



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy



## ST LOUISE'S MISSION STATEMENT

*"In partnership with parents, guardians, staff, governors and students  
St Louise's promotes excellence in learning and teaching  
within a Catholic, Vincentian, Comprehensive ethos"*

## **SECTION 1: RATIONALE**

“Regular school attendance and educational attainment are inextricably linked. Regular attendance ensures that students get the best possible outcomes from their period in compulsory education and improves their chances of employment and life chances in the longer term.”

**(Education Minister, John O’Dowd)**

We believe attendance at school is essential if students are to be happy, involved and successful. Good attendance and learning are inter-dependent and good attendance therefore is essential for improved attainment and academic success. We recognise that the partnership between parents and the school is crucial in setting and maintaining high standards of attendance and punctuality throughout a student’s time in school.

A school year is very short. It has only 190 days for students. This leaves 175 days for holidays and activities at home.

A school week is also very short. Most students spend 7 to 7½ hours at school on each of the five days they attend during term time. This means only approximately one third of a school day is spent in school. Most of the day and the week is spent at home. Time in school is precious. Absence from school and late coming to school has a negative effect on a student’s educational progress, achievement and employment prospects. Therefore daily attendance and excellent punctuality is our goal for all.

The strong correlation between attendance and attainment has been highlighted in the DE Attendance Strategy Miss School Miss Out when it was showed that if your attendance was:

**Greater than 95% Attendance**

*78% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended more than 95%*

**Less than 90% Attendance**

*50% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended less than 90%*

**Less than 80% Attendance**

*39% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended less than 80%*

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow a child or young person to fulfil their potential. The key reasons to have outstanding attendance for any young person is:

- To learn.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To gain qualifications.
- To develop new skills.
- To build confidence and self-esteem.
- To have the best possible start in life.

The 2016 Publication of the Department of Education’s Improving Student Attendance Strategy – Miss School Miss Out; provides a strategic framework for all the work that goes into maximising student attendance. In St Louise’s we use this framework as a basis for improving student attendance.

The strategy is presented under four key themes, which research and practice have shown to be essential in successfully managing student attendance:

**School leadership** – In St Louise’s our Vincentian ethos and culture is one that values the importance of attendance and its link to attainment. As a school community; our communication with the home is always precluded with our shared desire for maximising potential.

**Early Intervention** - In St Louise’s we recognise the need to establish the emergence of poor patterns of attendance as well as encouraging positive habits early in Key Stage 3. We are committed to intervention before negative patterns become sustained. When our own Pastoral Care strategies do not sufficiently redress the issue, we will involve support services, such as the EWS, in a timely manner.

**Tailored support** – In St Louise’s we endeavour to ensure that all students needs are personalised. We value all our students and work hard to increase their aspirations and dedication to their own success.

**Collaboration and engagement** - In conjunction with other school policies, we at St Louise’s endeavour to address a range of barriers that may impact a student’s attendance at school. This may involve outside agencies who can support our own pastoral arrangements. The policies that are inextricably linked to attendance include:

1. The Pastoral Care Policy
2. The Anti-Bullying Policy
3. The Positive Behaviour Policy
4. The Healthy Schools Policy
5. The Assessment Policy
6. The Learning and Teaching Policy.

## **SECTION 2: TARGETS**

One of the two key drivers in our Whole School Pastoral Action Plan is improved attendance/punctuality to support learning. Our aim is that the students' attendance/punctuality will improve at individual, tutor group, year group and whole school level, year on year.

### **2.1 Attendance Targets**

**Our current whole school attendance target is 95%+ attendance.** This whole school target is reflected in attendance targets set at year team and form tutor level. It is also reflected at individual student level.

We expect all students to have a minimum of 95%+ attendance and to meet the whole school attendance target. We encourage our students to strive to have attendance better than the agreed minimum requirement, teaching them that they should all aspire to have 100% attendance.

### **2.2 Punctuality Targets**

**Our current whole school punctuality target is that students should not have more than five lates per annum.** This whole school target is reflected in punctuality targets set at year team and form tutor level. It is also reflected at individual student level.

We expect all of our students to arrive to tutor time before 8.55am and to class promptly and on time every day. If a student arrives to school late, after 8.55am, they must sign the Latecomers Book at Reception.

### **SECTION 3: PROMOTING EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

Attendance and Punctuality are addressed on an ongoing basis, through our assembly programme, through displays on pastoral notice boards and at presentations on Parent's Evenings. All parents are given regular updates on their child's attendance through Progress Updates. Parents of students whose attendance falls below the minimum acceptable level of 95%+ attendance are contacted by the Head of Year to discuss the situation. Parents of students whose late coming is a cause for concern are also contacted by the Head of Year.

There is ongoing monitoring and contact with home. A wide range of Intervention Strategies are used to improve attendance and punctuality.

