



# Stratford College

Co-educational Secondary School

## Attendance Policy

*(Last revised 2017)*

### Scope of Policy

As a school community, the staff at Stratford College believe:

- That there is a direct relationship between a student's success and regular attendance
- That students who have good attendance records enjoy their school experience more than students who do not attend regularly.

The attendance policy applies to the whole school and encompasses all students, teachers, departments, parents, subjects, classwork, homework and home study.

### Mission

In our mission statement we aim to provide a teaching and learning community committed to quality and excellence in education by

- Promoting personal achievement and academic success.
- Respecting the unique potential of every student and encouraging each to maximise it. This policy sets out to ensure that attendance is not a block towards our students achieving their best selves. Attendance is a key tool in the teaching and learning process. We believe that good attendance should increase student motivation, engagement, learning, enjoyment and autonomy.

### Rationale

**This policy is directed by:**

1. Legislative requirements arising from the Education Welfare Act 2000
2. The requirements of the Department of Education and Skills
3. The educational interests of the students
4. The School Mission Statement

5. The Pastoral Care policy
6. TUSLA reporting requirements
7. The educational interests of our students

**The Education Welfare Act, 2000**, provides a comprehensive framework for promoting regular school attendance and tackling the problem of absence and early school leaving. Under the Act, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post-primary school, whichever comes later.

**TUSLA**, the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency, has been established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly. Under this act parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it recommended that they explanation be in writing. It is incumbent on schools to notify TUSLA if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.

**The Education Welfare Officer** for Stratford College is Vincent Collins. The EWO will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. Alternative schooling will be sought for students who have been expelled, suspended or refused admittance to a school.

### Aims and Objectives

#### **this policy sets out to:**

This policy will encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school and will provide for:

- The rewarding of students who have good attendance records
- The identification of students who are at risk of dropping out at an early stage
- The establishment of closer contacts between the school and the families concerned
- The co-ordination with other schools of programmes aimed at promoting good behaviour and encouraging attendance
- The identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the curriculum that may contribute to truancy and the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary for the proper running of the school.
- Encourage full attendance where possible
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Improve communication with parents
- To ensure our students have a positive relationship with learning
- To regularly monitor and evaluate techniques used
- To set targets for improving attendance

## Roles and Responsibilities of attendance procedures:

### Board of Management

- Overall responsibility for attendance rests with the BOM
- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time
- To approve the policy
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy
- Unauthorised absence from school is a major breach of school discipline.

### Principal

- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy
- To monitor the implementation of the policy
- To Liaise in a timely fashion on issues arising from monitoring attendance
- Students with consistently poor unexplained attendance may be barred from activities at the discretion of school management

### Deputy Principal

- Weekly attendance records will be left for the attention of Principal/Deputy Principal and Class Tutors, this should help to identify, at an early stage, students who are risk of developing school attendance problems.
- The Deputy Principal will meet with Class tutors at the monthly Class Tutor meetings to ensure students with poor attendance records are being addressed.
- The Deputy Principal will meet with the students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend. The Deputy Principal may, at this early stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school, to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school. Confidence and trust should be nurtured.
- The school will notify parents when a child has in the region of 10 – 19 absences that a report will soon be issued to TUSLA if the pattern continues.
- The school is required by law to keep records of all absences, and make them available to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on request.
- The school is also required to notify TUSLA if a child is absent for twenty days or more at regular intervals during the year, or where the absence gives rise to concern.
- Maintain contact with parents/guardians
- Forms of affirmations
  - a. Students with a record of poor unexplained attendance will be targeted from September the following year to encourage improved attendance.
- Keep the Principal informed
- Aware provided for good attendance

- b. For perfect attendance, those students will receive a Certificate from TUSLA donating their perfect attendance. Also, the class with the best attendance for their will receive a prize (generally a week off homework, or a half day watching a film. Vouchers could also be provided as an award).
- If no improvement, they should refer the student to the TUSLA Welfare Officer.

### Admin staff

- Absences will be notified to parents by text first thing in the morning and no later than 11 am. Lates will be recorded until 11am. Absence will be recorded thereafter.
- Periodically during the year, an attendance report will be forwarded to parents/guardians of all students. This information is embedded in a student's Progress Report and their end of term reports.

