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ATTENDANCE STRATEGY POLICY

1. The school's vision and values in relation to attendance

Mission Statement

Clonkeen College is a voluntary Catholic secondary school, where each individual and group within the school community is encouraged and facilitated to contribute to the creation of a caring, supportive and inclusive educational environment, conducive to developing the diverse talents of all the participants.

Good attendance is promoted in Clonkeen College to:

- Ensure that the school can best cater for the care and welfare of our pupils
- Best enable progression and continuity in pupil learning.
- Better enable pupils to participate in and benefit fully from the variety of opportunities that life in school offers them.
- Inform parents/guardians, pupils and teachers of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance by the pupil population of the school
- Best enable the school fulfil its legal obligations regarding school attendance in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and other relevant Acts.

The Clonkeen College School Attendance Strategy aims to:

- Develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality
- Encourage full participation in class.
- Encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance
- Keep accurate records of pupil attendance at school.
- Maintain school attendance rates at the highest levels possible for all students.
- Facilitate the early detection, monitoring and correction of patterns of poor attendance

2. Operating Context

Section 22 (1) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 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 pupils attending the school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such pupils.”

3. How attendance will be monitored

Pupil attendance is recorded every morning by the Form Tutor at 8.50 and every afternoon during the first class after the lunch break (13:55 to 14:35) by the class teacher. It is at these times that pupils will be marked present or absent for the day/half day. Attendance is recorded throughout the school day by each subject teacher as he/she takes a class. These attendance records are retained in the individual teacher's diary and can be referenced at any time by the Form Tutor or Year Head when cases of absenteeism are being investigated.

Pupils who arrive late to school are required to sign in at school reception. They must get a 'Late' stamp in their Journal at reception and then proceed immediately to their first class. The class teacher will enter that pupil as 'Late' in his/her personal class record. Reception staff will ensure that the pupil record for that day will show 'Late'. If the pupil has previously been marked as absent (ABS), this is to be changed to 'LATE'. A pupil who arrives late to school must give an explanatory note to his Form Tutor. The note must be signed by a parent/guardian and must be given on the day of the lateness or at the start of the following school day.

A pupil who wishes to leave school during the school day to attend an appointment must have a written and signed permission note from a parent/guardian in his school journal. The signed permission note must be given to the Form Tutor at 8:50 on the day of the appointment. The Form Tutor will countersign and date the note. The pupil must present the countersigned note at reception and then sign out in the 'sign-out' book held at reception before leaving the school for the appointment.

A pupil who reports feeling unwell and wishes to leave school before the end of the school day must contact his Form Tutor or, in his/her absence, his Year Head, who will write an explanatory note in the pupil's journal consenting to the leave. The pupil will present this note at school reception and ask a member of staff there to arrange for a parent/guardian to collect him. The pupil must sign an entry in the 'sign-out' book at school reception when a parent/guardian comes to collect him. The parent/guardian must also sign the sign-out entry of the pupil to confirm that he/she is taking the pupil into his/her care.

The pupil must give an explanatory note for the absence to his Form Tutor at the start of the following school day. This note must be signed by his parent/guardian.

Where pupils are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, the teacher in charge of the activity provides a list of the pupil names to Reception and posts the same list on the staff noticeboard. The administration staff enters the absences on the school record as 'school activity'. The teacher in charge will notify the administration staff when a pupil is absent from the activity.

4. A positive approach to attendance and punctuality

Good attendance is promoted in Clonkeen College by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each pupil to take responsibility for his own learning and achieve his full potential through regular presence in class.

Pupils are made aware, during assemblies, general classes and in SPHE, of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance.

The Form Tutor and/or Year Head meet with pupils for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.

Reports to parents/guardians include a breakdown of attendance for the period in question.

The school's reward system acknowledges excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises pupils who show significant improvements in attendance and punctuality.

A sense of belonging and connectedness in school is developed through participation in school life and/or extra-curricular activities.

5. Responding to poor attendance

Contacting parents (initially by the Form Tutor/Year Head) on an informal basis when a pupil is absent regularly in order to begin a dialogue about attendance.

Reporting to parents when pupils are absent without their permission.

Tracking of pupil attendance through the Form Tutor/Year head.

