

# **St. Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School**



## **Attendance and Punctuality Strategy**

**November 2017**

## **Scope**

This Attendance and Punctuality strategy was drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, staff, parents/guardians and students of St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School and relates to all aspects of school attendance and punctuality. It takes into consideration the national legislation relevant to this strategy.

## **Relationship to the school's Mission, Vision and Aims**

St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School is an ecumenical, open and welcoming secondary school with a Church of Ireland ethos. We believe that children learn and benefit greatly from interacting with others of a different background, race or creed as this encourages tolerance and acceptance in our multicultural society.

Our mission is to encourage students to strive for excellence in their academic studies and extra-curricular activities. We try to create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, in which we can help students reach their full potential.

Here in St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School we aim to educate young people to ensure they become well-rounded adults, to teach all our students the value and importance of their role in society and to identify the personal strengths of each individual and help them fulfil their potential.

Therefore, the Board of Management of St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School recognises that punctuality and regular school attendance is an essential precondition of social inclusion and a prerequisite to effective learning.

## **Rationale**

In St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School we have identified attendance and punctuality as an area of focus. This strategy aims to help each student develop to their full potential, both socially and educationally and is intended to foster a good, mature attitude towards attendance and punctuality.

## **Objectives**

Through implementation of this strategy St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School expects to:

- Encourage full attendance at school.
- Highlight the importance of punctuality and attendance amongst students and parents.
- Positively enforce punctual attendance.
- Maintain an effective attendance record-keeping system through VS Ware.
- Develop suitable intervention strategies to improve school attendance and punctuality.

# **Policy Content**

## **1. The Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 18**

The Education Welfare Act 2000 imposes statutory duties on parents and schools re. attendance. It is the duty of the school to inform the National Educational Welfare Board when;

- A student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days.
- A student is absent for 20 days or more aggregate in a school year, for any reason.

Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she is registered during part of the school day, or for a school day or more than a school day, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the Code of Behaviour prepared by the school under section 23, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

## **2. National Education Welfare Board**

Under legislation 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 Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established to support school attendance and to follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.

Parents/guardians must notify the school if their child is absent and the reason for this absence. It is school policy that explanations must be given in writing.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School

It is a legal requirement that the school will;

- Be open for 167 sessions each school year.
- Maintain attendance registers.
- Accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
- Clearly distinguish between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised.
- Submit termly absence returns to the NEWB.
- Liaise with the NEWB Officer regarding absence issues and meet with relevant families.

The following procedures are used by the school:

- A record of attendance is taken by the classroom teacher, using VS Ware, during the first period of the day and no later than 9.30am.
- The school office will inform parents/guardians, by text message, if their child is late or absent (without authorisation) no later than 10.30am.
- Post-registration truancy is monitored through the taking of class registers and spot checks. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are promptly informed of any post-registration truancy.

- The school office will inform Form Teachers if a student in their year has 5 unexplained absences – this will be communicated to the parents via text message, email, letter, phone call or parent teacher meetings.
- The Attendance & Punctuality post holder will be informed where a student has 10 or more unexplained absences and contact will be made with the parent(s)/guardian(s) requesting a meeting with the relevant personnel in order to devise a strategy which will aim to improve the student's attendance at school.
- The Guidance/Pastoral Care team are requested to liaise with at risk students.

#### Rewards & Sanctions:

- St Patrick's Cathedral Grammar School aims to create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance by recognising and rewarding students who have achieved 100% attendance and punctuality with a School Certificate at the Prize Giving Ceremony in the Cathedral in December.
- Attendance and punctuality will be commented upon in all school reports and references, either favourably or unfavourably.
- Sanctions as laid down in the school's Code of Behaviour\*, will be imposed for late arrival, truancy and unexplained or unacceptable absences, unless the student arrives with an acceptable written explanation from a parent/guardian or the school is contacted before 10.30am.

- Poor attendance and punctuality may result in the removal of certain school privileges such as class outings/tours, consideration for position of Class Captain /Prefect etc.

*\*This may need to be review in due course.*

### **The students:**

Teaching and learning are the most important activities in our school. To learn effectively students must attend school regularly and arrive to their classes prepared and on time. Late arrival by students not only interferes with their own learning but disrupts the teaching and learning of others.

- Students are expected to be in school before 8.50am and remain for all classes.
- When a student arrives late they must sign the 'late register' and collect a 'late pass' from the school office before going to their class. The class teacher will note the arrival time and adjust the class roll on VS Ware accordingly. Failure to sign the late register will result in a student being recorded as absent.
- Form 1 students are not permitted to leave the school grounds at lunchtime until after the Christmas term and then may only do so with written permission from parents/guardians.
- Only Form 6 students are permitted to leave the premises at break time.
- In the interests of the safety of the student, a pupil may not leave the school premises during school hours, without permission from the school authorities.

- Students who have a medical/dental or other appointment during the course of the school day must bring a written note from parent(s)/guardian(s) requesting permission to leave the school early. Those notes must be presented to the Form Teacher during the registration period or before the student leaves the school premises. The student must also sign out at the school office. If a student returns to school during class time they must sign back in at the school office, before returning to class.

**Parent(s)/Guardian(s):**

Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible, by law, for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered regularly, on time, dressed in the school uniform and in a fit condition to learn.

Therefore, parent(s)/guardian(s) must play an active role in supporting the regular and punctual attendance of their children.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) should:

- Take an active interest in their child's school life and work.
- Ensure that their child arrives in school on time and prepared for their classes every day.
- Ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness.
- Always notify the school as soon as possible – preferably before 10.30am on the first morning - of any absence.



- Confirm this in writing when their child returns to school.
- Avoid booking family holidays or making unnecessary appointments during the school term.
- Contact the school if they are concerned that their child is reluctant to attend school.
- Avoid collecting their child unexpectedly from school as this results in significant disruption to teaching and learning.
- Ensure that their child gets adequate sleep so that they are in a fit condition to learn.

**Please note:**

Certain absences and late excuses will not be excused by the school even in the event of a note from parent/guardians. These include tardiness in getting up and attending school, mitching, blaming traffic if living locally and family holidays during term time without prior approval etc.

**Relevant Legislation**

This Code adheres to the following legislation enacted since 1997;

- Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- Education Act, 1998
- Safety & Welfare at Work Act, 1998

- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- Equal Status Act, 2000