



St. Aloysius' College

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY 2017

INTRODUCTION:

St Aloysius' College believes that:

- there is a direct relationship between a student's success in school and regular attendance.
- That students who have good attendance records enjoy their school experience more than students who do not regularly attend.

This attendance policy applies to the whole school community and encompasses all students, teachers, parents, classwork, homework and home study.

MISSION:

In our mission statement we aim to provide a teaching and learning community which is committed to excellence in education by:

- Promoting personal achievement and academic success.
- Respecting the unique potential of every student and encouraging each to maximise it.

Attendance is a key tool in the teaching and learning process. We believe that good attendance should increase student motivation, engagement, learning, enjoyment and autonomy.

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 more than 5 days
- II. The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is more than 20 days
- III. A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of St. Aloysius' College, not attending school regularly

This strategy is directed by:

1. The educational interests of the students.
2. The St. Aloysius' College mission statement.
3. St. Aloysius' College Pastoral Care Policy.
4. Legislative requirements arising from the Education Welfare Act 2000.
5. Requirements of the Department of Education and Skills.
6. TUSLA reporting requirements.

AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

It is hoped by constantly monitoring and tracking students' attendance records, absenteeism will improve and students will have a positive school experience.

This strategy will encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school and will provide:

- A focus on the awareness and importance of school attendance
- Accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
- Inform parents of the vital role they play in their child's school attendance.
- Steps for early identification and correction of students with patterns of poor attendance.
- For the establishment of closer contacts between the school and families concerned
- Steps to ensure our students have a positive relationship with learning
- To regularly monitor and evaluate techniques used
- To set targets for improving attendance

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES:

Students:

- Are expected to be present for in school for 8.35 each morning for classes at 8.45 am
- Are expected to be present at Assembly at 8.35 am one day a week.
- Students are expected to maintain high standards of punctuality for classes throughout the day.
- Students are expected to be present each day.

Parents:

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities as parents. (Education Welfare Act 2000)
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.
- To oversee that advice and guidelines provided in this strategy and the students journal are followed.
- To provide a written excuse for the student's absence on the first day of return to school.
- To provide to the school with reliable contact telephone numbers, email addresses and alternative 'emergency' numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.
- To make every effort to arrange dental and medical appointments outside school time.
- To acknowledge, and where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- Parents who are collecting their daughter early must present to reception or appoint a designated adult to do so.
- Parents are reminded that all family holidays should be taken within school holiday periods only.
- Parents and students are made aware of the legal position with regard to part-time work and are also alerted to the adverse effect it has on student's performance in school..
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Board of Management

- Overall responsibility for attendance rests with the BOM.
- To ensure that the strategy is developed and evaluated from time to time.
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the strategy.
- Unauthorised absence from school is a major breach of school discipline.

Principal and Deputy Principals:

- To establish structures and procedures to record attendances and absences of students.
- To monitor regularly the attendance records on VShare for students.
- To monitor the implementation of this strategy
- To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

- To remind students and parents of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress and student participation in school and all school based activities.
- To work in cooperation with the Year Heads, Class Teachers, Administration Staff and the Pastoral Care Team to implement the School Strategy and develop necessary approaches to improve student attendance.
- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance

Year Head:

- To monitor the attendance records on VSware for students in their year groups.
- To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To communicate with the Pastoral Care Team any concerns regarding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/or when patterns of absences are developing and to notify the Deputy Principals/Principal of same.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.
- To recognise and reward students, using the Merit System, who have excellent attendance or punctuality, or who have significant improvements.

Subject Teachers

- Subject teachers shall record the attendance of every class, every day using VSware.
- They should bring any concerns regarding student attendance in their subject to the attention of the appropriate Year Head.
- Teacher expectation should be that that all students can succeed academically.
- Curriculum should be assessed to ensure that it suits the needs of all students.
- Attention should be paid to lateness as an indication of the beginning of an attendance problem.
- To model good punctuality for the students.
- To report student attendance to the internal school office for any special tuition groups.
- Where a teacher takes a group for school-related extra-curricular activities, the teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of the names and this is entered in the system by Admin staff as SCH - school business or sport. Prior to departure, the teacher provides a copy of the list to the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal either posts this on the Staff Notice Board or emails it to staff@saintals.ie. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the admin staff of same.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