Intervention Strategies include:

- Identifying students who are vulnerable to becoming persistent absentees or latecomers and having individual action plans in place for each student
- Offering a Personalised timetable (alternative / flexible provision for disaffected students)
- Having vocational options included in the curriculum recognising likely career pathways of students
- Employing effective counselling systems
- Having a Student Mentoring / Buddy System
- Providing additional study support
- Supporting the reintegration process following long term absence
- Using attendance incentive schemes which recognise and reward good attendance
- Offering activities before and after school as an incentive for students to come to school
- Organising attendance and punctuality projects
- Organising attendance and punctuality theme days/week
- to supporting students with poor attendance

- Allocating resources for an Attendance Support Officer to support students with poor attendance
- Creating student-generated Classroom Rules
- Building Positive Student-Teacher Relationships
- Promoting a safe environment for students
- Using school assemblies and visual displays to engage students
- Sign Posting and accessing external support for parents and students
- Providing Transition support (Primary to Post-Primary)
- Offering support programmes for parents

## **SECTION 4: REWARDS FOR EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

Attendance and Punctuality are promoted through our Reward System.

Attendance Certificates are given to students who meet the whole school attendance target of 95%+ attendance on a termly basis.

Special rewards are also given to students with 100% attendance or no lates on a termly basis.

Students with 100% attendance for a whole year or less than five lates are recognised at our Annual Celebrations of Achievement at each key stage.

Letters and post cards are sent home on an ongoing basis by the Head of Year to congratulate students on good or improved attendance and punctuality.

Praise is also used by the Form Tutors, Year Team, and Principal to applaud high standards of attendance and punctuality.



## **SECTION 5: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **5.1 The School's Responsibilities**

- To develop and implement strategies to promote and encourage good attendance/punctuality.
- To ensure all staff promote and implement agreed attendance/punctuality management strategies.
- To actively promote the 95%+ attendance target at whole school, year team, tutor group and individual level.
- To actively promote the punctuality target of students having less than five lates per annum at whole school, year team, tutor group and individual level.
- To promote whole school attendance and punctuality targets amongst parents as well as students.
- To provide additional support for students who are deemed "attendance priority students".
- To provide attendance and punctuality rewards for students who meet the attendance and punctuality targets or exceed them.
- To ensure all staff share responsibility for whole school attendance and punctuality.
- To monitor the monthly attendance data using SIMS attendance data aligned to free school meal, and other benchmarked information.

## **5.2 The Staff's Responsibilities - The Role of the Form Tutor**

Form Tutors Will:

- Emphasise the importance of good attendance/punctuality in form classes on a regular basis.
- Set form class targets for attendance/punctuality and monitor progress.
- Set individual targets for attendance/punctuality and monitor progress.
- Monitor attendance and punctuality at individual and tutor group level on a daily/weekly basis (using Lesson Monitor).
- Identify priority students in terms of attendance and punctuality.
- Place priority students on report to monitor their attendance/punctuality.
- Monitor Home Learning Planners and the attendance records contained within them.
- Collect and keep absentee notes from students.

### **5.3 The Staff's Responsibilities - The Role of the Head Of Year**

Heads of Year will:

- Distribute attendance/punctuality data to Form Tutors on a regular basis.
- Set year groups targets for attendance/punctuality and monitor on an on-going basis.
- Set individual student targets for attendance/punctuality and monitor them.
- Monitor attendance and punctuality at individual, tutor group and year team level on a daily basis (using Lesson Monitor).
- Adhere to a policy of first day contact and follow up reasons for absence on the first day of absence.
- Identify patterns of absence for individual students in order to provide on-going support.
- Co-ordinate the creation and distribution of attendance rewards for their year group.
- Monitor Home Learning Planners and the attendance records contained within them.
- Contact parents through a range of media including text messaging when students have not presented themselves to school without prior information, telephone and through personalised attendance concern letters.
- Liaise with parents regarding students who are poor attenders/persistent latecomers through arranged meetings and house visits.
- Organise daily detention for latecomers.
- Send standardised attendance letters to the parents of priority students on a monthly basis.
- Organise support for priority students (internal support – Form Tutor and HOY through personalised targets and external support - Education and Welfare Officer).

- Request support from the Education and Welfare Officer when a student's attendance falls below 85% (Years 8-12).
- Emphasise attendance/punctuality throughout their assembly programmes.
- Deliver an Attendance/Punctuality Assembly on a monthly basis.
- Organise suspensions for students who truant from school.
- Support students who are being reintegrated after long term absences.
- Provide students' attendance and punctuality records to employers and other agencies upon request.

