**STATEMENT OF STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**



**Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan**

**Roll No. 60010P**

**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.”

(Government of Ireland, 2000, p.19)

**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 students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents

or guardians the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

**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 changing circumstances relating to local, national and international events

**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 that 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

**How attendance is monitored**

* The Compass system is used to monitor attendance and record school attendance notes
* In the event of an unexplained absence of a student from school on a particular day, a text is sent to parents/guardians. Attendance texts are sent out to parents/guardians at 09:40 and 14:30 each school day (except Wednesdays where texts are sent out at 09:40 only)
* Students who arrive late to school are required to present to the school office before attending class. Once registered as ‘LATE’ on the Compass system by a member in the school office, the student must present an Arrival Pass to their relevant subject teacher
* 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 Compass note. In the case of an emergency, a parent/guardian may need to contact the school office

* Students who are absent from timetabled class periods as a result of school-related activities are entered in the Compass system by a relevant organising teacher (e.g. school hockey coach, debating coach, etc.). The teacher organising the school event will call a roll at the time of the event. Students attending events will be actively registered on Compass as attending their school event rather than their timetabled class
* Attendance notes that parents/guardians enter are accessible on the Compass system for relevant Year Heads, Form Teachers and subject teachers to view

**School Procedures for Absent Students**

The school’s response to absenteeism, and contexts that affect school attendance, are taken with the student’s wellbeing in mind. Year Heads work with Senior Management, the school Attendance Coordinator and other stakeholders to provide a system that ensures timely compliance with all legislative and policy requirements on the issue of attendance.

Procedures are summarised below:

* At the end of each month,
	+ Form Teacher monitors Compass to see if all student 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 on Compass. When a parent/guardian enters ‘Other’ as a reason for their daughter’s absence on Compass, they must give an explanation
	+ Form Teacher sends a generic email to parents/guardians after five unexplained absences appear on the Compass system
	+ If a student has a legitimate reason for absence (e.g., Illness) then that is accepted by Form Teacher
	+ If a student offers a response (e.g., family holidays) that warrants further explanation, the Year Head is contacted. In this instance, Year Head uses their discretion and may decide to ring a student’s parent/guardian
* The Year Head will use their discretion to deal with the situation as they are best placed to know the relevant student and their particular context
	+ When a student under the age of 16 has reached the 20-day threshold of absences, a referral letter is sent to the Attendance Officer who makes an official Tusla referral
* All matters pertaining to attendance are context-dependent, discretionary and subject to change. Therefore, it is not possible to be entirely prescriptive in the steps outlined above. Much of the work on attendance can only be managed effectively within the parameters of the professional judgement and discretion of the Year Head in question

**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 and whole-school intercom announcements organised by the Attendance Coordinator. Year Heads and Form Teachers highlight the significance of excellent attendance in their regular 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

* Award ceremonies at the end of the year celebrate students from individual classes and year groups who have had exceptional attendance records
* A monitoring and reporting system that provides a detailed breakdown of attendance trends in the school is accessible to parents through Compass and champions a culture of high attendance levels within the school
* Messages on posters and on electronic screens throughout the school campus highlight attendance as a crucial component in teaching and learning and in improving student outcomes
* The early publication of the academic year on our website supports parents/guardians in family holiday and event planning thereby minimising the chances of student non-attendance
* A breakdown guide of attendance procedures is accessible on the school website to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the various functions Compass serves in relation to managing attendance

**Responding to poor attendance**

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

* Contacting parents informally when a student is absent in order to maintain healthy, solution-focused levels of dialogue around the issue of non-attendance
* Reporting to parents when students are absent without their permission
* Contacting the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) for advice where applicable
* Positive reinforcement of good or improving levels of individual 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, Year Head Team and information meetings at the beginning of, and throughout, the school year

* A referral may be made to Tusla’s Education Support Service (TESS). The referral

system is carried out online by the Attendance Coordinator

* Attendance Coordinator liaises with TESS to organise and facilitate Attendance Clinics when necessary

**Stakeholders / 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 report to the Educational Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
* To inform Tusla 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 for those under the age of 16
* 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

**Deputy Principal:**

* To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Attendance Coordinator, Class Teachers, Form Teachers and administration staff to implement the school attendance policy
* To liaise with the Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student’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, 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 student’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

* To liaise with the Attendance Coordinator when making a referral to TESS

**Attendance Coordinator:**

* To formulate policy and make sure the attendance strategy is updated and in line with department guidelines
* To be the official contact between Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) and the school
* To liaise with the Year Head Team, Pastoral Care Team and SEN Team when making a formal and signed referral to TULSA Educational Welfare Service
* To liaise with TESS to organise Attendance Workshops when necessary
* To promote positive awareness and behaviour around school attendance

**Form Teacher:**

* To monitor and report on unexplained absences each month
* 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
* To promote positive awareness and behaviour around school attendance

**Class Teacher:**

* To record the attendance on Compass for each class period
* To record Compass chronicle entries under the S&S scheme and when providing cover for personal leave
* To record attendance manually in the case of technical difficulties and submit these records to the school office
* To impress on students the importance of regular attendance, insist on punctuality and record those who are late for class
* To acknowledge students, welcome them back and support them on their

return to school. Teachers will ensure that students will complete any work outstanding due to absence from school

* To monitor and track attendance trends within their class and communicate attendance records at subject department and parent-teacher meetings

**Parents/Guardians:**

Parental participation in the implementation of highly effective teaching and learning practices enables all students to become active and motivated learners. Therefore, parents/guardians should be aware of relevant government legislation and school policy pertaining to attendance. Parents are asked:

* To support the school’s Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal

responsibilities to ensure that their child is attending school every day that it is open as per Section 17 of the Education

(Welfare) Act 2000

* To ensure absences relate 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. Where possible, parents/guardians are encouraged 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 take personal responsibility for inputting student absence notifications into Compass and to ensure correspondence on the issue of attendance is timely and compliant with school policy requirements
* 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

* Students who arrive late to school are required to present to the school office before attending class. Once registered as ‘LATE’ on the Compass system by a member in the school office, the student must present an Arrival Pass to their relevant subject teacher

**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

**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 23rd October 2023**

Signed: 

 Chairperson

Signed: 

Principal/Secretary, Board of Management