



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Our school community provides a caring, happy and safe environment, which strives to foster a love of life-long learning.

We endeavour to develop each person's academic, physical, moral, cultural and spiritual potential based on mutual respect, fairness and honesty.

We want our students to emerge as confident, adaptable, responsible and caring citizens.

School Mission Statement

The Education Welfare Act, 2000 provides a comprehensive framework for promoting regular school attendance. Under the Act, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school, whichever comes later. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) has been established to support school attendance and follow up children who are not attending school regularly.

- St. Colmcille's Community School seeks to ensure that all its students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise his/her potential.
- The School strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.
- All school staff work with students and their families to ensure each student attends regularly and punctually.
- The school continually develops its incentive and rewards system to acknowledge the efforts of students in improving their attendance and punctuality.
- The school challenges the behaviour of those students who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that attendance and punctuality is a priority for all stakeholders in the school including students, parents and teachers.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance for parents and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To further develop a system of rewards and sanctions.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when dealing with attendance related issues or planning reintegration following a significant period of absence

Roles and Responsibility (in relation to attendance & punctuality)

- **The Role of the Parent**

A student should attend school everyday. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that their son/daughter only miss school due to illness or an “unavoidable” circumstance. Medical/dental appointments should be made outside school hours whenever possible. Students should not be taken out of school during term time for family holidays.

If a student misses a day from school it is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school of this absence. A message can be telephoned into the school office. Students returning to school following an absence must have a written note of explanation from their parent. A space is provided for these notes in the student’s journal.

Parents should ensure that their son/daughters arrive to school punctually. Students should arrive 5 minutes before both the beginning of the school day and the afternoon lessons. This gives them time to go to their locker and organise the books and equipment they require for classes.

It is school policy that students with one late (am or pm for senior cycle students) per week are detained on a Friday evening for a 40 minutes detention. Parents are informed of LATES through the LATE STAMP in the journal and we ask that parents support the school by ensuring their son/daughter attend any detention given. Parents can monitor punctuality to school by checking the journal for late stamps. Students who fail to attend Late Detention will be placed on Referral Detention that week.

It is recognised that there may be unavoidable circumstances when a student may arrive late e.g. transport difficulties. The school adopts a flexible approach in these instances and works with the parents and student to support in any way possible

It is through encouraging the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life and in striving to promote their personal development, good citizenship and academic progress attendance patterns are maximized. The school expects parents to full support them in ensuring that their son/daughter’s attend all compulsory school activities.

The decision to limited participation in some activities to a particular group of students is made in the best interests of the students. We would ask that parents fully support school policy and practice in this area.

- **The Role of the Student**

Students must be in their tutor room at the beginning of registration each morning. It is unacceptable for students to send messages to their tutor via other students as to their whereabouts during registration.

On arrival back to school following an absence, students should show their note to the tutor during morning registration.

It is expected that in all cases of absence students will catch up with work missed at the earliest opportunity.

Students who leave the school during the school day are required to sign out in the School Office, giving the time of departure and the reason.

Late arrival (am)

If a student arrives to school late in the morning they will be signed in at the front door by the Principal /Deputy Principal and receive a late stamp in their journal. If the student arrives after 9.05am they should go directly to the School Office and sign in. Failure to sign in late is a serious breach of the school Code of Conduct and students will be disciplined accordingly.

Late arrival (pm)

Senior students are expected to return to school punctually after the lunch break. Students arriving to lessons late after lunch will be sent to the School Office for a late stamp. Students with a recurring pattern of lateness after lunch may have their lunch pass withdrawn.

- **The Role of the Principal /Deputy Principal**

- The Principal/Deputy Principal are responsible for the effective implementation of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal are responsible for making the appropriate attendance returns to TUSLA
- The Principal/Deputy Principal sign in students who arrive to school after registration has begun.
- In liaison with Year Heads the Principal /Deputy Principal will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal will manage the computerised registration system.

- **The Role of 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 parents where a pattern of absence or lateness to school emerges.

In some instances the Year Head may feel that referral to a member of the Care Team is an appropriate strategy in improving attendance. Following discussions with the Principal/Deputy Principal, Parents and Student the Year Head is responsible for making this referral.

- 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.
- The Year Head will notify parents when a student has in the region of fifteen absences, that a report will soon be issued to the National Educational Welfare Board, if the pattern continues.
- The Year Head is responsible for informing parents when a student fails to attend a Late Detention and/or subsequent Referral Detention.

The school is sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of its students and is aware that some students need encouragement to attend school regularly. The Year Head plays a role in supporting students overcome difficulties relating to attendance. This can be done by:

- Liaising with staff
- Referral to Care Team
- Working closely with Parents
- Regularly reviewing strategy in place

The Year Head is responsible for ensuring that standards of attendance and punctuality are a priority within the Year Group. This can be done through Year team meetings, assemblies, certificates, end of year prize giving etc.

