



School Attendance Strategy & Policy

AIM

As a Mercy school, we strive to set high standards and encourage students to aspire to the pursuit of excellence. This we feel is achieved by good classroom management, creating an atmosphere that is orderly and disciplined. The aim of our School Attendance Strategy & Policy is to facilitate students in achieving this excellence and availing of opportunities to develop his or her personal and professional potential to the full. The Mercy School aims to form people of competence and conscience; people with a Christian vision and value system, who can play a full role in society today.

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE

This policy is a school-wide policy, for implementation by all staff, students, parents/guardians and Board of Management.

This policy strives to set out the basic principles upon which the School Attendance Strategy will be implemented, sustained and evaluated in our school.

The policy itself has been developed (through a partnership committee representing/in consultation with) the Board of Management, parents/guardians, staff and students.

RATIONALE

Education is important

In this school we are educators first. Education is the foundation stone upon which a child's development for later life is built. Parents/guardians are the primary educators and as such are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children receive the education which they have a right to and deserve. The school is here to support and enhance this education.

Attendance at school and full participation in school life is therefore extremely important.

Research has shown that poor attendance and poor participation are directly linked to low educational achievement and early school leaving.

An environment where children want to come to school.

The school wants to work in partnership with parents/guardians to ensure that the environment is created where children look forward to coming to school and participating in school life.

The school wants to create conditions where children see that it is in their own interest to come to school regularly.

The school and parents/guardians have certain obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 regarding attendance and participation.

Our School Attendance Policy will only work if there is good communication between the school, parents/guardians and students.

POLICY GOALS

Meeting educational and personal needs

This policy statement will assist towards developing a school environment where all students feel welcome in the school, and where their educational and personal needs are met within the resources provided to the school. The school management and staff will:

1. Implement the monitoring and recording aspects of the School's Attendance Strategy.
2. Highlight the importance of regular attendance.
3. Encourage regular attendance and participation in school life.
4. Encourage good communication between parents/guardians and the school.
5. Establish procedures for attendance record-keeping for the school, students, parents/guardians and Tusla.
6. Develop working partnerships between the school and other relevant agencies and services such as Tusla.
7. Support students and parents/guardians where there are attendance problems.

CONTENT OF POLICY

Expectation of all students

The school expects all students registered in the school to attend all timetabled classes every day. If a student is absent then the school will require an explanation in writing from the parent/guardian.

Legal Responsibility

If a student is under 16 or he/she has not yet completed 3 years at post-primary school, it is the parent/guardian's legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day, and if he/she is absent, that an explanation has been provided to the school stating the reason for absence.

Referral to Tusla

If a student is absent for a total of 20 days or more during the school year, the school is obliged by law to report this to Tusla. This report must be made irrespective of the reasons a student is absent.

If the school is very concerned about the pattern of a student's absences, then the school is also obliged to inform Tusla.

The school will always inform the parent/guardian if a report is being made to Tusla.

School Calendar and timetable:

Parents/guardians will be notified of school re-opening dates for the new school year in June each year. Parents/guardians should consult the school's website for the opening and closing times of the school, and details of school holidays and other closures. The website also contains information regarding parent-teacher meetings and other whole-school events.

In advance of staff meetings/days where the school must be closed, parents/guardians will be send a text and/or email. Any changes to contact details should be furnished to the school office without delay.

Parents/guardians are requested to ensure familiarity with their child's class timetable. This will be available to view on the school management system VSWare using the parental login and the child will have their timetable in their school journal.

All students will be expected to be in school during the normal school hours.

Medical appointments etc.

If a student has their parent/guardian's permission to leave the school early for e.g. a medical appointment, a written note/email/phone call must be provided to the school. Alternatively, the absence can be recorded on the appropriate form on the school's website. On leaving the school the student will need to be collected by the parent/guardian and the parent/guardian will need to sign the student out at the School Office.

Parents/guardians and students should consult the School Code of Behaviour for the procedures which will be followed if a student leaves the school premises without permission.

If a student becomes unwell parents/guardians need to be contactable. Emergency contact must be supplied to the office. Any changes to contact details should be furnished to the school office without delay. In the event of illness – the student remains in the school until they are collected by a parent/guardian. Students must follow the school policy of reporting to the office when unwell and not contacting parents/guardians by mobile phone.

