Attendance & Participation Policy

of

Jesus & Mary Secondary School.
Gortnor Abbey

School Patrons: Le Chéile Schools Trust clg.

This Policy has been approved by the Board of Management at its meeting of

DATE: 26-3-2026

CHAIRPERSON: Paul Mc Dermott

Mr. Paul Mc Dermott

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 26-3-2029

Introduction

Research has identified the following as significantly associated with attendance rates:

- The way schools monitor and respond to absenteeism
- The social climate in the school and classroom, particularly the relationship between teacher and student in the classroom
- The organisation of student groups in mixed ability classes
- Student economic background and general ability level

Factors influencing non-engagement and absenteeism include:

- Student attitude to school
- Relationships with teacher: including perceived absence of positive interaction and perceived low expectations
- Relationships with peers including perceived bullying
- Academic self-rating including, self-other comparison, expectations in relation to performance and expectations in relation to tests and assessments
- Parental factors, including absence of involvement, inconsistent or lax parental boundaries
- Family conflict
- Self-identity and control issues
- Juggling school and paid employment especially at senior cycle impacting on study/homework
- An active social life outside of school, Monday morning absences
- Allocating first year students to class groups according to assessed abilities
- The school's choice of sanctions
- Family holidays during school term time
- Parental permission to stay away
- Students skipping classes on their own initiative
- Protective factors, (anxiety & self-esteem issues) e.g., deliberate skipping school to avoid house tests
- Disaffection with school: 'acting out' an underlying mental, emotional, health or social difficulty.

Rationale

Parents/Guardians are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children receive an education and the school supports and enhances this education.

Gortnor Abbey works in partnership with parents to ensure that the environment is created where children look forward to coming to school and participating in school life.

Gortnor Abbey recognises that every member of the School Community is a unique individual, each with the potential to grow academically, emotionally, spiritually and socially. The school aims to provide an environment conducive to this development at all times. All members of the school community strive to work in an atmosphere of mutual

respect, co-operation and challenge to realise the full potential of all in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment. The school recognises that attendance is a requisite for maximising and deriving the most from school life to achieve this potential.

Scope

This policy refers to all aspects of school attendance and punctuality for implementation by students, all school staff, parents and management.

The Legal Context

The **Education (Welfare) Act (2000)** places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents to provide for the optimum attendance of every pupil. 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 six or more days
- The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is twenty or more days
- 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.

Aims and Objectives

Our policy aims to

- support and encourage **each student** to maintain full attendance in school in order that s/he gains the most of school life and performs to the best of her/his ability and
- ensure that the school works in partnership with students and parents to achieve this end
- Engage **parents/guardians** as the primary educational partners in promoting participation
- Address **school factors** such as climate, policies and practices which may contribute to student disengagement and non-attendance
- Develop strategies to promote **early prevention** by identifying and monitoring disengagement & attendance issues from first year in the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

The Board of Management ensures that a school attendance strategy is prepared and submitted to the Education Welfare Agency. The Board ensures that all aspects of this attendance policy are implemented.

Principal

- To oversee the implementation of the Attendance Policy
- To prepare a report for the NEWB four times a year, listing students under sixteen years of age who have more than twenty days absence from school.
- To ensure Parents/Guardians are informed of any report concerning their son/daughter
- To prepare a report for the NEWB at the end of the school year on the total number of absences throughout the year plus a summary of the information previously sent to the NEWB.

Deputy Principal

- In conjunction with the Assistant Principal to process excuses for all absences.
- To follow up on absence notes still outstanding.
- To inform Parents/Guardians in writing when their son/daughter has been absent for 10 days and, subsequently, for 20 days
- To organise the administration of sanctions where appropriate
- To record students absent due to suspension on the Tyro.
- To arrange an appointment with Parents/Guardians when deemed necessary

Guidance Counsellor

- Accepts referrals from Principal/Deputy, Assistant Principal and other school personnel
- Establish and maintain contact with students/parents / guardians
- Encourage parents/guardians to adopt a positive attitude to school attendance
- Investigate and establish reasons for student absences
- Work with Special Learning Needs Coordinator if appropriate to counteract any 'gaps' in education which may lead to further absences
- Work with the Year Care Team to set in place appropriate supports to keep student at school
- Monitor progress
- Keep Principal/Deputy, Assistant Principal, class teachers informed as appropriate

