

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**ST. DOMINIC’S COLLEGE**

**CABRA**

**DUBLIN 7**

**Mission Statement**

At St. Dominic's College, we are committed to enabling each and every student develop her potential, both in the academic and non-academic fields.

There is an established link between attendance and achievement. Aside from the holistic

development of the individual, each student must be in school to achieve.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and attending to problems of absenteeism. It was signed into law on July 5th 2000. Tusla was set up under this Act to support regular attendance and the education of children and young people. The Board has appointed Educational Welfare Officers (E.W.O.) to provide advice and support to parents and schools and to follow up absences from school. Under the Act parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it is recommended that the explanation be in writing. It is incumbent on schools to notify the National Educational Welfare Board if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.

We aim to ensure that the students in our school attend regularly and on time and where this is not the case, we will apply the procedures which are designed to encourage consistent attendance.

**SCHOOL DAY**

 All students must attend at the scheduled times every day:

Assembly every morning at 8:45

Mon. Tues. 8.45 – 3:40

Wed. Thurs. Fri 8.45 – 3:00

Students are expected to be present each day.

Students are expected to maintain high standards of punctuality throughout the day.

**PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

Daily attendance is recorded when students swipe in their student card and this is recorded on Anseo and VSware.

Subject teachers take registration using VSware at the start of each lesson.

Students must swipe in in the morning before assembly. Where students fail to do so a text message alerting parents to a student’s absence will be sent once when students are late or absent from school.

The year head of each group monitors the attendance records of her year group.

The year head meets with the students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend school.

The year head may at this stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties.

After 15 days a letter is sent to the parents/guardians by the school inviting them to attend the school to discuss the situation.

The Pastoral Care team may make recommendations to support the students; for example, referral to the Guidance Counsellor or outside an agency as appropriate.

After 20 days absence a letter is sent by the school administration to the parents/guardians of students under 16 to inform them of the school’s obligation to inform the education welfare services of Tusla - Child and family Agency, and inviting them to the school to discuss the situation if they wish.

**PROCEDURE FOR RECORDING EXPLANATION OF ABSENCES**

Explanations for absence are provided at the back of the school journal in the absent section.

The absent note is stamped and must be shown to each subject teacher.

**SCHOOL ACTIVITY/WORK EXPERIENCE**

Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded as School Activity (ASA) on VSware.

Teachers organising the school activity provide the administration staff with the list of students involved the day prior to the event at the latest. The administration staff pre-enters the students’ absence under the category School Activity (ASA).

The staff member accompanying or organising the event phones the school on the morning of the activity to confirm the presence/absence of the students.

**LATE POLICY**

When a student is late, the reason for her lateness must be clearly stated on one of the Notes provided at the back of the student contact journal and presented to the office on entry to the school.

The subject teacher will enter the code late on the Vs ware system.

If a student arrives to school and swipes in after 8:44:59 she must swipe in at the main office where she will receive a late stamp in her journal.

If a student gets more than 3 lates in one term, the student will then receive detention.

**TRUANCY**

Truancy is considered an extreme violation of the School Code of Positive Behaviour and incurs immediate suspension.

In school, Truancy (where a student remains in the school building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs an in-house detention.

**MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS**

Parents/guardians and students are requested not to make medical or dental appointments during school hours.

When a parent/guardian arrives to collect his/her daughter he/she must sign the Early Out book and indicate whether or not the student is expected to return. The student must then swipe out. She will receive an Early Out stamp in her journal.

The departure of the student is recorded on the Anseo system.

If a student is leaving on their own without a parent, a note must be provided to the Year Head/ Principal in the morning.

Parents/guardians must provide a note for medical late which will be stamped with a Medical Late stamp at the main office. The student must present this to the administrator who will record it as a medical late.

**COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

A text message alerting parents to a student’s absence will be sent at approximately10.00am

If a parent receives a text message to say that their daughter is absent then the student has not swiped in or is absent. If a parent queries the text and believes the student should be in school, then the absence is investigated.

A letter is sent to parents/guardians when a student has a significant number of absences, usually in excess of 15. When a student is absent in excess of 20 days the school is obliged to report it to the Education Welfare Officer in Tusla..

Individual subject teachers can track a student’s attendance for their given subject using VSware and are encouraged to contact the Year Head if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.

When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may discuss the issue with the principal who may contact the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies regarding same.

**STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT GOOD ATTENDANCE**

* Rewarding pupils with full attendance at the end of each year by giving them a certificate.
* In the case of full attendance parents receive a card at the end of the school year congratulating and thanking them for their support in relation to attendance.
* Through the monitoring and encouragement of the student from the Year Head system.
* By creating a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians- teachers aim to create positive interactions with students through the effective use of praise, asking questions and creating a positive school climate.
* By having high expectations of students amongst teachers
* School organisation- the school uses a mixed ability system, which helps students to have higher expectations of themselves.
* Random spot checks on students’ attendance from the school journal
* Psychological approaches for anxiety and non-anxiety based absenteeism through the school counselling system and guidebooks for students entering a transition from Junior Cycle or Transition Year to 5th year.
* Alternative educational programmes such as Leaving Cert Applied to help students who may need the structure of such a programme to help them attend school.
* Mentoring programme for Senior Cycle students who are at risk due to high absence rates.
* The attendance committee assess what students are in need of individual mentors so that these students can get support they need.
* Particular attention is paid to students who are making a transition from primary to secondary school or from junior cycle to senior cycle.
* By having a book school rental system for students from first to third year.
* By teachers engaging in differentiation in their classes to meet individual needs.
* By having an active Student Council where the student voice in school matters is considered. Also, student ideas on what they need to help them to engage and attend more are actively encouraged by the school.
* Distribution of Tusla’s Education Welfare Services leaflet entitled- Don’t let your child miss out at the main reception
* By providing sporting activities such as Hockey, Basketball and Athletics as well as enriching activities such as art, and music. These activities support students in their school attendance.
* Practical business and enterprise skills programmes such as Junior Achievement or NFTE help students who may find it difficult to engage with the formal curriculum or where a combination of academic and vocational skills may provide a more appropriate skills mix for some students.
* Programmes such as SPHE and Wellbeing programmes to help students with their wellbeing, thus school engagement.
* Reduced timetables for students who may be suffering from stress and are absent from school for a long durations.
* Guest speakers are brought in to address the area of Mental Health.
* Students participate in events such as Cycle Against Suicide, Darkness into Light and Zeminar.
* There is an Anti-bullying programme facilitated by “Sticks and Stones”.

**ROLES AND RESPONSI BILITIES**

**Role of Parent/Guardian**

* To ensure that school days are only missed due to illness or unavoidable circumstances.
* To make Medical/Dental appointments outside of school hours where possible.
* In the event of a student leaving school early Parents/Guardians must write a note of explanation in the student’s journal stating the date, time and reason for leaving early.
* When collecting a student, Parents/Guardians or their designee, in loco parentis, must report to the office to sign out the student.
* Parents/Guardians of an absent student are obliged to complete and sign an “explanation for absence” slip in the student diary. This should be completed before the student returns to school.
* In exceptional circumstances a parent/guardian may ring the school to arrange to collect their son/daughter. Normal signing out procedures will apply.
* Where a parent/guardian is aware of an expected prolonged student absence they should inform the school authorities.
* Parents/Guardians should ensure that their daughter arrive to school punctually. In exceptional circumstances the school will adopt a flexible approach.

**Role of Student**

* To come to school on time every day unless there are exceptional circumstances.
* A student, who arrives late in the morning or after lunch, should report to the school office to sign and swipe in. Failure to do so is a serious breach of the schools code of behaviour.
* Students who need to leave school early for an appointment, must present the parent/guardian’s note of explanation in their journal, to the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal. When leaving class, the student must also present the signed note to the class teacher.
* If a student needs to go home early, due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, she must get her journal signed by the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal before parents/guardians are contacted by the school.
* To provide absence notes to all her teachers, on return to school.
* To make every effort to catch up on missed work.

**Role of subject teacher**

* To encourage and promote good attendance among all students.
* All subject teachers to take a roll call on VS ware for every class.
* Subject teachers should highlight any concerns they may have about a student’s attendance to the Year Head.
* If a student arrives late to school a.m. or p.m., the subject teacher should check that the student has reported to the office and signed in.
* If a student is leaving class early, to be collected by parent/guardian, the subject teacher should check that a permission note in their journal, from parent/guardian has been countersigned by the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal.

**Role of Year Head**

* Year Head monitors patterns of attendance with the support of designated subject teachers.
* Year Head will liaise with parents/guardians where a pattern of absences emerges.
* Year Head will address any concerns communicated about a student’s attendance. In some instances, this may require a referral to Principal/Deputy Principal.
* Year Head, if available, will sign/initial and date any notes from parents requesting that the student leave school early.
* If a student needs to go home early unexpectedly, the Year Head, if available, will give them written permission in the journal to make contact with home.
* Year Head plays a role in supporting students to overcome difficulties relating to attendance. This may involve liaising with staff/pastoral support.

**Role of Administrative Staff**

* Students arriving late to school, must report to the school office, where the lateness is recorded on the computerised registration system and the student is also issued with a late stamp.
* Students leaving school early must swipe out and be signed out by their parent/guardian or designee in the school office, where the time and reason for departure is noted.
* The administrative staff will ensure that students, who need to make contact with home with a view to leaving school early, have secured written permission (note in journal) from Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal.
* These records are then completed in the computerised registration system.
* In the event of a student being absent for more than 15 days, the administrative staff will inform the Year Head.
* Administrative staff convey student absences- via text- on a daily basis to the relevant parents/guardians.
* Records received from parents e.g. medical certificates and explained absences are recorded on VSware and Anseo.

**Role of Principal/Deputy Principals**

* Responsible for the effective implementation of the school attendance policy.
* Responsible for making the appropriate attendance returns to the EWS.
* Will be proactive about encouraging attendance and focus on preventative strategies.
* In liaison with the Year Heads, Principal/Deputy Principal will monitor attendance and ensure early intervention if a problem is identified.
* Will liaise with Year Heads, other staff members and EWS personnel regarding student attendance.
* Principal will submit an annual attendance report to Tusla.

**MONITORING AND REVIEW**

St. Dominic’s College will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures, on an ongoing basis, to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practice.

Date of ratification by the Board of Management: 14 November 2018

Date of Review by Board of Management: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­ ­­­­­­­­­November 2021

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Brian Swan, Chairperson