### Subject Teachers

- Subject teachers take registration on Vsware at the start of each lesson
- They should bring any concerns re attendance in their subject to the attention of the appropriate Class Tutor.
- For Transition Year students, each subject teacher will award 10% for attendance in their end of term exams. If a student has less than 90% attendance for their particular subject, then that student will not receive any marks for attendance, they are automatically down 10%.
- Teacher expectation should be that that all students can succeed academically.
- Curriculum should be assessed to ensure that it suits the needs of all students.
- Attention should be paid to lateness as an indication of the beginning of an attendance problem
- To implement the policy by following the points in the guidelines

### Class tutors

- The Class Tutor takes the official roll call on Vsware each day at a time specifically allocated to class tutor business. During this time, the Class Tutor follows up on absences and collects letters from parents explaining absences.
- On receipt of a note please change ABS to ABN. Go to Groups, select your class, click on the attendance icon and make the relevant changes. This can be back dated, just change the starting date. It can only select one month at a time.
- Class Tutors must not record activities organised by the school which have been authorised by the Principal e.g. school trips, participation in sporting or cultural activities, or work experience, as absences in the school attendance records. These should be marked as other. This leaves ABN for illness, thus making it easier to identify.
- The Class Tutors will communicate the names of students of concern to the Pastoral Care Team at their monthly meeting. The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Team or outside agency as appropriate.

- Class tutors should promote the importance of good attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences.
- Attention should be paid to lateness as an indication of the beginning of an attendance problem
- Class tutors could encourage peers to visit non-attenders and to help them with missed homework.
- Students with a record of poor unexplained attendance will be targeted from September the following year to encourage improved attendance.
- Class tutors are obliged to keep all their attendance notes indefinitely and to store them neatly so that relevant materials can be found.

### Class tutors required actions relating to TUSLA warning letters:

1. 10 absences. Once a student has received a letter home after 10 absences, class tutors should follow this up with a phone call home. Ensuring that home is doing all they can to help child attend school on a daily basis. The letter must be followed up by a phone call to ensure a change in behaviour. Class tutors should use the attached Attendance Rubric to guide the phone call.
2. 15 Absences: Another letter is sent home warning parents that their child is at imminent risk of being reported to TUSLA. Class Tutors should ring home and arrange for the parents to come in and meet to devise an attendance strategy.
3. 20 Absences: The student has been reported to TUSLA. The Deputy Principal will ring home and arrange for parents to come in to help devise an attendance strategy, with the aid of TUSLA's Educational Welfare Officer.

### Pastoral Care Personnel (Class tutors, Guidance and Resource Personnel)

- The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Team or outside agency as appropriate.
- Monitor students referred on an ongoing basis

### Students are required

- To attend school each day
- To be punctual each day and for each class
- Students who leave the school during the day are required to sign out at the office, giving the time of departure and the reason (medical appointments etc). These details are then noted when the official roll call is checked by the Class Tutor

### TY Students and TY Co-ordinator

- Due to the high incidence of collaborative teaching and learning in TY, absenteeism can have a detrimental impact on the effective completion of TY activities. In light of this, the following attendance protocol should be applied:

- If more than 20 days are missed (not counting illness or explained absences by their class tutor) then they will not be invited to the TY graduation.
- 20% of their TY Certificate Award will be based on their attendance. Students with less than 100% but more than 90% will receive a proportional percent. Students should bear in mind that a top score on this certificate will act as a strong indicator to future employees as the reliability of that potential employee.
- Attendance will be linked to one special event at the end of the year. Again 90% attendance is required in order to attend. This class activity will be selected in consultation with their TY co-ordinator.
- For Transition Year students, each subject teacher will award 10% for attendance in their end of term exams. If a student has less than 90% attendance for their particular subject, then that student will not receive any marks for attendance, they are automatically down 10%.

### Parents are encouraged

- To oversee that advice and guidelines provided in this policy and the students diaries are followed
- As a parent/guardian, you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. These reasons must be given in writing. The school is required by law to keep records of all absences and, make them available to the Education Welfare Officer on request.
- Dental and medical appointments should be made outside school time if possible,
- Parents are reminded that pupils are obliged to attend school on all days in which the school is open. All family holidays should be taken within school holiday periods only.
- If a child is absent for 5 or more days due to illness, evidence of being at a doctor's surgery is required, if this is an ongoing illness.
- Parents should bear in mind that a top score on this certificate will act as a strong indicator to future employees as the reliability of that potential employee.

### Educational Welfare Officer

- If the child is absent due to illness or other good reasons, no action will be taken by the NEWB. However if there is concern about the child's attendance, parents may be contacted by an Educational Welfare Officer. The officer will work with the parents and take full account of the circumstances before deciding what further action is necessary to ensure that the child received his/her entitlement to an education.

### Success Criteria

- Attendance awareness is embedded in all our teaching and learning
- A positive attendance culture in the school
- To regularly monitor and evaluate techniques used
- To make improvements year on year for the final BOM Attendance and Discipline Report to the BOM
- Parents, students and teachers are satisfied with the effectiveness of this policy

- The goals are being attained

### Monitoring Procedures

- Class tutors will conduct on-going monitoring through informal discussion with students and subject teachers and will note feedback from students, teachers and parents.
- Form Tutors and the Deputy Principal will review implementation at designated meetings.
- Principal will include attendance on staff meeting agenda twice yearly.
- On-going surveys of staff, parents and students to ensure satisfaction

### Review Procedures

The policy will be reviewed after two years. The review team will comprise the Principal, Deputy Principal, the BOM and staff.

