Coláiste Cholmcille

Ballyshannon

Attendance Policy

2022-2023

Relationship to School's Mission Statement:

At Coláiste Cholmcille, we are committed to encouraging our students to develop a pattern of regular and punctual attendance in a happy and safe environment in order to benefit fully from the education provided.

A pattern of regular attendance will help each student achieve his/her spiritual, academic, and personal potential.

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:

  ➢ A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days
  ➢ The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty
  ➢ A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal
  ➢ 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 our Well-Being programme and Class Tutor system.

The Year Head, Attendance Officer 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.

Attendance records of all students is available to see by their parents/guardians on VS Ware.

Policy Content

Roles and responsibility:

Student

- To enter the school before 8.50am and 1.55pm each day and to punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- Prior to or following an absence from school, to ensure an explanation from parent/guardian has been recorded on the school app.

- If arriving late for school, to be accompanied by a parent/guardian <u>or</u> to ensure an explanation has been inputted on the school app by parent/guardian.
- If signing out at any point during the day to ensure that parental or guardian permission has been logged on the app prior to signing out at the school office.
- To report to the school office before leaving school to sign out, even if signed out via the school app.
- To report to the office to sign back in if returning to school the same day.
- Do not leave site without a parent, guardian, or responsible adult.

Parent/Guardian

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities. (Education Welfare Act 2000).
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.

- To use the school Attendance app to log and explain student absences or the withdrawal of students during the day.
- To ensure the Attendance app is used in a responsible manner. Students should **not** be given access to parental accounts.
- School App will close at 8:50am for signing out. Parents must then contact the school office. All students signing out must be collected by a parent/guardian or responsible adult.
- All messages relating to student absences must be confirmed as soon as possible for the attention of the Year Head.
- 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.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in this Policy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays, or after school finishes on Wednesday (1.05pm).
- To ensure that holidays are not taken during term time as under the Education Welfare Act 2019 schools cannot authorise holiday absences during term time.
- To provide a letter to the school to say they are taking holidays during term time and are fully aware of the implications. See section below from the Tusla documentation on term time holidays.
- Any student who arrives late for school must be either accompanied by a parent /guardian or have a note from the parent/guardian entered on the school app.

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 Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences 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 (Ref: Philosophy of Education).

Deputy Principal

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Attendance Officer, Year Heads, Class Teachers, 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 meet, along with the Year Head, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.
- To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To support the rewards systems for positive attendance.

Subject teachers/tutors

- To record the attendance of all classes every day on VSware.
- When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher covering will record the attendance on VSware.
- If there is a technical difficulty the subject teacher or substitute teacher will record the attendance manually and pass this information to administrative staff as soon as possible.
- To impress on students, the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.
- To report any concerns regarding attendance to the Year Head and Attendance Officer.
- Report students to year heads if late to class on 3 occasions.
- Alert the office and Year Head of any unexplained absences from class.
- Follow and implement school attendance policy and Statement of strategy regrading attendance.

The Attendance Officer

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on the VSware system.
- To liaise with the Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, Year Head or Home Community School Liaison officer, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem to discuss the issue.
- To contact the Year Head where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/ or when patterns of absences are developing. Where a student is absent for 5 days or more the Year Head will contact the home to enquire as to the student's welfare.
- After 10 days of absence the Attendance Officer will draft a letter informing the parent/guardian of the number of days missed and the student is referred to the HSCLO and the Student Support Team.
- After 15 days of absence a letter will be sent from the Attendance Officer in collaboration with the HSCLO to arrange a home visit.
- After 20 days of absence a meeting is arranged with parents/guardians in conjunction with HSCLO and Management.

The Year Head

- To liaise with the Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, Attendance Officer or Home Community School Liaison officer, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem to discuss the issue.
- To respond appropriately to attendance issues identified by the Attendance Officer or other school staff.
- To set attendance targets for students.
- To reward students for positive attendance at specific points throughout the year.

The Home School Liaison Officer

- Support measures to improve attendance, participation, and retention of all pupils at risk of poor engagement with education and early school leaving.
- Work collaboratively with the Tusla EWS and School completion Programme to address issues which impinge on school attendance, participation, and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.
- Work with parents to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children in relation to improving attendance.
- To liaise with the Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To liaise with the Year Head and Student Support Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.

