



St. Mary's Secondary School, Mallow

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Review dates

Staff	24/02/2016	Reviewed
Parents	19/04/2016	Reviewed
Student Council	23/05/2016	Reviewed
Board of Management	23/05/2016	Ratified 23/05/2016

Due for next review _____

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1. Mission Statement

- To develop a community of learning which is geared towards the holistic development of each student.
- To foster the pursuit of academic excellence, respecting the specific potential and talents of each student.
- To promote the School community, the values of a Christian, caring society.
- To cater for students with special needs.
- To value, within the total school community, self-respect, respect for others and for the environment.
- To recognize and affirm the unique value and contribution of each individual.

2. Introductory Statement

Regular, punctual attendance maximises academic progress and performance as well as skills in sports, social interaction and personal development. Regular attendance supports and progresses students' intellectual, emotional and psychological wellbeing. Good attendance and punctuality lay the foundation stone for successful working lives, where they are perceived as mature, reliable and responsible persons.

3. Aims

The policy aims are:

- To promote self-discipline, commitment and responsibility.
- To increase awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- To enhance the learning environment where students can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To ensure that the systems of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school.
- To identify pupils at risk of low achievement through absence or of becoming early school leavers.
- To recognise good attendance.
- To identify obstacles to school attendance and remove where possible.
- To ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

4. The Education Welfare Act

The purpose of the act is to encourage regular attendance and participation in education and training for as long as possible, preferably until a student completes their education.

The main provisions of the Education Welfare Act are as follows:

- Schools are required to establish and maintain a school register, showing attendance or non-attendance for each student.
- Every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years of education in post primary, whichever comes later.
- Parents are obliged to notify the Principal of reasons for a child's absence.
- The act established a National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).

5 The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)

The NEWB was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.

- The NEWB has appointed Education Officers to work with schools to encourage school attendance.
- Under the Act, a school is obligated to report to the NEWB every time:
 - It decides to expel a student
 - A student's name is removed from the school register
 - A student has reached 20 days absences cumulatively
 - A student has been suspended for six days
 - A student's attendance causes concern for the school
- Where there is a concern about your daughter's attendance or about reasons given you may be;
 - Contacted by the school's Year Heads, Principal, Deputy Principal or another member of staff.
 - You may also be contacted by an Education Welfare Officer.
- Schools must prepare a student absence report. This information must be submitted three times a year in summary format for all students.

Absences must be categorised under the following headings:

- ✓ Illness
- ✓ Family Business
- ✓ Appointment

- ✓ Other (Religion, Holiday etc.)
- ✓ Unexplained
- ✓ Suspended
- ✓ Transfer to another school

6. School Policy on Attendance

A Punctuality

- Classes commence at 8.50am and at 1.50pm, all students must attend punctually. Classes finish at 3.50pm on Monday and Tuesday and at 3.10pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Students arriving late for school must present a note detailing reasons for late arrival signed by parent/guardian and sign in at the PE Hall door in the mornings. After 9.05am, students must sign in at the School Office. Failure to do so will result in the student being marked absent for the day.
- Five late mornings without a note will result in afterschool detention.
- Consistent lateness to class may result in lunchtime detention in keeping with the schools Code of Behaviour.

B Absence

- Parents are requested to ring the school before 10am to report and explain absence.
- A written note in the student's journal explaining the absences is presented to the Principal by the student on the morning of their return to school. This note is kept on file. The signed stub is presented to each teacher at the start of each class that was missed. Where there has been a significant absence through illness the school may request a doctor's certificate.
- Prolonged absence e.g. holidays during the school term time should be avoided. If it is deemed necessary a request must be made in writing to the school Principal in advance.
- In the case of an unexplained absence a text will be sent to parents to notify them.

C Leaving the school grounds

- In the interests of safety students may not leave the school premises without the permission of the school.

- Transition Year, 5th year and Leaving Cert students may leave the school premises at lunchtime but must return by 1.45pm.
- In the event of an accident or illness, the parent/guardian will be informed by the school so that arrangements can be made to collect the student.
- We strongly recommend that medical/dental appointments are made outside of school hours. If the student has to leave the school for an appointment the parent/guardian must sign a note in the school journal giving permission to their daughter to leave. This note must be presented to the Principal between 8.30am and 8.45am. Before the student leaves the school she must report to the school office to present the note and sign out. Students are encouraged to return to school once the appointment is completed and sign book in the office on returning to school.
- On occasions where parents need to collect students it is requested that this happens at the break of class and not during class time so as to cause as little disruption as possible to their own, and other students learning.
- If a student gets sick in school the following procedure is to be followed:
 - Inform the class teacher
 - Get permission to go to the office
 - Ask the office to ring home
 - Parent/guardian must call into the office to collect the student.
 - The student signs out in the office
 - A note must be presented on return to school to show to each subject teacher where a class has been missed.

