



ATTENDANCE POLICY & STRATEGIES



*Presentation Secondary School,
Miltown, Co. Kerry*

School Mission

Our school is a Catholic school which aspires to the full development of all its members according to Christian Principles. Every effort is made to ensure that each student develops according to his/her talents and potential: physically, spiritually, emotionally, intellectually.

We aim to develop fully integrated people who are aware of their own dignity as persons, who have Christian values, who are reliable, trustworthy, honest, truthful, caring, prayerful, devoted to duty, lovers of God and of neighbour; people who are prepared to reach out to those less fortunate than themselves.

This policy aims to ensure that all students have equitable and reasonable access to our school, with consideration for personal issues/difficulties, family circumstances and other factors which may influence or determine a student's attendance at school.

Rationale for Policy

In line with our school ethos we actively encourage all students attend school regularly in order to ensure that they have adequate access to the curriculum and school services.

Under Education (Welfare) Act 2001 *'The Principal of a recognised school shall..... cause to be established and maintained a register of all students attending that school' and '...in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school'.*

Furthermore the Board of Management shall *'....prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measure it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering and encouraging regular attendance at school'.*

The Education (Welfare) Act also states that parents also have an important role to play in ensuring good attendance. *'Where a child is absent from the school at which he/she is registered.... The parent of such child shall in accordance with the procedure specified in the Code of Behaviour prepared by the school, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.'*

Under the Education Welfare Act (2001) all schools have a legal obligation to notify the Educational Welfare Officer of frequent absences of 20 school days and over

Attendance Records & Procedures

- 1) Students are required to be in attendance at **9.05am** in the morning for classes commencing at 9.10am and at **1.55pm** in the afternoon for classes commencing at 2.00pm.
- 2) Attendance rolls will be called in every class through the VShare system.
- 3) The roll call for Period 1 will be completed by 9.20am in order that SMS messages be sent to parents informing them that their son/daughter has been marked absent from class. They will be requested to contact the school if this is an unauthorised absence.

A random spot-check is carried out weekly to ensure parents are aware of student absences.
- 4) Latecomers must have an explanatory note & report to the School Office/Deputy Principal for a late slip. They will be marked 'Late' on the VShare System.
- 5) Students who need to leave school early must have a note from parents/guardians. This note must be signed by the Year Head/Deputy Principal in the morning before school and shown to the secretary at the time of leaving.
All students must be collected from the School Office where the parent/guardian should sign the Sign-Out Book. They will be marked 'SO' (Signed-Out) for the rest of the day on the VShare system.
- 6) Explanatory notes, written, dated and signed by a Parent/Guardian are needed in the case of the following:
 - To explain a student's absence from school on the day of his/her return
 - To obtain permission to leave school during the day
 - To explain late arrival in school

Parents may choose to phone the School Office to authorise absences and give reasons to be recorded. Parents can access their son/daughters attendance records through the VShare System.

Where a student has not submitted an explanatory note or a parent has not informed the school office of the reason for absence, such absences will be recorded as 'unexplained' on the NEWB returns.
- 7) Truancy from class or part of a day is deemed an extremely serious offence and may incur after-school detention and/or suspension as per the Code of Behaviour.
- 8) The Deputy Principal will phone the parents of students who have been absent for 4 school days or more with no explanatory note or phone call to determine the nature of the absence and to offer support if appropriate.
- 9) Parents of students who have been absent for 15 days within a school year are contacted by phone to inform them of the number of absences and to offer support for the student/family with regard to improving attendance.
- 10) Parents are informed in writing when their son/daughter has been absent for 20 days (informing parents of our legal obligation to notify the Education Welfare Board through the bi-annual returns)
 - Letters are then sent for every 20 days students are absent after this.
 - Referrals will be made to the EWO as per NEWB requirements.
 - In some cases the school will refrain from sending letters as outlined above, for example where the school has been informed of a long term certified absence due to illness. Informal contact in such cases will continue by telephone.

Communication & Support

- ❖ As part of our pastoral approach to student support subject teachers and class tutors regularly monitor student attendance. Where an issue or concern is highlighted the teacher/tutor will report to the Year Head.
- ❖ The Year Head will make enquiries about the absences if they are not already aware of an explanation.
- ❖ Students will be met by the Guidance Counsellor, Counsellor or Year Head to discuss attendance and to see how we can support the student in improving their attendance. These supports may include;
 - Regular meetings with the school Guidance Counsellor/Counsellor.
 - Peer support/mentoring
 - Review of subjects and/or class allocation/dynamics where possible.
 - Referral to NYP to offer school & home based support.
- ❖ Parents will be asked to attend a meeting (where appropriate) to discuss strategies to help improve their son/daughters attendance.
- ❖ Where poor attendance has become a major issue strategies will be implemented to help the student attend more regularly. These may include;
 - Regular meetings with the school Guidance Counsellor/Counsellor.
 - Review of subjects and/or class allocation/dynamics where possible.
 - Referral to NYP to offer school & home based support.
 - Consultation with NEPs
 - Reduced Curriculum (*only in exceptional circumstances and when deemed absolutely necessary – supporting professional documentation will be sought*)
- ❖ Where there is no improvement in attendance or where improvement is slow, the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal will phone parents regularly to offer further supports for the student/family with regard to improving attendance.
- ❖ Where school refusal manifest parents (preferable with the student) will be invited to a meeting to discuss supports for the students return to school. These may include;
 - Regular meetings with the school Guidance Counsellor/Counsellor.
 - Referral to NYP to offer school & home based support.
 - Consultation with NEPs
 - Reduced Curriculum (*only in exceptional circumstances and when deemed absolutely necessary – supporting professional documentation will be sought*)
 - Referral to the Education Welfare Officer through NEWB
- ❖ Our aim is always to ensure that we support our students back to a good level of school attendance, so that they can reach their full potential. However, in extreme cases, and after consultation with the EWO and NEPS, it may be necessary to assisting parents in considering alternative educational provision for their son/daughter. These may include;
 - Discussions and support around provision for Home Tuition
 - Review of alternative approved educational courses (eg Youth Reach, NLN)

Attendance Strategies / Promoting Good Attendance

Presentation Secondary School actively seeks to encourage all our students to attend school regularly by...

- ❖ ... through our ethos, promoting a positive, nurturing and inclusive environment in which students can feel happy, safe and valued.
- ❖ ...ensuring, as far as is reasonably possible, that students' individual needs are met in a holistic and inclusive way.
- ❖ ...providing an accessible and relevant curriculum and promoting the use of a diverse range of active learning and teaching methodologies.
- ❖ ...ensuring equitable access to all school services/activities, curricular and extra-curricular.
- ❖ ... monitoring the school climate from a student experience perspective (through Student Council, Student Mentors, Class Tutors and the general student body.)
- ❖ ...rewarding good attendance through end of year Awards Day (certificates and awards).
- ❖ ...rewarding good behaviour through the Year Head Awards (termly).
- ❖ ...early identification of attendance issues and assisting parents, where possible, with improving their sons/daughters attendance at school.
- ❖ ... providing opportunities to talk to School Counsellor, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Class Tutor, Deputy Principal, Principal. In difficult cases such individuals may act as mentors to the student, meeting them regularly and assisting them to catch-up on work missed.
- ❖ ...early identification of general issues which commonly affect specific year groups and often lead to students not being happy at school (eg. bullying, self-esteem, building & maintaining friendships, study skills) Sourcing workshops and speakers to help address these issues.
- ❖ ... early liaison with external groups/agencies who may be equipped to assist students/families who are experiencing difficulties with school attendance (KDYS/NYP, NEPs, NEWB etc)

Date Ratified - *April 2014*

Review Date - *April 2017*