available)

- Reduced Timetable arrangements
- One to One teaching and learning
- Change of mind/class facility

Links to other agencies