Contacting TUSLA for advice.

Giving positive reinforcement of good or improving attendance. Every effort is made to engage with pupils who are working to improve their attendance.

Providing class teachers with information as to which pupils are particularly at risk of developing attendance problems.

When there is no improvement in a pupil's attendance following school intervention, a referral will be made to Tusla's Education Welfare Services.

6. School Roles in relation to attendance

Role of Principal:

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record pupil attendances and absences of pupils.
- To monitor attendance records regularly.
- To make reports to TUSLA 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 TUSLA where any of the following occur:
 - A pupil is suspended from school for a period of not less than 6 days.
 - The aggregate number of school days on which a pupil is absent from school during a school year is 20 days or more.
 - A pupil's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal.
 - A pupil is, in the opinion of the Principal, not attending school regularly.
- To inform parents/guardians and pupils of procedures for the notification of absences or the withdrawal of pupils from the school.
- To remind pupils and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on pupil progress.

Role of Deputy Principal:

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Form Tutors and Administration Staff to implement the school policy.
- To liaise with the Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- To ensure that all staff complete attendance rolls as required.

Role of Year Head:

- To regularly monitor the attendance records for his/her year.
- To raise issues regarding attendance at the weekly meetings of Year Heads with the School Principal and Deputy Principal.
- To meet those pupils from his/her year, for whom attendance or punctuality is a concern, to investigate the cause(s) of the problem.
- To liaise with class teachers, Form Tutor, school guidance counsellor, Deputy Principal, Principal and parents to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/or when patterns of absences are developing.
- To remind pupils during assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To reward pupils who have excellent attendance/punctuality records or who have made significant improvements to same.

Role of Form Tutor:

- To check absence notes from parents/guardians.
- To liaise with the Year Head in the event of unexplained absences or where other concerns arise in relation to attendance.

Role of Class Teacher:

- To record pupil attendance at all of his/her classes. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the substitute teacher will record the attendance on paper and give that record to the class teacher on his/her return to school.
- To impress on pupils the importance of regular attendance, insist on punctuality and keep a record of those who are late for class.
- To welcome pupils back on their return to school after absences.
- To endeavour to support pupils to complete work that they have missed when absent from school.

Role of Parents/Guardians:

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities to ensure that their child is attending a recognised school on every day that the school is open. (Section 17 of the 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 the Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time.
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of pupils and avoid unnecessary absences.
- To inform the Form Tutor/Year Head in advance of any planned absences from school.
- To provide a written explanation for the pupil's absence on the first day of return to school.
- Where possible, elective appointments should be arranged for outside of school time. Where appointments can only be arranged within school hours, pupils should return to school following the appointment.
- To provide the school with reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in the Strategy for the withdrawal of pupils from school during the school day.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.

Role of Pupil:

- To attend all scheduled classes on time every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- On the day of return to class following an absence from school, the pupil must present a written explanation for the absence to his Form Tutor/Year Head. This must be signed by his parent/guardian.
- If arriving late for school, a pupil must sign in at Reception, get a late stamp in his Journal and proceed immediately to his first class. If the pupil has already been marked absent on the class roll, this will be changed to LATE by the school administration staff at reception.
- The class teacher will enter that pupil as LATE on his/her own class register.

Role of Administration Staff:

- To input attendance data from Form Tutor-filled morning roll books in the morning and from teacher-filled roll books from the first class in the afternoon each day.
- In conjunction with the Principal to submit required reports to TUSLA.
- To administer the signing in and signing out of pupils and the insertion of 'Late' stamps in pupil journals as required.
- To compile attendance reports as required.
- Liaising with teachers on queries re attendance.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board of Management will monitor the School Attendance Strategy in consultation with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Teaching Staff, the Parents' Association and the Student Council.

Success criteria will include having:

- Sustained high rates of attendance.
- Sustained high levels of punctuality.
- High standards of record keeping relating to attendance
- Good communication/interaction with parents on matters related to attendance
- Pupils taking high levels of responsibility for their own attendance

8. Review

The policy will be reviewed annually with the Year Heads and by the Board of Management in 2018/2019.

9. Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on:

Signed:

Chairperson

Date: 08.05.2018