Attendance Strategy

Mission Statement

Here in St Michael's we provide a happy and secure student-centred place of learning. Inclusivity, respect, kindness and encouragement are central to everything we do.

Introduction

Section 22(1) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2002 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."

Goals

- To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality
- To support our students to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness via regular school attendance and participation in school life both curricular and extracurricular.
- To help parents appreciate the vital role they play in their daughter's school attendance.
- To facilitate the early detection and correction of patterns of poor 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.

A Student Centred Approach to Attendance

Our ethos and mission statement are at the heart of all strategies. In Loreto Secondary School St Michaels we strive to foster a school environment that prioritises student well-being and encourages regular attendance, aligning with St Michael's mission of providing a "happy and secure student-centred place of learning."

We are committed at all times to:

Building Strong Relationships
- We encourage regular communication between school and home to identify and address attendance concerns early on.
- We maintain open and supportive relationships with students and parents to foster a sense of trust and safety.
- We recognise that each student has their own unique needs and implement a personalised program to support the student based on their identified needs.

Promoting Inclusivity and Belonging
- We organise school events and extracurricular activities that cater to diverse interests and encourage participation.
- We celebrate student achievements and contributions to foster a sense of pride and belonging within the school community.
- We encourage peer-to-peer support via our prefect and peer mediation student leader, supporting initiatives to promote mutual understanding and empathy among peers.

Empowering Students with Ownership
- We recognize and reward students for consistent attendance.
- We involve students in decision-making processes related to school activities.
- We encourage students, via termly reflections, to track their progress and set goals.

Addressing underlying issues

- Via our students' support structure we identify and address potential barriers to attendance, such as personal or family challenges, transportation difficulties, social and emotional needs or specific learning needs.
- We have a full time counsellor that provides support to address concerns related to anxiety, social issues or any mental health issue that may impact attendance.
- We actively collaborate with outside organisations to provide further resources and support for our students.

Regular Review and Adaptation

- We regularly monitor attendance data to identify trends and patterns early and implement appropriate supports.
- We evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies and make adjustments as needed.
- We seek feedback from all members of the school community to continuously improve attendance initiatives.

Multi Tiered Approach to Supporting Attendance

Prevention:

- Yearheads proactively monitor attendance and engage in early intervention with parents and students regarding attendance concerns.
- The school app is utilised to provide real-time notifications of absences without permission, enabling timely intervention.

Intervention:

- Students participate in the "My Thoughts About School" reflection sheet.
- Students are referred to the Student Support Team (SST), a comprehensive student care plan will be put in place involving the use of the NEPS Problem Solving Framework to identify and address underlying causes of absenteeism followed by implementation of individualised supports.
- Students will have the following needs evaluated
  - Environmental
  - Learning
  - Social and emotional
- The Student Support Team, AEN department, parents and students engage in collaborative decision-making to determine appropriate placement on the continuum of support.

Supports:

Implementation of supports* such as

- ○ Reduced timetables
- ○ Access to sensory rooms and guidance areas
- ○ Home Tuition
- ○ Learning support
- ○ Utilisation of Google Classroom as a platform for sharing resources, keeping students informed, and fostering a sense of connection during absences.
- ○ Provide support for accessing necessary books and materials to facilitate learning continuity.

*This is not an exhaustive list

How daily attendance is monitored

VSWare is used to record attendance and punctuality in every class during the school day.

The first roll call of the day is used to inform parents / guardians if a student is absent from school.

It is of the utmost importance that attendance for period 1 be taken accurately before 9:00 am.

A notification from the school app is sent to parents at 9:30 informing parents / guardians of unexplained absences during the first class period.

Procedures

A student arriving late to school

- Any student that arrives after the 8:45 bell must report to reception to be recorded as late. A notification will be received via the app.
- If a student arrives at school late they must check in via reception.
- A late note can be submitted by a parent / guardian via the school app. A notification will be received via the app when the student signs in.

A student arriving late to class

- If a student arrives late to any class other than period 1, this will be recorded by the teacher on VSware.
- Negative behaviour points will be administered for persistent lateness.