- **The Role of the Tutor**

The caring atmosphere nurtured by the tutor aims to encourage full attendance and participation in all areas of school life. The pastoral structures in the school provide a medium through which parents can contact and meet with teachers should any difficulties arise, including those relating to attendance and punctuality.

The tutor is responsible for taking the official roll call each day during morning registration. During this time, the tutor should follow up on absences and collect notes from parents explaining these absences.

If a student is marked absent from one session of the school day (i.e. am or pm) the tutor should clarify with the student the reason for this at the next registration. If the tutor feels the explanation is inappropriate they should discuss it with the Year Head.

The tutor is responsible for amending the computerised registration system so that records of attendance and punctuality are maintained accurately. The tutor is supported in their role by the Year Head and should seek their support if they have concerns about a student's attendance and punctuality. The tutor should alert the Year head if after a number of reminders a student fails to bring a note to explain their absence.

- **The Role of the Subject Teacher**

The subject teacher is responsible for taking a roll call at the beginning of each lesson. These records can be made available to Year Heads, Principal or Deputy Principal should any issue regarding a student's whereabouts at a given time arise.

Subject teachers should inform the Year Head if patterns of absence /lateness emerge for any student in their group.

The subject teacher can communicate any such concerns to the parent through the student journal.

First lesson after lunch

The subject teacher teaching the first lesson after lunch (period 7) is responsible for taking the computerised registration in the afternoon. This roll call should be taken as early into the lesson as practical. Any student arriving late to the lesson should be sent back to the School Office for a late stamp. On return the teacher should check the journal to ensure that the late stamp has been issued.

- **The Role of the Administrative Staff**

Students arriving late to school must report to the School Office where they are issued with a late stamp. The administrative staff record this late on the computerised registration system.

Students leaving the school during the school day must sign out in the School Office, where the time and reason for departure is noted.

The administrative staff monitor the completion of the morning and afternoon roll call. Any incomplete roll calls are followed up to ensure accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained.

The administrative staff make the list of students in Late Detention available to the Year Head.

Computerised Registration System

In striving to implement a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data St. Colmcille's Community School has introduced a computerised registration system.

It is school policy that all morning and afternoon roll calls are taken on this system. Teachers also have the facility to take their class roll calls on this system.

Training has been provided for staff in using this system.

In the event of a technical difficulty with the computerised system staff are asked to take a paper roll call and return it to the School Office.

The Year Heads are able to access the roll calls for all tutor groups in their Year Group. This enables a more effective monitoring of attendance and punctuality and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.

Strategies to Promote Student Participation

The school recognises that good attendance is achieved when students feel happy, secure and part of the school community. It is through encouraging the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life and in striving to promote their personal development, good citizenship and academic progress that we hope to maximise attendance patterns.

We aim to do this in the following ways:

- **Curriculum**

The school offers a wide range and variety of subjects and both Junior and Senior cycle. A comprehensive Transition Year Programme is also offered. Students have the support of a Career Guidance Counsellor, a school chaplain and resource teaching when/if appropriate.

- **Methodologies**

In teaching the curriculum the teacher endeavours to use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. The school management provides and supports professional development of teachers by facilitating their attendance on in-service courses and by offering staff training days.

- **Co-Curricular**

The school's programme of co-curricular/extra curricular activities caters for a wide range of interests in order to maximize student participation. Activities range from sports, drama, visits, exchanges, charity awareness, Year Book and field trips.

- **Pastoral Care**

The school's pastoral care structures and class organization arrangements enable all students to participate in the life of the school in a way that promotes their personal development.

- **Form Tutor /Year Head** – The caring atmosphere nurtured by the form tutor also encourages full participation in school life. The form tutor supported by the Year Head plays a role in instilling a good class spirit to promote friendship and learning. This structure also provides a medium through which parents can contact and meet with teachers.
- **Care Meetings** – Care meetings are held once a month. At these meetings strategies are put in place to support any student who is experiencing difficulties which may impact on their school life. For some students this strategy may be inclusion on the school's Care List. Students on this list are supported by a key worker (usually Year Head). Staff are made aware of the names of these students and should direct any concerns regarding the student to the key worker in the first instance.
- **Parents' Participation** – Parents' contribution is welcomed through the various opening available to them e.g. Parent's Association. Parent-Teacher meetings and relevant information meetings are held during the school year. Part-time work during the school week can at times contribute to poor attendance and punctuality. Parents and students are made aware of the legal position with regard to part-time work and are alerted to any adverse effect it may have on their son/daughters performance.

Monitoring and Review

As part of the Development Planning process St. Colmcille's Community School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures on an on-going basis to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practice.