A student may never leave the school grounds without the express permission of the school authorities. Students who do not follow these procedures will be dealt with under the schools Code of Behaviour.

D Attendance and Rolls

School attendance/absenteeism/lateness is monitored carefully as follows;

- A roll call is taken by each subject teacher at the 8.50am class and again at the 1.50pm class.
- This is recorded on the VSWare system and the list of morning absences is posted on the Staff Notice Board each morning.
- Year Heads have access to records through the VSWare System.

- Each teacher also takes their own roll at the beginning of individual classes. Teachers are required to follow up on students absent from their class and check absence notes.
- A 'late' record book is also maintained for all students arriving late in the mornings. Students who arrive late to class after lunch are noted as late on the VSWare system.
- Parents are requested to ring the school before 10.00am to report and explain absence. A written note in the student's journal explaining absence is presented to the Principal by the student between 8.30am and 8.45 am on the morning of their return to school. This note is kept on file. Students must present the signed stub to each teacher at the start of each class.
- Parents/Guardians are always informed by letter when a pupil has 20 days non-attendance. A meeting may be arranged to discuss the effects that it has on pupil learning and strategies to improve attendance and learning for the student.
- The school may also decide to contact parents where there are concerns about absenteeism.
- All records regarding attendance will be kept in the school for 7 years in keeping with the schools Data Protection Policy.
- Teachers organising an out of school activity are required to note it in the activities diary in the staff room and to post the list of students who will be absent on the notice board in the staff room, they must also provide a copy of this list to the office. This is noted as School Business in attendance records.
- In so far as practicable, students will inform their teacher of absence from class or part of school day. It is their responsibility to get homework and catch up on work missed including homework.
- If a student needs to leave class for any reason they must seek the permission of their teacher and have a signed note in their student journal explaining their absence e.g. going to the toilet, performing an errand, project etc. Diaries will be spot checked if students are found in the corridors during class time.

E Strategies to Promote Good Attendance

At present there are many strategies in place to encourage positive attendance. These include:

Environment

- The school endeavours to create a safe, bright, welcoming, interesting environment for students and parents.

- The school fosters positive teacher-student relationships to create a sense of belonging for each individual student in keeping with our Mission Statement.

Early Intervention

- New parents/guardians are informed of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance
- Monitoring of lateness allows for staff to identify students at risk of poor attendance.
- Where a subject teacher has concerns with a student absence they may address this directly with the student.
- Differentiation in curricular areas is an integral part of each teachers planning in the hope that each child will achieve to the best of her ability.
- Subject Teachers report concerns about student absences to Year Heads.
- Students of concern are discussed at weekly Pastoral Care and weekly Year Head meetings.
- The Year Head meets with students on their return to school.
- Students with poor attendance will, in so far as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- Where relevant the student may be referred to the Guidance Counsellor.
- An individualised plan is put in place to support the student. This may include reduced timetable, reduced curriculum, resource teaching etc. This is done in partnership with parents and guardians.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal monitor absences daily.

Awards

- Students with full attendance are recognised with an award at the end of the school year.

Other

The School Calendar is communicated to parents in June to enable them to plan around school closures. This is also available on the school website for access throughout the year. Parents are encouraged wherever possible for appointments such as dental, doctors etc. for their daughters to take place outside of school hours.

Additional strategies include, but are not limited to the following (in random order):

- Homework Club
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Class Teachers for Junior Classes

- Year Heads
- Extra-Curricular Activities
- Supervised Study
- Student Council
- Monitoring and Home Contact by School
- Mentoring Programme by Senior Students for 1st Years
- Transition Year and Leaving Cert Applied Programmes
- Induction Day for 1st Years
- Learning Support
- Twice Daily Computerised Roll Call
- Parent-Teacher Meetings
- Individual Class Roll Call
- Awards Day

F Strategies to Deal with Poor Attendance

If a student is absent for more than 3 consecutive days parents/guardians should phone the school with a progress report to the office.

If a student has been absent for 10 days the office will send a letter to the parents to make them aware of this.

G Roles and Responsibilities

Parents

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parents (Education Welfare Act 2000)

- When a child is absent from school for any reason parents must notify the school by telephone by 10am that day.
- Parents must provide a note of explanation for any absences in their daughters' journal. These notes are signed on the students return to school by the Principal and inspected by all teachers whose class have been missed.
- Where possible all medical appointments should be made outside of school time.
- Should a student have occasion to leave school early or arrive late due to an appointment or otherwise the school requires that a signed note of explanation in their journal be presented to the Principal.

Students

- Have responsibility to attend school every day except for a valid reason.
- Be punctual for class
- Sign the late book and sign in and out in the office if leaving during the day where necessary.
- Must promptly pass on notes to teachers/parents/guardians.