Appointments during the school day

- The school must be notified of appointments by parents / guardians via the school app before 8:30 on the morning of the appointment. Regardless of age all students require a note from their parents / guardians and year head approval to leave during the school day.
- The appointment is approved by the relevant Yearhead.
- Students must sign out at reception. A notification will be received via the app when the student signs out.
- Students under 18 must be collected at reception by a parent / guardian or emergency contact (ID may be requested).

Illness during the school day

- If a student falls ill during the school day, they must report to their Yearhead or Deputy Principals/Principal to receive permission to go home.
- Parents / guardians will be contacted in the first instance, if they are not available the emergency contact will be called.
- Students sign out when collected
- For reasons of health and safety all students regardless of age must be collected by a parent/guardian or emergency contact in the event of needing to leave school ill.

School Activities or tours

- The teacher organising the activity / tour must log the student(s) taking part in the activity on VsWare (SCH) before 8:30 am to ensure an absent notification is not sent to the parent / guardian.
- If teachers remove students from scheduled class during the school day to take part in a school activity etc. they are responsible for updating VSware.

AEN

- Learning Support: if students are attending learning support classes (AEd or LS), the teacher is responsible for updating VSware.
- Sensory Room: If a student is attending the sensory room (SRM) the SNA or teacher supervising the students is responsible for updating VSware.

Guidance Area

- Guidance and Counselling: The guidance counsellor will update VSware.
- Guidance area pass: When a student arrives in the guidance area they must
  - check in with Guidance Staff or Senior Management who will update VSware
  - Fill in the guidance area pass on the school website.

A positive approach to attendance and punctuality

- Good attendance and punctuality is promoted in Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's by Yearheads, tutors and classroom teachers.
- Yearheads acknowledge and promote good attendance via the school's reward system.
- In line with the promotion of key skills students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and achieve their full potential by regularly attending and engaging in class.

Responding to poor attendance

- Yearheads monitor attendance and absences from school of all types. They will make informal contact with parents if they have a concern about a student's attendance.
- Letter sent by the Year Head after a student 10 full days of absenteeism are recorded (all types of absences).
- In line with the schools legal obligations after 20 Full absent days are recorded a referral will be made to Tusla's Education Welfare Officer.

Roles and responsibilities

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
- To inform the Principal of another second level school of an inter-school transfer
- 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's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal
  - ○ 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 Principals
- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class TeachersTutors, and Administration Staff to implement the school policy
- To liaise with the Year Head and student support team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance
- To inform 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 approve notes received via the school app.
- To monitor regularly the attendance records on the VSWare system for their year group.
- To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- To reward students who have excellent attendance/punctuality or who have made significant improvements to same
- To raise issues regarding attendance at AP meetings.
- To liaise with the Student Support Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To make contact with parents/guardians when they have a concern about a student's attendance.
- To send a formal communication to parents/guardians after 10 full days of absences have been recorded.

- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue
- 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 make a referral to Tusla's Education Welfare Officer after 20 full days of absences have been recorded.

Class Tutor
- To report any concerns regarding students' attendance to the relevant Year Head.
- To record attendance at tutor time.

Class Teacher
- To record the attendance of every class every day.
- When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will record the attendance on VSWare
- 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.

Parents / guardians
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that explained absences are sent via the school app before the start of the school day.
- Parents are encouraged to book appointments outside school hours. In the event of an appointment during school hours parents are responsible for informing the school via the school app if a student is leaving the school during the school day. This must be approved by the relevant year head in advance of the departure time. Students are strongly encouraged to return to school after the appointment
- Regardless of age all students require a note from their parents / guardians and year head approval to leave during the school day.
- If the student is under 18 years of age they must be collected from reception by a parent, guardian or designated emergency.
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that all contact information on VsWare is up to date.

Student

- To punctually attend all scheduled classes everyday unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- If arriving late for school, sign in at the office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board of Management will monitor the policy in consultation with the Principal and teaching staff, the Parents' Association and the Students Representative Council.

Review

This policy will be review annually or as as the need arises

Ratification

This strategy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting in January 2024

Paschal Marry

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Chairperson

January 2024

Maria Harney

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Secretary of the Board

January 2024