



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 by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for her own learning and achieve her full potential. 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 them
- 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.
- To adapt to the changing circumstances relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 maintain 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. Due to the current pandemic situation, students will present straight to class in the event they are late, and the teacher will alter the roll to " LATE".
- Students who leave school during the day due to illness or appointments can only do so with the permission of a parent/guardian via a note on Compass or a call to the office.
- 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.
- Parents will enter notifications in relation to attendance through compass. This will appear on the compass homepage for teachers to view.

Year Head Procedures for Absent Students.

When a student has missed 5 days in a four week period;

- Form teacher checks Compass to see if the absences are explained.
- If absences are not explained the Form Teacher has a chat with the student and advises the student to ask her parents to put in an explanation.
- If a student has a legitimate excuse e.g illness then that is accepted.
- If a student has the excuse e.g holidays, revert to Year Head. The Year Head uses their discretion and may decide to ring home. There may be a letter of explanation from the parents.
- There is a recent change in the 'other' tab. Now when the parent enters 'other' they must give an explanation.
- The Form Teacher works with the YH in continuing to monitor the student's attendance.

When a student has missed up to or more than 10 days over a period of time (the length of which is at the discretion of the Year Head who is in the best place to know their students and their particular contexts.)

- The Year Head checks Compass/liaises with the form teacher to see if there are explained reasons for the student's absence.

- Using their discretion the Year Head may decide to ring home to find out why the student is absent.
- In the case of illness it may be to see how the school can best support the student.
- In the case of holidays the Year Head should flag the 20 day rule with the parents.
- In the case of general absenteeism with no legitimate excuse the Year Head monitors the student's attendance as it could lead to the 20 day rule.

When a student is approaching 20 days absent.

- Where it has been established the student's continued absenteeism has no valid reason behind it, the Year Head will then inform the parent that once the 20 day watershed is reached they will be sending a formal letter to Túsla, as required by law.

Due to the fact that we are dealing with so many varied scenarios and family contexts, combined with the complication of Covid 19, it is not possible to be entirely prescriptive in the steps outlined above. Much of the work here can only be managed effectively within the parameters of the professional judgement and discretion of the Year Head in question.

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 through Year assemblies, year heads and form teachers highlight the significance of excellent attendance in their dealings with students.
- Form teachers play a key role in monitoring attendance. Form 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 with 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.
- A breakdown of the procedures relating to attendance and is available on Compass to ensure all staff are aware of the various functions in relation to Compass and attendance.

7. Responding to poor attendance

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

- Contacting parents 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.
- A referral may be made to Tusla's Education Welfare Services. The referral system is carried out online by Year Head

Stakeholders involved-

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, Form teachers and administration staff 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 bi-weekly Year Head meetings.

- To liaise with the Pastoral Care 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
- 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.

Form Teacher

- To check absence notes online 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:

- When taking the role one must note on the comment section of the compass page the table number of each student. This is carried out to ensure contact tracing is carried out to the highest standards.
- To record the attendance for each class period.
- In the interest of public safety
- 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 it to the school reception.
- To impress on 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 input online notifications of student absences.
- 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.
- If arriving late for school, students are required to sign in at the compass system at the office.

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.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on:29th November 2021

Signed: 
Chairperson

Signed: 
Principal/Secretary, Board of Management