St. Columba's College Stranorlar

Attendance Strategy

2018

Contents:

Scope:

Board of Management, Teaching Staff, Administration Staff, Parents Council, Student Council

Relationship to School's Mission Statement:

At St Columba's College, we are committed to encouraging our students to develop a pattern of regular and punctual attendance in order to benefit fully from the education provided.

Without such a pattern of regular attendance, it is very difficult to achieve the holistic development and the full potential of each student. (Philosophy of Education)

Rationale:

- To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the students.
- To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process.
- To ensure that students benefit fully from opportunities that this school offers them.
- To ensure 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, 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 which may emerge. The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:
    i. A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days
    ii. The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty
    iii. A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal
    iv. A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly

Goals

To achieve:

- Accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
- That students learn to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
- That parents appreciate the vital role they play in their child's school attendance.
- Minimum rate of absenteeism.

- The early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance.

A positive approach to attendance and punctuality:

Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.

Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme.

The Year Head and/or member(s) of the Student Support Team meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.

Reports to Parents/Guardians include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question. All members of the school community will support the implementation of the Attendance Strategy.

Strategy Content

Roles and responsibility:

Student:

i. To swipe their student card on the Anseo machines before 9.00am and 2.00pm each day and to punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
ii. Following an absence from school, to present a written explanation in the designated section of the School Journal on the day of return to class.
iii. If arriving late for school, to be accompanied by a parent/guardian or to present a written explanation to one of the Deputy Principals.

Parent/Guardian:

i. To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities. (Education Welfare Act 2000)
ii. To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.
iii. To provide a written excuse for the student's absence on the first day of return to school.
iv. All messages relating to student absences must be confirmed in writing as soon as possible for the attention of the Year Head.
v. To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other

authorised parties if necessary. Where a reliable contact number is not provided, the school will send a letter requesting same.

vi. To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.

vii. To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.

viii. To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays, or after school finishes on Wednesday (1.20pm).

ix. Any student who arrives late for school must be either accompanied by a parent /guardian or provided with an explanatory note from the parent/guardian.

Principal:

i. To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.

ii. To monitor attendance records regularly.

iii. To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

iv. To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences withdrawal of students from the School.

v. To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress (Ref: Philosophy of Education).

Deputy Principal:

i. To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Administration Staff to implement the School Policy.

ii. To liaise with the Year Head and Student Support Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.

iii. To meet, along with the Year Head, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.

Subject teachers:

i. To record the attendance of all classes every day. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will take a list of the names of every student in the classroom (essential information in the event of an evacuation of the school.)

ii. To input the attendance for all class periods into the VSware system for all classes. If there is a technical difficulty the subject teacher will record the attendance manually in their diary. If a teacher is substituting during these periods, the attendance should be recorded either electronically on VSware or on the class list available for that time and then submitted to the Year Head.

iii. To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.

Year Head:

I. To monitor regularly the attendance records on the VSware and Anseo systems for the given year.

II. To check absence notes from parents/guardians and to store these safely for the duration of the year.

III. To amend, ideally on a weekly basis, the records on VSware and Anseo from absence unexplained to absence explained where relevant.

IV. To liaise with the Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.

V. To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.

VI. 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. Where a student is absent for 3 days or more the Year Head will contact the home to enquire as to the student's welfare.

VII. To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

VIII. To administer the signing in and out of students.

IX. To provide students who sign late (after 9.05am or 2.05pm) with a late note.

Administrative Staff:

i. To input attendance data when required.

ii. To work in conjunction with the Year Head to submit the four reports to the NEWB.

Day to day implementation:

i. All students swipe their ID card on machines to register on the Anseo attendance system before 9.05am. The roll is recorded electronically in each class on VSware. Absence notes are submitted to the year head. He/she will subsequently amend the absence unexplained to absence explained on Anseo.

ii. Those arriving after the start of class at 9.05am are recorded as late.

iii. Students who arrive at school after 9.05 am are required to swipe in at the Deputy Principal's office.

iv. The Deputy Principal will issue a late note confirming that signing in has taken place.

v. Students who have to leave the school during the day due to illness must be collected by a parent/guardian at a Deputy Principal's office/Infirmary and must then sign out. The signing out is filed for use of the relevant year head.

The Principal/Deputy Principals will not give permission to any students who may be feeling ill to leave school unaccompanied.

vi. Students who need to leave school for an appointment must have a signed permission note from home. Otherwise they must be signed out at the Deputy Principal's office.

vii. The attendance is also entered into VSware in all classes by the relevant subject teacher.

viii. Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities must swipe in before leaving the college (from 8.45am onwards). The teacher who is taking students away on an activity prepares a list of the names and, prior to departure, enters the details in the school activities book. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the Deputy Principal of same.

ix. Students who re away on extra-curricular activities will be make absent on the VSware system but will not be recorded as absent for the day if they have swiped in before leaving. The Year Head will update the Anseo system if students leave the college before 8.45am

Appendix 1: Copy of the letter sent out to parents/guardians re absence from school.

St. Columba's College
Stranorlar,
Co. Donegal.

Phone (074) 9131246 Fax (074) 9132528

Date:_____

Student
Name:_____Class:_____

Re: School Attendance

Dear _____,

Our Code of Behaviour states that:

'Regular attendance and punctuality are vital to maximise learning. Absence from school should be for genuine reasons only…..'

As you are aware your son/daughter has been absent from school on _____ days during this current school academic year to date. We appreciate that there may be many factors which might prevent a student from attending school on any given day and that some absences may be unavoidable. However, we are concerned that the number of absences to date is having a negative impact on your son's/daughter's progress.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 stipulates that the name of a student, who is absent in aggregate for 20 days or more during the school year or whose pattern of attendance is irregular, should be sent to the local Educational Welfare Officer. We are anxious to address any issues regarding the current absenteeism before we arrive at that stage.

I would be grateful if you could contact me at the college in order to discuss the matter. There may be areas where we could be of assistance with a view to improving your son's/daughter's attendance at school and hence maximise their learning.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Year Head