

**ST. JOSEPH'S SECONDARY SCHOOL.
DROGHEDA.**



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY.

Adopted by the Board of Management, 26th June, 2017.

INTRODUCTION.

As a school community, the staff at St. Joseph's Secondary School, Drogheda believe

- That there is a direct relationship between a student's success in school and regular attendance.
- That students who have good attendance records enjoy their school experience more than students who do not attend regularly.

THE POLICY IN CONTEXT.

The school Attendance Policy is directed by

1. The School Mission Statement.
2. The Pastoral Care Policy.
3. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

AIM OF THE POLICY.

1. It is anticipated that by constantly monitoring and tracking students' attendance records, absenteeism will decrease and students will have a positive school experience.
2. To reflect our obligations relating to school attendance as outlined in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

INTRODUCTION.

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and attending to problems of absenteeism. It was signed into law on July 5th 2000. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was set up under this Act to support regular attendance and the education of children and young people. This State body is now known as Tusla and it has appointed Educational Welfare Officers (E.W.O) to provide advice and support to parents and schools and to follow up absences from school. Under the Act parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it is recommended that the explanation be in writing. It is incumbent on schools to notify the

National Educational Welfare Board if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.

The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) for St. Joseph's secondary School, Drogheda is Ms Caroline Mhic Eoin. (June 2017)

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 safeguards every child's entitlement to an appropriate minimum education by:

- Developing a national Framework to promote regular attendance at school.
- Promoting a positive appreciation among students of the benefits to be derived from education and attendance at school.
- Identifying the causes of absenteeism and early school leaving and developing measures for its prevention.
- Providing support to children at risk and those who experience difficulties in school in order to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.

Tusla.

Tusla has been given the lead role in implementing the provisions of the Act:

- The principal function of Tusla is to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.
- Tusla also has an advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance and education provision.
- Tusla will deploy educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country. These officers will work in close co-operation with parents, teachers, school managers, community bodies and other relevant agencies to promote regular school attendance and prevent absenteeism and early school leaving.

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE OFFICER.

The Educational Welfare Officers appointed by Tusla will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. Alternative schooling will be sought for students who have been expelled, suspended or refused admittance to a school.

SCHOOL DAY.

- All students must attend at the scheduled times every day except when otherwise agreed with parents for exceptional reasons: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. LCA students attend work placement on Fridays.
- Students are expected to be present each day.
- Students are expected to maintain high standards of punctuality throughout the day.

PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE.

- Subject teachers take registration/attendance using VS Ware at the start of each lesson. Students must sign in using the Anseo biometric hand scanners in the morning and again after 1.30pm.
- A text message alerting parents to a student's absence/not scanning will be sent at 10.30am each day.
- The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis.
- To help identify and at an early stage, students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- The Year Head meets with the students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend. The Year Head may, at this early stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school, to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.
- After 10 days absence, a letter is sent to the parents/guardians by the Year Head, signed by the Principal (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) inviting them to the school to discuss the situation.
- The Year Head communicates the names of students of concern to the Pastoral Care Team at their Care Team meeting. The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support team or outside agency as appropriate.

- After 20 days absence, a letter is sent by the Year Head, signed by the Principal, to the parents/guardians of students under 16 years old to inform them of the school's obligation to inform the EWO and inviting them to the school to discuss the situation if they wish. (Appendix 3)

PROCEDURE FOR RECORDING EXPLANATIONS FOR ABSENCES.

- Counterfoil absence notes are provided to students in the back of the Student Homework Journal (Appendix 4).
- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed and placed in the letter box in the front foyer of the school on the day of return.
- A counterfoil of the absent note must be shown to each subject teacher.
- The reason for the student's absence is entered by the administration staff on the student's database on VS Ware.
- The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis and if he/she notices that a student has a number of unexplained absences, a letter signed by the Principal (Appendix 1 or 2) is sent to parents informing them of the unexplained absences and requesting an explanation in writing.

SCHOOL ACTIVITY / WORK EXPERIENCE.

- Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded as school activity (SA) or work experience (WE).
- Teachers organising the school activity must provide the administration staff with the list of students involved the day prior to the event. The administration staff pre-enter the students' absence under the category school activity (SA) or work experience (WE).
- The staff member accompanying or organising the event informs the administration staff on the morning of the activity to confirm the presence/absence of the students.

LATE POLICY.