In the event where a parent/guardian is uncontactable and the student needs urgent medical attention, 2 members of staff will accompany the student to the nearest GP/hospital and attempts will continue to be made to contact the parent/guardian.

In the event of a student taking ill on a school trip and requiring urgent medical attention, then one member of staff and two other students will accompany the student to the nearest GP/hospital and attempts will continue to be made to contact the parent/guardian.

Holidays

Parents/guardians are encouraged to avoid taking their child out of school for holidays. This has the potential to impair his/her education. It is very difficult for any child to catch up with what has been missed when out of school for an extended holiday.

There are, of course, exceptional circumstances where parents may have to take their son/daughter out of school during term time. However, parents/guardians should always be aware of potential risks to the child's education, and therefore these situations should be kept to an absolute minimum and the school should always be informed.

Please note that a report will have to be made to Tusla if the total absences over the year is in excess of 20 days or if the school is concerned about the child's attendance.

Explanation for absence

If a child has been absent with e.g. sickness for a number of days, she/he must have a note from the parent/guardian with an explanation of his/her absence. This note should be given to the office on the morning of his/her first day back. Alternatively, the absence can be reported via the appropriate form on the school's website.

If explanation is not given the school may contact the parent/guardian to explain absence.

Extended Absences

If a child has been absent for more than 10 days and has attended a doctor, the parent/guardian should submit a doctor's note to the office. Alternatively the parent/guardian may make an appointment to see the student's Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal to discuss.

Good communication is vital and the school would prefer if parent(s)/guardian(s) would keep the school up-to-date about a child's condition.

Please keep in touch with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, and Class Teacher etc.

If the school is not satisfied with the level of information about the child's extended absence, then the school may need to make a report to Tusla.

If a parent/guardian needs assistance in ensuring a child attends school, the parent/guardian should contact the school immediately to obtain support. Alternatively the parent/guardian may contact the Educational Welfare Officer at Tusla, Child & Family Agency national helpline 1890363666.

Recording of non-attendance

The class teacher will record a child's attendance or non-attendance in class during every timetabled lesson.

A text will be sent home each morning to parents/guardians of each child who is recorded as absent.

If a student is late he/she should, on arrival go directly to the office with a written explanation from the parent/guardian and have the time of arrival recorded. Alternatively, the late arrival to school can be recorded on the appropriate form on the school's website. He/she will then be recorded as late and not absent. If he/she is late without a written explanation, this will be recorded and dealt with under the Code of Behaviour.

In general the school would advise regular contact with the school to keep us up to date. If the school is aware of the reasons for absence and is satisfied with these reasons, there will be less difficulty for all concerned.

The school's primary concern is each child's educational welfare.

School Reports

End of term reports may contain the number of days that a child has missed to date. If parents/guardians have any queries about this please contact the school office.

Communication

At the core of all relationships in the school is mutual respect and understanding, supported by good communication.

Please feel free at any time to contact the school if there are any matters of concern. All matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.

CONTACT DETAILS

The relevant school personnel are
School Secretary, Year Heads, Principal, Deputy Principal
Tel: 071-9183086

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be implemented by the Board of Management in the spirit of partnership through consultation with the school partners, within the available resources of the school.

The use of the school resources is at all times subject to the permission of the Board of Management.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

The Board of Management in consultation with the staff and the Parents Association and Student Council will establish criteria upon which the on-going success of the partnership approach is measured.

Success criteria may include:

1. Attendance rates
2. Improved explanations for absences
3. Improved timekeeping
4. Overall participation in school, extra-curricular activities etc.
5. Homework/study: improvements, more participation
6. Less children leaving school before completing the Leaving Certificate
7. General work ethic, student achievement

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Board of Management will carry out monitoring of the policy. Teaching Staff, Parents Association and Student Council will be central to this monitoring and evaluation.

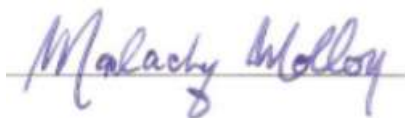
REVIEW PROCEDURES

The Board of Management in consultation with the school partners will, after one year, and every two years thereafter, review this policy. It will be the responsibility of the Principal to bring the policy before the Board for review at the appropriate time.

REVIEW AND RATIFICATION

This Policy was reviewed by students, staff and parents in May 2021 and ratified by the Board of Management on 24th June 2021.

Signed



Date 24/06/2021

Chairperson, Board of Management