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MEÁN SCOIL NAOMH IOSAIF
ST. JOSEPH'S
SECONDARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date staff consulted:	September 2021
Date parents consulted:	
Date students consulted:	
Date ratified at B.O.M. meeting:	
Date for Review:	September 2021

Signed _____ Date _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed _____ Date _____
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Policy on School Attendance

School Ethos

St. Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school established in 1952 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy Schools, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

St. Joseph's Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treasured as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realise our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, co-operation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal. The Good News of the Gospel is our story.

While St. Joseph's ensures that school attendance is monitored for all students, it stresses and rewards students who achieve high levels of attendance as well as monitoring those who struggle to attend school and encourage them to improve their attendance.

The system of rewards includes comment in Student Journal, presentation of Certificates of Attendance, Awards, and class outings/trips as appropriate. (Due to current Covid guidelines and restrictions, the awards system is on hold).

The school recognises the central role of parents in supporting and encouraging good attendance among the student body.

- This policy is a statement of strategies and measures to foster appreciation of learning among pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school.
- Every child has the right to an education.
- The Board of Management and staff of St. Joseph's Secondary School see good school attendance as a means of upholding this basic right. The Board of Management and staff view it as their duty to support the child in this right. Absenteeism of any kind is taken seriously.
- Gross or chronic absenteeism is seen as symptomatic of other problems and necessitates further enquiry by the Year Head, Deputy, Principal, and other, (eg: SEN team, Counsellor, etc), as appropriate.
- This policy was drawn up by staff of St. Joseph's Secondary School in consultation with and ratified by Board of Management and circulated to staff and parents / guardians of the children. The purpose of the policy is to document current and future practice on school attendance. The policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Joseph's Secondary School, is a co-educational secondary school which seeks to develop the full potential of each student intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social cultural and religious. To achieve this, the school seeks to recognise and affirm individual skills and abilities through curricular and extra-curricular activities.

We understand school as all school-related activities, sport, liturgies, school outings, seminars, examinations and parent teacher meetings.

Aims of Policy

1. To encourage the children to attend school on a daily basis.
2. To enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community.
3. To encourage the children to take responsibility for their actions.

Procedures

St. Joseph's undertakes to inform parents of their duty to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. There is an obligation on each parent/guardian to ensure that their child's **absence is explained** (section 18 Education Welfare Act). There is an expectation by the school that this **explanation be in written form** and be produced to the Year Head upon their return to school, **or by telephone call to the school office.**

The school secretary logs the communication from parents/guardians on the VShare system **or on their return to school the absence note must be brought to the Year Head and signed off on by the Year Head and filed.**

Late to school/class is logged on the VShare system by the class teacher or school secretary as applicable.

Attendance reports are available on **VShare for parents and staff to view.**

Upon reaching 5 days unexplained absence the parents/guardians or students will be contacted by the Year Head.

Upon reaching twenty days absence the students' attendance will be brought to the attention of the Education Welfare Officer of the National Education Welfare Board (Section 21 Education Welfare Act). This may happen earlier at the discretion of the principal. The age of the student must be held in mind when dealing with the NEWB and the reporting of prolonged absences.

Introduction

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

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

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive 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. The Board 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 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.

The Educational Welfare Board

The National Educational Welfare Board is given the lead role in implementing the provisions of the Act:

- The principal function of the Board is to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.
- The Board also has an advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance and education provision.
- The Board 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 the Board 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:

Mon., Tues., Wed., and Thurs: 9.00 – 3.45

Fri . 9.00 – 1.15

- 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 attendance using VS Ware at the start of each lesson.

A text message alerting parents to a student's absence will be sent after the first lesson in the am.

- After 5 days unexplained absence, the parents/guardians are contacted by the Year Head to alert them of the concern over the large number of absences.
- The Subject teacher/Class teacher/Year Head communicates the names of students of concern to the Student Support Team at their SST meeting and 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, the Principal contacts the parents/guardians of students under 16 to inform them of the school's obligation to inform the EWB.

Procedure for recording Explanations for Absence

- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed in his/her Student Journal and signed off on by the Year Head before 9am on the day of return. (In the absence of the Year Head, the Principal or Deputy Principal will sign).
- The Year Head 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, he/she contacts the parents informing them of the unexplained absences and requesting further information re: same.

School Activity/Work Experience

- Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded on the VSware system as school activity (Sch).
- Teachers organising the school activity provide the administration and teaching 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. The staff member accompanying or organising the event phones the school on the morning of the activity to confirm the presence/absence of the students.
- The students engaging in the activity will be expected to get the homework completed as normal.

Late Policy

- Students are requested to get into 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/her lateness must be clearly stated and presented to the subject teacher on entry to class.
- The subject teacher will enter the code Late on the VS Ware system.
- If a student accrues eight late notes they will be put on detention.

Truancy

- Truancy is considered an extreme violation of the School Code of Conduct and incurs immediate detention
- In school Truancy (where a student remains in the school building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs an incident sheet.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents/guardians and students are requested not to make medical or dental appointments during school hours.

- Where this is not possible, a permission to leave the school note must be completed in the Student Journal and signed off on by the Year Head (Principal/Deputy) on the day in question before 9am.
- The administration staff will record the student's name on the Signing Out Book.
- When a parent/guardian arrives to collect his/her daughter he/she must sign the Signing Out book and indicate whether or not the student is expected to return.
- The student is required to sign in on their return.

Communication with Parents

- A text message alerting parents to a student's absence will be sent once logged on the VSware system in the second period.
- Parents have full access to their child's attendance and punctuality record through VSware. Parents/guardians are encouraged to regularly check the system.
- Parents/guardians are contacted by the Year Head once a student has been absent, unexplained, in excess of 5 days and again by the Principal when a student is absent, unexplained in excess of 20 days
- Individual subject teachers can track a student's attendance for their given subject using VS Ware and are encouraged to contact a parent/guardian 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 Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies re same.
- When a Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes explaining his/her absences, the Principal will contact the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.

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 information is received from parents in relation to a student's absence, teachers are notified of this through the Year Head.
- **In the case of a prolonged absence and if requested by parents, teachers are encouraged to place classwork and notes on TEAMS.**

School Action

In order to encourage student attendance, St. Joseph's Secondary School will develop and implement grade appropriate strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

- Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, sport days, school tours, trips to cinema) will be scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before school holidays).
- **Certificate for Excellent Attendance**
- **Comment in Student Diary**

Community Awareness

The Board of Management shall promote necessary community awareness of the Policy on School Attendance by:

1. Promoting the understanding of the policy to students and their parents/guardians.
2. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the Policy on School Attendance.
3. Make the policy available on the school website.

Annual Review by the Board of Management:

The Board of Management shall annually review the level of student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall direct the Principal to develop and implement revisions and plans deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Joseph's Secondary School, in November 2017 and will be implemented by Year Heads, Deputy Principal and communicated through school administration.

Incentives:

On a monthly basis Year Heads will acknowledge good attendance by recording same in the Student Journal. Other incentives are presentation of Certificates of Attendance, Awards, and class outings/trips as appropriate.