Assistant Principal

- As part of the Care Team Structure, together with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Guidance Counsellor and SEN organiser, to discuss any students who appear to have patterns of non-attendance and identify possible interventions
- To liaise with teachers concerning attendance
- To meet with those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem
- To advise the Principal/Deputy and Guidance Counsellor of students for whom there are recurring issues and concerns

Subject Teachers

Subject teachers are key both to the daily monitoring of attendance as well as in the observation and identification of students who are disaffected or presenting disengagement behaviours in the classroom. Subject teachers

- Enter attendance in the school's Gortnor Abbey app.
- In the interest of prevention and early intervention, and with particular reference to First Years and Junior Cycle students, draw to the attention of the Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal and/or Guidance Counsellor the following:
    i. withdrawal or uncooperative behaviour
    ii. persistent absences
    iii. disengagement/disinterest
    iv. 'Acting out' or 'attention seeking' behaviours
- 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 and a copy given to the school office for recording on Tyro.

School Office

- To accept and input *Absent Note* information on Tyro.
- To monitor the *Sign In /Late Sheet* and the *Leaving School Early data.*
- To record parent requests for students to leave early or explanations for absence given by phone.

Parents/Guardians

It is the responsibility of the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) to furnish the school with a signed and dated note outlining the date and reason for every recorded absence. Such notes will be collected and filed and used in returns to the E.W.B. as outlined in the Educational Welfare Act (2002). Parents/Guardians are requested to ensure all discretionary absences occur outside of term time. School management furnish parents with a calendar of the school year to assist in this regard.

- Parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements for the collection of their son/daughter 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.

- In the event of students being collected by a designated adult other than parents/guardians the school office must be notified in advance either by a written note or telephone call.

Recommendations for parents/guardians by the *Child and Family Agency* include:

- Listen to your child. Be interested in his or her news about school and ask about what he or she is doing.
- Make education important in your home and let your son/daughter know it is not okay to miss school.

- Help your child to be proud of a good attendance record
- Build your child's confidence by praising him or her when he or she does well
- Read letters and reports from the school and know the school rules
- Go to school meetings and get to know the teachers, staff and your child's friends
- Don't take family holidays during school term
- Be alert for reasons why your child may not want to go to school. If your child finds school work hard, talk to the school right away
- Encourage your child not to take on a part-time job during school term. A tired teenager will not be able to keep up at school
- Support the school's Attendance Policy
- Provide a written excuse for your son's/daughter's absence on the first day of return to school.

Students

All students are expected to:

- Punctually attend all scheduled classes every day
- To adhere to the Specific Procedures listed below in relation to attendance

Specific Procedures

- Every student is expected to be in attendance on each school day from 8.54 a.m. until 3.45 p.m.
- On Friday school finishes at 1.43
- Students may not be absent from school except when the absence is unavoidable due to illness, urgent family reason or other legitimate and unavoidable reason.

- Students arriving late for class at 8.55 a.m. and /or 1.43 p.m. must complete the digital sign in at the office before proceeding to class. Late arrival to school on a repeated basis may be viewed as a breach of discipline and appropriate sanctions may apply.

- In the event of a student becoming ill or getting injured during the school day they should inform their class teacher or other members of staff who may send them to the Principal or Deputy Principal to obtain permission to go home. If such permission is granted, contact with their parents/guardians should be through the school office. Students should not contact home via a mobile phone or prior to getting permission to leave the school premises.

- 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. The unauthorised absence of a student from any class during the school day will be viewed as a breach of discipline and appropriate sanctions will apply.

- On occasion students may be absent from class due to school related activities such as sport, choir and drama etc. 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.

- A student wishing to leave the school premises for a legitimate reason during the school day must have a signed note from their parent/guardian. This note must be handed in to the school office before 8.30am on the day in question. This note should include the reason for the absence, the time the student is leaving and a contact number for verification. Any student who leaves the school premises without such authorisation will be deemed to have breached the school code of discipline and appropriate sanctions will be applied.

- On rare occasions a student may be absent from school due to suspension for breach of discipline. 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.

Breaches of School Attendance Policy

- Students may be placed on Lunchtime Detention.
- Unauthorised absence during the school day may result in Detention or Suspension
- Absences will be notified to the E.W.O as per the Education Welfare Act 2002.

References

Education (Welfare) Act 2000
http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/22/enacted/en/html
http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2000/a2200.pdf

The Child and Family Agency
http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services
McCoy, S., Darmody, M. Smyth, E., Dunne, A., (December 10, 2007) *Attendance and Students' School Experience* Dublin: NEWB

The National Education Welfare Board
www.newb.ie

Victoria State Government Education and Training Website
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx