



# ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

**Loreto Balbriggan Secondary School**  
**Roll No. 60010P**

## STATEMENT OF STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

### 1. Introduction

Section 22 (1) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 describes the Statement of Strategy as: “A statement of the strategies and measures the school proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students.”

### 2. Relationship to School’s Mission Statement

Good attendance is promoted in Loreto Balbriggan through a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for her own learning and achieve her full potential through regular presence in class. To create an environment which encourages excellent attendance. A core part of our Statement of Strategy is to raise awareness about the importance of attendance for a student’s learning and school success and to communicate high expectations for attendance. These expectations are shared by the Board of Management, the school management, staff and parents. They form part of the overall school climate (ethos and culture) and are clearly communicated to students. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or guardians the importance of regular and punctual attendance

### 3. Rationale

- To ensure the care and welfare of our students
- To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process
- To ensure that students benefit fully from the opportunities that the school offers
- To ensure that all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance

- To ensure the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and other relevant Acts. Under the Act, the Education Welfare Boards have 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 any attendance problems that may emerge.

#### **4. Goals**

- To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality
- To keep accurate records of the whereabouts of students at all times during school hours
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance
- To help parents appreciate the vital role they play in their daughter's school attendance
- To reduce the rate of absenteeism for full days and partial days
- To facilitate the early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance
- To encourage full participation in class.
- To establish an appraisal system which highlights and rewards excellent attendance.

#### **5. How attendance will be monitored**

- The Compass system is used to monitor attendance.
- A text is sent to parents in the event of their daughters' absence.
- Students who arrive late to school are required log into the compass system outside the office. This is then logged on the system, the student must then present this absence docket to their teacher in question. The teacher will then mark the student late on the compass roll.
- Students who leave school during the day due to illness or appointments can only do so with the permission of a parent/guardian.
- Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, this is entered in the system by the relevant teachers e.g. hockey coach. This is done so by creating an event on the compass system. The event must receive the approval by a member of management. The student will then appear on compass as absent due to school activity.

## **6. A positive approach to attendance and punctuality**

- Good attendance is promoted in Loreto Balbriggan by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for her own learning and achieve her full potential through regular presence in class
- Students are made aware of the importance of attendance at Year group assemblies, both year heads and attendance officer highlight the significance of excellent attendance.
- An appraisal system is in place which rewards students on a monthly basis in relation to excellent attendance.
- Wellbeing tutors play a key role in monitoring attendance. Wellbeing class is an excellent opportunity to identify any negative trends in relation to attendance.
- Awards ceremony at the end of the year highlights students from each individual year who have had exceptional attendance.
- Reports to parents/guardians include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question. End of year reports.
- Updates on the school electronic screens make attendance an important element in Loreto Balbriggan.
- The calendar for the academic year is published annually in the school journal and is published on our website It is hoped that this will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimizing the chances of non-attendance

## **7. Responding to poor attendance**

In order to improve poor attendance the following strategies are implemented:

- Contacting parents (usually by the Year Head) on an informal basis when a student is absent regularly in order to begin a dialogue about attendance
- Reporting to parents when students are absent without their permission
- Contacting the Educational Welfare Officer for advice
- Positive reinforcement of good or improving attendance. Every effort is made to re-engage students who are working to improve their attendance.
- Providing teachers with information as to which students are particularly at risk of developing attendance problems through appropriate updates from the Student Support Team and information meetings at the beginning of the school year.
- When the school has exhausted all efforts and there is no improvement in attendance, a referral will be made to Tusla's Education Welfare Services.

### **Stakeholders involved**

Department of Education & Skills

TUSLA

NEWB

HSE

Loreto Education Trust

Board of Management

Parents Association

Principal

Staff

### **8. School Roles in relation to attendance**

#### **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 Educational Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:
  - A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than 6 days
  - The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is 20 days or more
  - A student is, in the opinion of the Principal, not attending school regularly.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences or the 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.
- To submit the four reports to the NEWB.

#### **Deputy Principal:**

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Wellbeing Tutors, Administration Staff and Attendance Officer to implement the school policy.
- To liaise with the Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance

- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- To ensure that all staff complete rolls as required
- To meet, along with the Year Head, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.

**Year Head:**

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on the COMPASS system for the given year.
- To raise issues regarding attendance at the weekly Year Head meetings.
- To liaise with the Student Support Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/or when patterns of absences are developing and to notify the Deputy Principal of same.

**Attendance officer**

- To continually highlight the issue of attendance amongst both staff and students.
- To communicate effectively policy changes or improvements in relation to attendance.
- To monitor closely attendance within the school
- To liaise with year heads in relation to offending students.
- To ensure an appraisal system is in operation
- To carry out spot checks regularly to continually reinforce the importance of attendance.
- To liaise and assist wellbeing tutors in relation to attendance issues.
- To provide attendance updates prior to parent teacher meetings and at the end of school year.
- To present data at end of year to review attendance figures.
- To review current practices in relation to attendance.

**Class Tutor:**

- To check absence notes from parents/guardians, to liaise with the Year Head in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance.

**Class Teacher:**

- To record the attendance for each class period.

- When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will record the attendance on the compass system.
- If there is a technical difficulty the class teacher will record the attendance manually on paper and submit to the school Reception.
- To impress upon students the importance of regular attendance, insist on punctuality and record those who are late for class.
- Acknowledge students, welcome them back and support them on their return to school. Teachers will ensure that students will complete work that they have missed by their absence from school.

### **Parents/Guardians:**

- Parents and guardians are critical to ensuring the successful implantation of an attendance strategy. Communication is key to success. Parents and Guardians must be aware of relevant government legislation and school policy pertaining to attendance.
- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities to ensure that their child is attending a recognised school on every day that the school is open. (Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the Principal (Section 21(9) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time.
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unnecessary absences and where possible to arrange elective appointments outside of school time. If such appointments must take place within school hours, then students should return to school following the appointment.
- To provide a written explanation for the student's absence on the first day of return to school.
- To inform the Year Head in advance of any planned absences from school.
- To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in the 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.

**Student:**

- To punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- Following an absence from school, to present a written explanation in the designated section of the School Journal on the day of return to class to your Tutor/Year Head.
- If arriving late for school, students are required to sign in at the compass system at the office.
- Ensure they are aware of the relevant consequences if they fail to present at school without permission.

**9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Board of Management will monitor the policy in consultation with the Principal and teaching staff, the Parents' Association and the Student Council.

Success criteria will include:

- Improved attendance rates
- Improved explanations for absence
- Improved timekeeping
- Improved communication with parents

**10. Review process**

A review will take place at the end of the school year and feedback will be sought in relation to the success in achieving our goals as outlined.

Signed:  Chairperson

Signed:  Principal

Dated: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019