

St. Declan’s College

Nephin Road,

Dublin 7.

**School Attendance Policy**

**Mission Statement**

St Declan’s College is a Catholic college under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. It is committed to the education of its students in the spiritual, moral, intellectual, social and physical spheres. The college aims to live up to its motto, Cursum Tenere - to hold the course – promoting a sense of integrity and commitment among its students.

It aspires to help each student to realise his full potential, and to help him to make a positive contribution to the college and to the wider community.

The Board of Management, Trustees, Principal, Staff, Students and Parents work in partnership to achieve these aims.

**School Ethos**

St Declan's College is in the trusteeship of the Christian Brothers and is committed to the fostering of Christian values and personal growth in all its dimensions, spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical, emotional and social. It strives to be a school which has at its core the care and development of each individual student and has as its motto "Cursum Tenere", "Hold Your Course".

**Attendance**

St Declan’s College is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which allows each student to reach their full potential. The school is committed to providing a holistic education to each student and aims to be a welcoming and inclusive environment for all members of its community. This community includes teachers, students and parents. The school wishes to promote co-operation among students, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of attendance throughout the school year.

Regular attendance at school is essential for all students so that they may reach their potential. Our school aims to foster a culture of regular attendance at school for all pupils. In addition we seek to identify and support students who are experiencing problems with attendance at school. The provisions of the Education Welfare Act 2002 inform and support this policy.

**Rationale**

The policy is considered necessary because:

* there are a number of legislative requirements arising from the Education Welfare Act 2002.
* of the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills.
* attendance at school is essential in order for students to fulfil their potential.

**Aims and Objectives**

This school policy sets out to:

* raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
* make clear the roles and responsibilities of all key partners in ensuring students attend school
* enhance the learning environment
* ensure compliance with the relevant legislation

**Application of Policy**

This policy applies to all students of St Declan’s College.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**A.     Principal:**

       Overall responsibility for students including attendance

**B.     Deputy Principal:**

        Liaise with Principal on all issues regarding students including attendance

**C.     Year Head:**

        Monitor attendance in Year Group and make students aware of importance of regular attendance.

* Make contact with parents/guardians in an effort to improve attendance and ascertain reasons for non-attendance. Encourage parents/guardians to adopt a positive attitude to school attendance.

    \*       When necessary make referrals to the Care Team

**D.     Class Tutor:**

Ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences.

Call the roll every morning during tutor period. Check students in their tutor class have written explanation for absences in their journals.

Make initial contact with parents/guardians if there are concerns around a student’s attendance and refer the issue to the Year Head if attendance does not improve.

**E.     Class Teacher:**

Responsible for student registration during class period.

* Bring any concerns about an individual student’s attendance to the appropriate tutor/ year head.

1. **F.      Care Team:**

* Take referrals from Year Heads and advise Principal on further courses of action which may be taken. These include intervention by the Care Team or referral to E.W.O.
* Try to establish reasons for student absences.
* Nurture confidence and trust of student.
* Make contact with parents/guardian. Encourage parents/guardians to adopt a positive attitude to school attendance.
* Establish contact and trust with students.
* Work with students to counteract any ‘gaps’ in education which may lead to further absences.
* Maintain contact with parents/guardians.
* Monitor progress.
* Keep Principal informed
* If no improvement suggest to Attendance Officer/ Principal that student should be referred to the E.W.O.

**G.    School Attendance Officer:**

* Obtains and checks absences on a daily basis.
* Monitors half day absences.
* Notifies home when 10 and 15 absences have been reached.
* Informs Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head of serious late-coming or problems with attendance.
* Notify E.W.O. when 20 absences or 6 days (cumulative) suspension have been reached.

1. **Parents:**

* Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or hernot to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000).
* When a student is absent from school during part of the school day or for a school day or for more than a school day, Section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places legal duty on parents to notify the principal about the reasons for the student’s absence.
* A student who is absent from school must, on his return, provide a written explanation from parent or guardian in his journal for his class tutor.
* Medical and dental appointment cards should be presented at least one day in advance.
* In the likelihood of a prolonged absence, a parent or guardian should (after three days at most) notify the relevant Form Tutor in writing or by phone.

**J. Students:**

* Each student has a personal responsibility to attend school each day.

