

St. Louis Community School

Attendance Policy



Introduction

Education gives every child the best possible start in life. It helps them mature and develop into responsible young adults and it assists them in securing and maintaining meaningful employment. Procedures in St. Louis Community School are based on the belief that a student's attendance and punctuality strongly influence development and achievement. The procedures are in accordance with Section 21 and 22 of the Education Welfare Act (2000). We aim to encourage excellence, integrity and responsibility in this area. The purpose of our school policy on attendance is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in the education system.

This policy should be read in conjunction with

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Suspension and Expulsion Policy
- Whole School Guidance Policy
- Education Welfare Act 2000

The Education Welfare Act 2000

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

1. Schools are required to establish and maintain a school register, showing attendance or non-attendance for each student.
2. 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.
3. The Child and Family Agency, TUSLA operates the Education Support Services. TUSLA has appointed Education Welfare Officers to work with schools to encourage school attendance.
4. The act stipulates that the school is obliged to report to the TUSLA Education Support Services if a student is expelled, suspended, has absences in excess of 20 days or their absences are a cause for concern.
- 5) Schools must prepare a student absence report and submit this information at designated times each year in summary format for all students.

Attendance and the responsibilities of parents/guardians

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parents/guardians (refer to The Education Welfare Act 2000). They must make every effort to encourage the attendance and punctuality of their child. Parents'/guardians' responsibilities for their child's attendance are as follows:

- Parents/guardians must send their son or daughter to school until the age of sixteen or until three years education in post primary is completed, whichever comes later.
- To notify the school, via the St. Louis app of the reason for any absences. "Absentee Forms", "Permission to Leave Forms" and "Late Notes" signed by parent(s)/guardian(s) are required to cover any absences, early leaving or late arrival. Notes must be submitted by parent/guardians on the school app in advance.
- Medical certificates or attendance certs may be requested for prolonged absences.
- Parents are strongly discouraged from taking family holidays during school term as this can have a negative impact on students' learning.
- Student attendance records are available on VShare. Parents/guardians are encouraged to regularly check their child's attendance.

Attendance and the responsibilities of students

Students must take responsibility for their own attendance as follows:

- Signing In: If a student is late to school, they must sign in at the main office to have their Late Note approved on the app. Any student who arrives late to school and does not have a Late Note submitted on the app, must report to the main office; where they must sign the late register and have their journal stamped.
- Signing Out: Prior to leaving the school grounds every student must sign out at the main office to have their Permission to Leave Form approved on the app. If the student returns on the same day, they must sign back in at the main office.
- Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds without first signing out at the main office.
- Senior Cycle students must remain on the school grounds at break but are permitted to leave the school grounds during lunchtime.
- Junior Cycle students must remain on the school grounds at break and lunch time.
- There may be occasions during school hours when a student feels unwell. Should this situation arise, the student must notify a staff member. Contact with parent/guardian must take place via the main office in this situation.

- Students must be on time for all classes throughout the school day. Failure to do so will result in a sanction given by their class teacher.
- Students should only sign out early when necessary for pre-arranged appointments such as medical, dental etc.
- Students who sign out during the day, will occur a partial absence on their record.
- Student attendance records are available on VShare. Students are encouraged to regularly check their attendance.

Attendance and the responsibilities of the Principal

The Principal has responsibility for the administration of the attendance register on VShare and for coordinating the analysis and communication of data to all involved, including TUSLA, in accordance with this policy. The Principals responsibilities for student attendance are as follows:

- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance
- Leads the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Policy
- Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- The Principal must ensure that a Summary Absence Report is submitted to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Service at designated times each year. This report contains a list of students who have reached 20 days absence or more. The absences must be categorised under one of the six headings of Illness, family business, appointment, other (Religion, Holiday etc.), unexplained, suspended, transferred to another school.
- Where the school has a concern about a student's attendance and where the school has made efforts to resolve the problem and the school still remains concerned about the student's attendance, a referral will be made to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The Principal oversees this referral in consultation with the Year Head and Deputy Principal. Referrals to the EWO can only be made for students under 16 years of age.
- The Principal will liaise with the VShare Administration team to ensure that a text message will be sent to the designated mobile number of the parent / guardian at 9.30am to inform of the student absence.