- Must present a note to the Principal to explain their absence on the day of their return between 8.30am and 8.45am.
- Should present the signed stub in their journal to each subject teacher whose class they have missed.
- Should inform the class teacher if they are aware of reasons why they may be absent either for personal reasons or for sporting or extra-curricular reasons.
- If leaving class to go to the toilet, perform an errand etc, the student must have a signed note from their teacher. It is their responsibility to keep their student journal with them at all times as they may be checked if a student is in the corridors during class time.
- Must find out details of work missed. This applies to absence from class for sporting or other extra-curricular activities as well as absence for personal reasons.

Subject Teacher

- Implements high standards and expectations of attendance of all students to achieve to the best of their ability.
- Calls a roll in every class and checks notes for absences from previous class.
- Records their roll on the VSWare system at the 8.50am and 1.50pm class each day.
- Request to see the signed stub in the student journal.
- Address concerns with individual students in relation to absences.
- Informs the Year Head of concerns they may have regarding the attendance of any student.
- Applies fair and consistent disciplinary procedures in line with the Discipline Policy of the school

Teachers may use the following language to describe attendance patterns at parent-teacher meetings and when writing students' reports. (As per NEWB guidelines)

0-4 days absent:	Well above average
5-10 days absent:	Above average
11-13 days absent:	Average
14-19 days absent:	Below average
20+ days absent:	Well below average

Year Head

- Promote attendance and punctuality by setting out clear expectations and responsibilities at assembly for year group.

- A report of absences specific to each year group will be furnished to Year Heads from the office on a monthly basis to identify a pattern of absences to be addressed.
- Year Heads will raise issues of concern regarding attendance at weekly Year Head meetings and complete follow up actions as decided.
- Year Heads may initiate discussions with parents regarding their daughter's absence and follow up as appropriate to encourage and support full participation in school.
- Letter from office will be sent to parents after 15 days absences and this will be co-signed by the Year Head and the Principal.

Principal

- Informs parents/guardians at the beginning of each academic year of the school policy on attendance and punctuality and parent responsibilities in relations to attendance and punctuality.
- Signs notes each morning notes from parents excusing their daughters' absence.
- Informs parents/guardians if their child has to be included in the NEWB report if absent 20 days or more, suspended for 6 days or more or is expelled.
- Ensure the relevant NEWB reports are completed
- Maintains a register of all students who have been enrolled to the school.
- Support work of Year Head by ensuring attendance remains on agenda and by informing Year Heads of issues in relation to attendance.
- Inform parents of the number of day's absences and number of days late on the student school report.

Board of Management

- Ratify and review the Attendance Policy.
- Ensure that the statutory obligations of the school with regard to school attendance and participation are adhered to.
- Ensure that all information is collected and issued in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) and Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003.

7 Information for Parents

The ultimate responsibility for student attendance and punctuality lies with the parent/guardian.

Parents/Guardians can promote good attendance by:

- Ensuring maximum participation in school as well as regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school by 10am if their daughter is absent, this should be followed up with a note in their journal for presenting on their return to school.
- Where there has been a significant absence (3days or more) the school reserves the right to request a doctor's certificate.
- Parents are asked to refrain from taking their daughter's on holidays during term time.
- In exception circumstances of necessary/planned absences, parents are asked to request this in writing from the Principal.
- Ensuring that appointments are arranged for outside of school time when possible e.g. during mid-term breaks, after 3.50pm on Monday and Tuesday and 3.10pm on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
- Showing an interest in their daughter's school day, homework and school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their daughters' achievements.
- Instilling in their child a positive self-concept and self-worth.
- Attend annual parent-teacher meetings to discuss your daughter's progress with her teachers.
- Ensuring their child gets 8-10 hours of sleep a night and refrains from using their mobile phone or social network sites late at night.
- Ensure part-time jobs don't affect your child's progress.

8 Success Criteria

The following will provide some indicators of the success of this policy:

- Improved attendance levels
- High Academic Achievement
- Involvement of Board of Management, staff, parent/guardian and student in the promotion of good attendance and punctuality and in so doing promote achievement of students in the school.

9 Annual Reporting

Attendance records and relevant issues are reported to the school community in a variety of ways including but not limited to the following:

- Staff meetings
- Year Head meetings

- Pastoral Care Meetings
- NEWB reports
- Student reports
- Parent Teacher Meeting

10 Websites of interest to this policy

The Education Welfare Act 2000 is available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>

The National Education Welfare Board <http://www.newb.ie>

The Data Protection Act 1998 is available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>

The Data Protection (Amendment) act 2003 is available at <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>

11 Review and Ratification

- a. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School on 23-5-2016.
- b. This policy may be reviewed as deemed necessary by the Board.

Signature of Chairperson _____ Date _____

Signature of Principal _____ Date _____