- Students are requested to embrace the routine of being at school on time.
- Students who arrive late disrupt the class and miss important instruction time.
- When a student is late, the reason for his lateness must be clearly stated on one of the Late Notes from Parent/Guardian (Blue colour) provided at the back of the Student Homework Journal and presented to the office on entry to the school.
- The late note must be shown to the subject teacher on arrival to class.
- The subject teacher will enter the code *Late with note* on the VS Ware system.

TRUANCY

- Truancy is considered an extreme violation of the School Code of Behaviour and incurs a Saturday morning detention.
- In-school Truancy (where a student remains in the school building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs a Saturday morning detention.
- Saturday detention starts at 9 am and finishes at 11am. Students must attend in school uniform and bring appropriate school text books to study.

MEDICAL / DENTAL APPOINTMENTS.

Where Parents/guardians make medical or dental appointments during school hours, permission to leave the school note (Blue colour in student Homework Journal) must be completed and handed into the office before 9.00am on the day in question.

- The administration staff will record the students name on the VS Ware system.
- When a parent/guardian arrives to collect his son he/she must call to the office and indicate whether or not the student is expected to return.
- The administration staff will record the student's departure from the school on VS Ware.
- The student is required to sign in on his return.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS.

- A text message alerting parents to the fact that their son has not scanned in will be sent automatically to parents at 10.30 am. It is the student's responsibility to scan in.

- Parents are routinely informed of their son's attendance and punctuality record at parent/teacher meetings and through the term and mock examination reports.
- A letter and a copy of the attendance record are sent to parents/guardians once a student has been absent in excess of 10 days (Appendix 1 and 2) and again when a student is absent in excess of 20 days (Appendix 3).
- Individual subject teachers can track a student's attendance for their given subject using VS Ware and are encouraged to contact the relevant Year Head if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.
- When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Office and parents/guardians to discuss strategies re same.
- When a Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes explaining his absences to the office, the Year Head will write to the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that a written explanation be presented (Appendix 1 and 2).

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS.

- Teachers have access to the attendance records of all students through the use of VS Ware.
- Teachers can access the specific attendance record for each of their teaching groups using VS Ware.
- If specific information is received from parents in relation to a student's absence, teachers are notified of this through the Noticeboard of Concern in the staffroom. The student's name will appear on the notice board and teachers will be asked to speak to the relevant year head to obtain this specific information.
- In the case of a prolonged absence and if requested by parents, teachers are encouraged to assign classwork to the absent student and administered by the relevant Year Head.

REWARDING STUDENTS FOR ATTENDANCE.

Students who have full attendance in any given year are presented with a Certificate of Attendance at the end of the school year.

Appendix 1.

Letter for sending to parents/guardians after 10 days of absence.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent on the following days < insert days>. The school has not received any letter or contact from you. You are asked to contact the school as soon as possible to arrange an appointment to discuss the matter with <name of teacher>.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for this absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

David Madden.

Principal.

Appendix 2.

Letter for sending to parents/guardians if they do not respond to letter in Appendix 1.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

The school has written to you about this matter but has not received a written explanation from you. The school is now very concerned that < Insert name> is not receiving an education and we will be writing to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency to pass on our concern. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you shortly to discuss the matter further.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is

absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

David Madden.

Principal.

Appendix 3.

Letter to parents/guardians who son has been absent for 20 school days.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school who has been has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

Because <insert name> has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

OR

Because <insert name> has been absent through illness, the school will be reporting the absence in the normal way but will not be informing Tusla – Child and family Agency that it is concerned about your child’s educational welfare.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

David Madden.

Principal.

Appendix 4.

Student absent notes reproduced from the Student Homework Journal.

Student Name:

Class:

Absent from: // to // No. of days:

Unable to attend school due to:

Signed by Parent/Guardian:

Date: / /

Signed by Teacher:

Date: / /

Student Name:

Class:

Absent from: // to // No. of days:

Unable to attend school due to:

Signed by Parent/Guardian:

Date: / /

Signed by Teacher:

Date: / /

Student Name:		Class:
Absent from: //	to / /	No. of days:
Unable to attend school due to:		
Signed by Parent/Guardian:		Date: / /
Signed by Teacher:		Date: / /

Student Name:		Class:
Absent from: //	to / /	No. of days:
Unable to attend school due to:		
Signed by Parent/Guardian:		Date: / /
Signed by Teacher:		Date: / /