Views and experiences of teachers, students and parents will be surveyed in relation to the success criteria.

### Strategies to Promote Student Participation

The School encourages the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life and aims to maximise their personal development, good citizenship and academic progress. This is achieved through various programmes in the school.

#### Curriculum

The school offers a wide range and variety of subject at Junior and Senior level. The school also offers a Transition year programme. Career guidance and counselling are also available in the school as is resource teaching. These programmes provide scope for personal development as well as preparing students for their participation in society.

#### Methodologies

In the teaching of these programmes the teacher endeavours to use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. The school management provides and supports the professional development of the teachers by permitting them to attend in-service courses/workshops and by offering staff training days.

#### Co-Curricular

The school's programme of co-curricular/extra curricular activities caters for a wide range of activities in order to maximise student participation. Activities range from sports, music, drama, visits, exchanges, charity awareness, competitions, newsletter, mock interview and field trips.

## Pastoral Care

The school's pastoral care structures and class organisation arrangements enable all students to participate in the life of the school in a way that promotes their social development.

## CLASS TUTOR

The caring atmosphere nurtured by the Class Tutor also encourages full participation in all areas of school life. The Class Tutor also instils a good class spirit to promote friendship and learning. This structure also provides a medium through which parents/guardians can contact and meet with the teachers. Participation is encouraged at an early stage by the provision of information and meetings, which facilitate the transition from primary to secondary school for both parents and students.

## Parents' Participation

Parents' participation is greatly encouraged through the various openings available to them e.g. participation on the Parent's Council. Parent Teacher meetings and the various information meetings held during the year.

Part-time work during the school week contributes to poor participation of students. Parents and students are made aware of the legal position with regard to part-time work and are also alerted to the adverse effect it has on student's performance.

## Organisation of Students

For students to participate fully in their education it is of the utmost importance that they come to school fully equipped. Students' inability to organise themselves is a key reason why they often forgot books, equipment etc.

During the first weeks of term, time will be spent teaching first years these organisational skills. Class Tutors, together with individual class teachers, will clearly explain to students what books and equipment are required.

Teachers will outline to students some good tips on how to be organised, e.g.

- (a) correct use of the journal
- (b) the importance of writing in subjects the night before and using this as a cross check to ensure that all the correct books and equipment had been packed.
- (c) Where two or more textbooks exist students to note in their journal which book was required and when.
- (d) Class Tutors will inspect journals, especially in the early days to ensure that journals are being correctly used.
- (e) The use of the School Diary will be explained to parents and students.

Appendix 1

<b>Attendance Rubric</b>	
Name:	
Number of lates to date:	
Number of absences:	Unexplained
	Illness
	Agreed (e.g work experience)
	Holidays
What are the main causes?	
What have I done to make the situation worse?	
What can I do that will help me to improve my attendance in TY?	
What can my parents do to help improve my attendance?	
What is the school doing to help improve my attendance and punctuality?	

## Appendix 2

The NEWB commissioned a report in 2008, 'School Attendance: What works and Why?', in order to ascertain what strategies could be employed to improve attendance. I've extracted some of the key conclusions from this report:

1. There is no one solution or 'magic bullet' to school attendance. The approaches that are often the most successful are developed as to address particular circumstances and are characterised by flexibility and pragmatism.
2. There is a need for further research, in particular qualitative research and specifically research into the reasons why children stay in school.
3. Teacher-student relations are crucial to students' sense of belonging and attendance.
4. Teacher expectation – whether teachers and staff project the belief that all students can succeed academically – influences student engagement and attendance.
5. Curriculum should be assessed to ensure that it suits the needs of all students. It should also include high quality vocational education.
6. Registration and ongoing analysis of data is vital. This should include a rapid response system that identifies the reason for non-attendance.
7. It is important to pay attention to lateness as an indication of the beginning of an attendance problem
8. Personal (phone) contact with parents on attendance is vital – letters don't work.
9. It can be effective to encourage peers to visit non-attenders and to help them with homework missed.
10. Interagency support is vital to respond to attendance issues effectively.
11. Intensive support from the Education Welfare Service can help schools develop a whole school and community approach to tackling non-attendance

Please see the link below for further information

[http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/attendance\\_report.pdf](http://www.newb.ie/downloads/pdf/attendance_report.pdf)

Signed: Cormac Murphy

Chairperson of the Board of Management

2017

Signed: Patricia Gordon

Secretary to Board of Management

2017