Attendance and the responsibilities of the Deputy Principal

The Deputy Principal will monitor the attendance of the Year Group in conjunction with the Year Heads. The Deputy Principals responsibilities for student attendance are as follows:

- The Deputy Principal will assist the Principal in the implementation of the school's attendance policy
- The Deputy Principal will meet regularly with the Year Heads to discuss student attendance.
- The Deputy Principal assists the Year Head to implement targeted interventions to help improve attendance, taking into account student circumstances.
- Where there is an on-going concern about a student's attendance despite efforts made to resolve the problem, a referral will be made to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The Deputy Principal will make the referral in consultation with the Year Head and the Principal.
- Following a referral to the EWO, the student's parent/guardian may be requested to attend a meeting with the Educational Welfare Officer and the Deputy Principal.

Attendance and the responsibilities of Year Heads

The Year Head will monitor the attendance of their Year Group. The Year Head's responsibilities for student attendance are as follows:

- The Year Heads will monitor the attendance of the year group and ensure that all absences are explained and accounted for.
- They will contact the parents/guardians of those students when their attendance is a cause for concern.
- When contacting parents/guardians, the Year Head will use their discretion in relation to student circumstances.
- The Year Head will implement targeted interventions to help improve attendance, taking into account student circumstances.
- Year Heads will encourage students to attend school and they will commend students who have excellent records of attendance.
- Convene and attend meetings with parents to discuss their child's attendance.
- Remind students at Year Head assemblies of the importance of regular attendance.

- The procedures for contacting parents by the Year Head are as follows:

Procedure
A text message via VSware, a phone call or an email will be sent to the parents/guardians highlighting the student's attendance record.
Where a student's attendance record remains a cause for concern, the student and the parent/guardian will be invited to attend a meeting with the Year Head and Deputy Principal.
Where a student's attendance record continues to remain a cause for concern, a referral can be made to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Officer. The referral is made in consultation with the Deputy Principal and the Principal.

Attendance and the responsibilities of teachers

- Attendance at all classes, which must be regular and punctual, will be monitored by the classroom teacher.
- The classroom teacher will call the roll at the beginning of each class and record the students that are present or absent on VSware. Any late arrivals will also be recorded on VSware.
- In the event that a student is late for class, the class teacher will impose an agreed sanction in line with the Code of Behaviour.
- In the event of a VSware malfunction, teachers will manually call the roll and submit it to the main office.
- Teachers will alert the relevant Year Head of patterns of absenteeism that are of concern.
- Teachers taking students out of school for school activities will mark the students as withdrawn in advance of their absence from class. Subsequently, should any student not attend the activity, the teacher will amend that student's attendance.

Interventions to Promote attendance

In order to promote the importance of attendance, the school provides whole school interventions to all students and targeted interventions to certain students. The school recognises that certain groups or individuals may need additional support with attendance and this is provided through targeted interventions. These groups include:

- Students with special educational needs
- Students with physical or mental health needs
- Students who have experienced bullying
- Students experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Students disengaged from the curriculum
- Students from the Traveller or Roma communities
- Students who are experiencing homelessness
- Students who are asylum seekers or living in international protection accommodation services
- Students in foster care
- Young carers or young parents
- Students whose parents have not had a positive school experience
- Students from a socio-economically deprived family or community.
- Students experiencing difficulties at home
- Any other reasonable concerns

Whole school Interventions to promote attendance

The interventions outlined below are designed to have a positive impact on student attendance	
• Broad curriculum with subjects that suit the talents of a variety of students • Code of Behaviour • Anti-Bullying Policy • Year Head Assemblies • Big Brother/Big Sister Programme • 1st Year Induction Programme • SPHE & RSE programmes • Pastoral Care Team • Sports teams	• Chaplaincy Team • Student Council • Extra-Curricular activities • School clubs • School Meals Programme • School App notify parents of student absence • Access to attendance record on VSware for parents • Attendance taken each class by the teacher • Seasonal events

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Targeted Interventions to promote attendance

The targeted interventions outlined below are designed to have a positive impact on student attendance. The implementation of these interventions will depend on individual student circumstances.

• Differentiated curriculum for certain students • AEN Support • JCSP Programme • Homework Club • Meetings with Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain, SEN support • Educational Welfare Officer	• Home Tuition • Home based Summer Programme • Outside agencies including: Nationals Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), National Council for Special Education (NCSE), HSE, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), TUSLA, Mind Space Mayo and other relevant organisations.
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Adoption

1. This policy was adopted by The Board of Management on _____
2. This policy has been made available to school personnel, Student Council, Parents' Association, and has been published on the school website. A copy will be made available to the Department of Education and to the Trustees, if requested.
3. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year. Written notification of the completion of this review will be provided to school personnel and Parents' Association and will be published on the school website.

A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Trustee and to the Department of Education.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next review: _____

The school may seek the assistance of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Barnardos, Tusla – The Child and Family Agency and any other organisation that may be of assistance.