Administrative Staff

- To input attendance data regarding absences and lates.
- To oversee the signing in and out of students during the day.
- To check digital notes from parents/guardians and to file these safely for the duration of the year.
- To amend, ideally on a weekly basis, the records on VSware from "absence unexplained" to "absence explained" where relevant.
- To work with the Attendance Officer to generate text messages notifying parents on the number of days their son/daughter has been absent.
- To work in conjunction with the Attendance Officer and Year Head to submit the four reports to the NEWB.

Day to day implementation:

Morning;

- Students must enter the school building before 8.50am.
- Students who arrive at school after 8.50am are required to report to the front door to sign in at the office. The administrative staff will mark them "Late" on VSware .
- Once a student has signed in, a push notification is sent home via the school app.
- The roll is recorded electronically in each class on VSware.
- Three morning lates in a term leads to a lunch detention. This is monitored by the Attendance Officer and implemented by the year head.
- If a student accumulates six morning lates in a term it will result in an afterschool detention on a Wednesday. This is monitored by the Attendance Officer and implemented by the year head.
- If a student accumulates nine morning lates in a term, it will be an afterschool detention on a Wednesday detention and parents will be contacted by the Year Head to discuss the ongoing issue.

Late after Lunch;
- Students must enter the building before 1.55pm.
- Students must report to the front door to sign in at the office if they arrive after 1.55pm. The administrative staff will mark them "Late" on VSware.
- One afternoon late leads to a lunch detention. This is monitored by the Year Head.
- Two afternoon lates in a term leads to an afterschool detention on a Wednesday. This is monitored by the Year Head.
- Three afternoon lates in a term will be an afterschool detention on a Wednesday and parents will be contacted by the Year Head to discuss the ongoing issue.

Late to class during the day;
- The classroom teacher will record the late on VSware.
- Three lates to class leads to a detention. This is monitored by the classroom teacher who refers the incidents to the Year Head.

Absences from school/class;
- Parents/guardians are expected to contact the school via the App in the morning to record and explain absence.
- Students who do not present to class are marked as "absent" on VSware and a notification is sent to parents/guardians via the school app.
- If their status changes to "absence explained" or "extra-curricular" the office will change their status on VSware.

Signing out during school hours;
- Students signing out of school for an appointment must present at the Office.
- Parents/guardians must have either phoned the office or used the school app in advance giving permission to sign out.

- Permission to sign out cannot be granted retrospectively. This will be viewed as leaving school without permission.
- Permission to sign out will not be possible on the App after 8:50am. A parent will need to phone the school to confirm permission and the student will need to be collected by a parent/guardian or responsible adult.
- Students must then sign the logbook before leaving the building and on their return (if returning the same day)
- Under no circumstances may students leave the school grounds at any point during the day to go to the shop or for any other reason without following the above protocol. Failure to follow protocol is considered a serious breach of school rules and a sanction will apply as outlined in the Code of Conduct.
- Students who must leave due to illness must be collected by a parent/guardian and then sign the logbook. Students who feel ill will not be allowed to leave the school building unaccompanied.

Extra-curricular activities
- Students who will be absent for extra-curricular activities must swipe in as normal in the morning.
- The teacher who is taking the students away must inform the office of the names of the students and relevant details. These students will be entered as "extra-curricular" by the office on VSware.

Unexplained absences during the day;
Teachers will alert the office and/or Year Head who will follow-up on the absence.

Absences due to Term Time Holidays
Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time. Schools should strongly discourage parents from taking students on holidays during term time and this should be documented in the school's communication to parents. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the principal should request the parent to provide a letter to the school to say they are doing so and are aware of the implications. Where there are regular holiday absences, the school should remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time

Attendance Incentives;
Coláiste Cholmcille has traditionally recognised students who achieve full attendance in the school year by presenting the students with a certificate of full attendance at the Awards
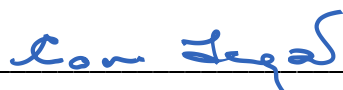
Ceremony in May each year. This year, due to the large number of covid-related absences it was felt that attendance records do not give a true reflection of a student's attendance patterns. We will return to this tradition at the appropriate time. In the meantime we will present an award for Most Improved Attendance.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation;
Senior management in conjunction with staff and the Board of Management will carry out the implementation, monitoring, review, and evaluation of this policy.

This policy was ratified by the Board of management on;

Signed:_____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: _27/9/22_ Date: _27/9/22_

Date of next review: _Nov 24_