## **5.4 The Staff's Responsibilities - The Role of the Principal and the Senior Team**

The Principal, Vice Principals, Assistant Principals, Leaders of Learning with responsibility for Key Stage or Year Groups will lead, guide and support the Form Tutors and the Heads of Year in their efforts to improve attendance/punctuality at individual, form tutor, year team and whole school level. As a school that promotes leadership at all levels, we endeavour to:

- promote closer parental engagement in their child's education by maximising the involvement of parents in the life of the school, through improved communication.
- share good practice through co-operation with other local schools through the WBALC, with the EA and the ETI.
- consult with their students about the appropriateness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching in engaging the learner.
- have in place forms of student participation to help students be involved in making decisions that affect them such as curriculum choices.
- ensure all parents are aware of what information is required in respect of their child's non-attendance and when it should be provided.
- seek to exploit the opportunities for sharing of good practice offered through C2k SIMS training.

## **Parents'/Guardians' Responsibilities**

Students should talk to a teacher or trusted adult about any worries they have about school which may affect their attendance in order that the school can take action if necessary.

- To value school and education.
- Parents should take an active interest in their child's education, the life of the school and promote the benefits of regular attendance.
- Parents should talk to a teacher about any worries they have about school which may affect their child's attendance in order that the school can take action if necessary.
- To support the school's policy on attendance, punctuality, non-attendance and truancy.
- To try to ensure that their child meets or exceeds the whole school attendance target of 95%+ attendance.
- To try to ensure that their child never exceeds the whole school punctuality target of having no more than five lates per annum.
- To ensure that their child is in school every day and on time.
- To contact school by phone if their child is going to be absent and to speak to the Head of Year to explain their child's absence. If the Head of Year is unavailable to speak to a member of the support staff and to let them know why their child is absent. They will in turn pass this information on to the Head of Year.
- To sign their child's Home Learning Planner to indicate reasons for absence.

- To take holidays during holiday time and not to book family holidays during term time. There are 175 non-school days in a year all of which are available for holidays. **Therefore no holidays should be arranged during term time.**
- To arrange dental/medical appointments outside school hours.
- To support their child in the completion of work missed as a result of an absence.
- To support and work in partnership with their child's year team if their child's attendance or punctuality is a cause for concern.
- To sign attendance/punctuality reports given to their child if they are deemed a priority student by the year team.
- Attend all Parent Meetings interviews and be willing to address poor attendance patterns.
- Parents should support school staff in their efforts to manage difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Not to condone absences or to give false reasons which set false standards. (dishonesty and irresponsibility)

## **5.6 Students' Responsibilities**

- To value school and education.
- To meet or exceed the whole school attendance target of 95%+ attendance.
- To never exceed the whole school punctuality target of a maximum of five lates per annum.
- To be in school each day and on time.
- To sign the Latecoming Book at Reception if you arrive late to school.
- To not leave school during the day without permission.
- To keep a record of their attendance in their Home Learning Planner.
- To ensure that a reason for absence is given in writing in their Home Learning Planner on their return to school.
- To undertake detention with their Form Tutor if they fail to bring in a note to explain their absence.
- To catch up on any work missed during their absence.
- To attend all classes required by their timetable.
- To accept detention with their Form Tutor if they arrive late for school or class.
- To be aware that you will be suspended if you are truanting from school.
- To be respectful to anyone who has reason to discuss your attendance or punctuality with you.



## **SECTION 6: RECORDING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

Student attendance is recorded by Form Tutors twice daily, during morning and afternoon registration. Attendance is recorded using Lesson Monitor on SIMS - the Schools' Information Management System. This is also monitored through the parent/guardian response through the Schoolcomms messaging services. Student absences are categorised and coded by the Form Tutors using agreed codes from the Department of Education.

Subject teachers record a student's attendance at each of their classes during the day, again using Lesson Monitor.

Form Tutors monitor their student's daily attendance to school and to class and follow up any concerns they may have related to it immediately with the student's Head of Year.

The Heads of Year in partnership with the Vice Principal with responsibility for Pastoral Care will track attendance data regularly to monitor progress, trends and set targets for improvement.

## **SECTION 7: STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL DURING SCHOOL HOURS FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

- (a) Where possible all appointments should be made after school or as late as possible in the afternoon. If a student has a medical appointment they should bring in their:
- Doctor/dental appointment card and present it to their Head of Year before 8.55am. This should be accompanied by a note from their parent/guardian.
  - If a student has to leave school for any reason their parent/guardian must come and collect them. Students will not be dismissed from school without being collected by an adult with parental responsibility unless specific arrangements are agreed with the Head of Year.
- (b) If a student has got their dental/doctor appointment card signed by their Head of Year they must present it at Reception before they leave school and sign their name in the Register.
- (c) Students must sign the Register on their return (They should return to school if time allows).

## **SECTION 8: TRUANCY**

One of the five major school rules is "students must not play truant." If a student breaks this rule they are suspended by the Principal and the Board of Governors.

## **SECTION 9: MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY**

The Pastoral Vice Principal will monitor and evaluate the Attendance Policy annually in consultation with students, parents and staff.

Attendance and Punctuality data, which is analysed by each year team, is an integral part of the whole school annual evaluation process.