**Procedures**

* The school day begins at 8.50am and ends at 4.00pm (1.00pm on Wednesday & 3.40pm on Friday).
* A student who is absent from school must, on his return, provide a written explanation from parent or guardian in his journal for his class tutor.
* Medical and dental appointment cards should be presented at least one day in advance.
* In the likelihood of a prolonged absence, a parent or guardian should (after three days at most) notify the relevant Form Tutor in writing or by phone.
* If a student arrives late to school he must have a written explanation from parent or guardian in his journal. He will receive a stamp in the ‘Lates’ section of his journal. If he does not have a written explanation for being late he will receive a sanction.
* In the event of a student becoming ill or getting injured during the day they should inform their class teacher who will send them to their Tutor who may give permission to go home. If such permission is granted contact with their parents/guardians will be made through the school office. Students should not contact home via a mobile phone or prior to getting permission to leave the school premises. Parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements for the collection of their son at the school office in the event of a student being ill or injured. When a student returns to school after such an absence a note of explanation should be presented.
* During the school day every student must attend every class according to their timetable unless prior permission has been received from the Principal or Deputy Principal, Year Head or Tutor. The unauthorised absence of a student from any class during the school day will be viewed as a breach of discipline. The parents/guardian will be informed and appropriate sanctions may apply.
* On occasion students may be absent from class due to school related activities such as sport or debating. Such absences are sanctioned on the understanding that students ensure all homework is sourced and carried out to a satisfactory standard. Students may be removed from such activities if they are having an adverse effect on their academic progress. Where a teacher is organising an approved activity which necessitates the absence of students from class a list of such students is posted in the staffroom or teachers are notified via VS Ware.
* On rare occasions a student may be absent from school due to suspension for breach of the School Code of Behaviour. In such instances parents will be consulted in advance and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies. In such instances, where a student is suspended, they should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications.
* If a student needs to leave school early he must have a written explanation from parent or guardian on the day that he has to leave early. He must show this to his class tutor during tutor class. He then proceeds to the school office at the time he has to leave and sign out.
* If a student is marked absent in the morning the school will send a text to parents on the morning of the absence. If an absence remains unexplained the Class Tutor or Year Head will make contact with parents to discuss this. If a student’s absence becomes an issue for concern the Attendance Officer, Deputy Principal/Principal will be informed and possibly the Care Team.
* The school must inform the NEWB in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended for six days or more. This report must be made irrespective of the reason for the student’s absence. If the school is very concerned about the pattern of a student’s absences, then the school is obliged by law to inform the NEWB. The school will always inform parents if a report is being made to the NEWB.
* The school cannot give ‘permission’ for holiday absences during term time. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays the school requires a letter to the principal saying they are doing so. Taking a student out of school during term time has a potential risk to his education and the student will need to take action to catch up on what he has missed.

**Communication**

* In the event of a student taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises the school must be notified immediately by Parent / Guardian.
* Teachers are requested to record on VS Ware all students in attendance and absent for each class period on a daily basis.
* The number of days a student has missed is clearly marked on his Christmas and Summer report.
* Parent(s) / Guardian(s) may be notified via phone call or text messaging if the school has a concern about a particular absence any time on any given date.
* The Parent(s) / Guardian(s) may be requested to make an appointment to discuss the matter.
* The School’s Attendance Officer will inform Parent(s) / Guardian(s) by letter when a student exceeds 10 absences or more. This letter will outline the school’s responsibility under the Education Welfare Act 2002. A copy of all recorded absences will also be enclosed .The Parent(s) / Guardian(s) will be invited to contact the school to discuss the matter if they wish to do so.

**Sanctions for Breaches of School Attendance Policy**

* Students arriving late to school without explanation from a parent/guardian will be placed on detention
* Latecomers to individual classes may be placed on a detention or given written sanction by their class teacher.
* Persistent late-comers may be placed on Wednesday Detention.
* Unauthorised absence during the school day may result in Wednesday Detention or Suspension or the student may be required to attend school on certain date(s) when the rest of the student cohort are not required to be in attendance.
* Absences will be notified to the E.W.B.as per the Education Welfare Act 2002.

**Rewards**

* Class Tutors acknowledge good attendance during tutor class and in the journal. During the Christmas Awards Ceremony certificates are presented to students to acknowledge excellent attendance.

***Policy Review:***

This Statement of Strategy was ratified by the Board of Management on:

Date: *13 September 2016*

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

Ken Duggan

*(Chairperson)*

Review Date: May 2017