

St. Vincent's Secondary School

Attendance Strategy

August 2017

School Roll Number: 60400F

1. SCOPE

This strategy applies to the students, staff and parents/guardians of St. Vincent's Secondary School, Glasnevin and relates to all aspects of school attendance and punctuality.

2. RELATIONSHIP TO OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We at St. Vincent's are committed to promoting high standards of attendance and punctuality. By encouraging our students to take responsibility for their actions, as well as empowering parents as primary educators, we will "promote leadership, foster community and respect diversity", in accordance with our Mission Statement. This strategy is dedicated to helping each student reach his full potential, both socially and educationally.

3. RATIONALE

- To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the students.
- To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process.
- To ensure that students benefit fully from opportunities that this school offers them.
- To ensure that all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance.
- To ensure that the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and other relevant acts. Under recent legislation, TUSLA has been established to oversee school attendance nationwide and each school has been assigned an Education Welfare Officer whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to attendance problems which may emerge. The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:
 1. A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days.
 2. The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty.
 3. A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal.

4. A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending regularly.

4. GOALS

This strategy sets out to:

- Set and communicate high standards of attendance.
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Encourage students to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
- Ensure accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
- Identify early pupils at risk of absenteeism.
- Foster an appreciation of learning.
- Improve communication with parents.
- To ensure a whole school approach in relation to attendance.

5. A POSITIVE APPROACH TO ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

- Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations. We encourage each student to take responsibility for his own learning and achieve their full potential through regular attendance in class.
- Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care Programme (including the HSCL coordinator).

- Members of the Care Team meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.
- Reports to Parents/Guardians include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question.
- Records of attendance and punctuality are available for parents to view on VS Ware by logging in using the unique password for that student.
- The school's reward system acknowledges excellent attendance and punctuality.
- A large emphasis is placed on being an active member of the school community, including extra-curricular activities.

6. PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR STRATEGY

- We are committed to attendance as an important aspect of our school ethos and school policy.
- High Expectations for Every Student – we aim to build a culture of high expectations among all staff and with every student for the student's learning, participation and attendance.
- A Whole-School Approach – we recognise how all areas of a student's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance.
- A Whole-Child Approach – we recognise the complexity of some students' lives and difficulties. We strive to secure the involvement and support of many agencies and community supports for the student's overall well-being and welfare.
- Working in Partnership with Parents/Guardians and Families – We place a huge emphasis on teamwork with parents/guardians to secure high levels of attendance, partnership in developing attendance policy and close working relationships with parents of individual students to address problems.
- Valuing and Responding to Diversity – Our strategy affirms the school's commitment to valuing the culture of every student and ensuring that every student will make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the school.
- Recognising resilience and Avoiding Stereotypes - We recognise every student's capacity to attend school, learn well and achieve good outcomes. We will challenge stereotypes that students from particular backgrounds or

with particular experiences will always encounter problems or difficulties with attendance and learning.

- Focusing on Personal Responsibility – We strive to build each student’s sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and their responsibility to their peers and their teachers to be at school every day.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal:

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.
- To monitor attendance records regularly.
- To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences / withdrawal of students from the school.
- To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.

Deputy Principal:

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Form Tutors, Class Teachers, Care Team and Administration Staff and to implement School Policy.
- To liaise with the Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student’s attendance.
- To meet with students who had unauthorised absence from class.
- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- To conduct an attendance and punctuality audit at the end of each term.
- Contact home to acknowledge excellent attendance and punctuality and to raise concerns about patterns of poor attendance and punctuality.

Form Tutor:

- To record manually into the teachers diary the attendance of the form class at 08:50 each morning.
- To check absence notes from parents/guardian and to store these safely for the duration of the year.
- To liaise with the HSCL Coordinator and Deputy Principal in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance.
- To report a student for lates detention if they receive more than three morning late stamps or one afternoon late stamp.

Class Teacher:

- To record the attendance of every class every day and log it onto VS Ware. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will take a list of the names of every student in the classroom (essential information in the case of an evacuation of the school).
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.
- Acknowledge students, welcome them back and support them upon their return to school.
- They need to carry out an initial investigation and refer to Tutor if the student does not have a satisfactory explanation for absence from your class.

Parents / Guardians:

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000).
- To ensure regular attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.
- To provide a written reason for the student's absence on the first day of return to school in the student's journal.
- All messages relating to student absences must be confirmed in writing as soon as possible for the attention of the Form Tutor.
- To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative "emergency" numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary.

- To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.
- To acknowledge, and where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays.
- Signing in and out of school: Any student who needs to leave school can only do so when contact has been made with a parent and permission granted. The student must report back to reception if that student is returning to school following an appointment.
- Student taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises: In the event of a student taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises the school must be notified immediately by Parent / Guardian.

Student:

- To punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- Report to the office through the front door upon arrival if they are late.
- Following an absence from school, to present a written explanation to their Form Tutor in the School Journal on the day of return to class.

Attendance Officer:

- To liaise with and assist class teachers in matters relating to the recording and inputting of the attendance into VS Ware.
- To attempt to make contact with parents / guardians when a student is absent in order to ascertain the reason for absence.
- To work in conjunction with the HSCL Coordinator in submitting necessary reports to TUSLA.
- To participate in the Care Team and assist in matters relating to attendance and punctuality.
- To manage the lates system in the mornings and afternoons.

- To liaise regularly with the HSCL Coordinator in relation to matters of attendance and punctuality.

HSCL Coordinator:

- Targets children at risk of not reaching their potential in the education system because of family-based issues, which adversely affect pupil attainment and school retention.
- Focuses directly on the significant adults in the children's lives and seeks direct benefits for the children themselves.
- Works in an enabling way with parents to develop their capacity as a key resource in their children's learning.
- Develops the pupil-parent-teacher relationship so that school becomes a place where all young people can reach their potential.
- Becomes familiar with attendance patterns, in order to maximise student attendance, participation and retention.
- Works in a supportive and purposeful way with parents and facilitates communication with class teacher, Form Tutor and school management, when required.
- Promotes positive teacher and staff attitudes towards partnership – working and adopting a whole-school approach to attendance participation and retention.

DEIS Coordinator

- Works in conjunction with the school's DEIS Committee to produce a *Plan to Promote Attendance* as one of the Key Strands of the DEIS Plan (1 Year and 3 Year Plans).
- Specify how attendance should improve as a result of measures in the school's DEIS Plan.
- State proposed measures (both existing and new) to improve attendance, including which member of staff is responsible, when it is happening and what resources are required.
- State how progress will be monitored and at what intervals over the three years.
- Explain how impact of actions on attendance will be evaluated at the end of

the three years.

- State how progress will be measured, using baseline data and targets as guides.

8. Day to Day Implementation:

- All students will attend Form Tutor Time at 08:45. The roll is recorded electronically on VS Ware and manually into the Form Tutor's Roll Book. Absence notes are submitted to the Form Tutor.
- Those arriving after 08:50 will be recorded as late by the Form Tutor.
- Those arriving after 09:02 must report through the front door to the main office to receive a late stamp from the Attendance Officer. The Attendance Officer will amend the record from *absence unexplained* to *late explained/unexplained*.
- Students who leave the school during the day must report to the office, where contact must be made with a parent/guardian before a student is permitted to sign out. If a student is returning later that day he must sign back in at the office.
- Each teacher then takes a roll call at the beginning of each class and records it on VS Ware.
- Where students are absent from school because of school related extra-curricular activities, this is entered into the system by the Attendance Officer as *School Activity*. The teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of names and, prior to departure, posts this on the Staff Notice Board and provides a copy of the list to the office. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify Attendance Officer of same.