All students must attend school at the scheduled times every day:

Mon, Tues, Thurs 8.45 am - 3.45 pm

Wed 8.45 am - 1.00pm

Fri 8.45 am - 3.30pm

- The School day starts at 8.45 am each day at St. Aloysius College. Students are expected to be at school at 8.35 am at the latest, to ensure that students are ready with all required books and equipment for classes. Students are expected to be seated in class at 8.45am.
- Teachers keep a record of attendance for each class during the day on VSWare.
- A text message is sent to the parent/guardian informing them of their daughter's absence from school between 9.30 and 10.00 am.
- Parents/guardians should also contact the school office on the day to explain any absence.
- Students must at all times supply the school authorities with a note of explanation provided by the parent/guardian for an absence.

DAY TO DAY IMPLEMENTATION:

- The attendance roll is recorded electronically by subject teachers on VSWare before 9.00 daily. Those arriving after the start of class are recorded as late.
- Students who arrive at school after 8.45 am are required to sign in at the Internal school reception. The student will be given a late note from the School Reception confirming that signing in has taken place. The secretary will amend the attendance roll on VSWare. The student will then go to their relevant class of the day according to the timetable where the class teacher will accept the late note. In the event a student does not have a late note or the teacher notices taking the roll that the student is marked absent, the student will be sent back down to the internal school reception.
- Students who leave the school during the day due to illness or appointments must present to the Principal/Deputy Principal before 10.00 am to explain their reason for leaving and have their Permission to Leave school note signed. Prior to leaving they report to the internal school office to sign out on VSWare and report to the main front office reception to be collected by a parent/guardian and signed out.
- Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, this is entered in the system by Admin staff as school business or sport. The teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of the names and, prior to departure, posts this on

the Staff Notice Board or emails to staff@saintals.ie and provides a copy of the list to the Deputy Principal. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the admin staff of same.

PROCEDURES FOR MONITORING ATTENDANCE:

- The Deputy Principal, Year Head and school secretary track the attendance records of the students. This helps to identify students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- The Year Head meets with students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend (Appendix 1). The Year Head may at this stage invite the parents/guardians to the school, to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties and or impediments to regular school attendance.
- After **10 Days absence** a Year Head will send a letter to parents/guardians (Appendix 2) informing them of the amount of absences and inviting them to the school to discuss the situation.
- The Year Head will communicate the names of these students to the Student Support Team. The Student Support team may make recommendations to support the student, including meeting with the school Guidance Counsellor.
- After **15 Days absence** another letter is sent home by the Deputy Principal warning parents that their child is at imminent risk of being reported to TUSLA. The Deputy Principal will ring home and arrange for the Parents to come in and meet in order to devise an attendance strategy.
- After **20 Days absence** the student is reported to TUSLA. The Principal will ring home and arrange for the parents/guardians to come in to discuss an urgent care plan.

PROCEDURE FOR RECORDING EXPLANATIONS FOR ABSENCES:

- Explanations for absence notes are provided in the back of the each student's journal.
- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed by a parent/guardian on day of return. This must be placed in the relevant Year Head box by 11.00 am.
- The counterfoil of this note should remain in the journal and be shown to each subject teacher.
- Unexplained absence will incur a meeting between the Year Head and the student and a possible sanction.

SCHOOL ACTIVITY/WORK EXPERIENCE:

- Absences from class due to participation in a school activity is recorded as school activity (SCH)

LATE POLICY:

- Students are requested to get into the routine of being on time for school.
- Students who arrive late, disrupt the class and miss important instruction time.
- When a student is late, the reason for her lateness must be clearly stated on the slip provided in the student journal and presented to internal school admin office before going to class.
- The roll is then amended to late on VSware by the office.
- The student must place the top copy of this note in the Year Head box during lunchtime and keep the counterfoil in her journal.

TRUANCY:

- Truancy is considered a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour and incurs immediate suspension.
- In school truancy (where a student remains in the building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs a meeting between the Year Head and student. This may result in a referral to the counsellor and or a detention, the student is required to explain why they have chosen not to go to their appointed class.

LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY DUE TO ILLNESS:

- Any student who feels unwell during the day is asked to present at the Principal/Deputy Principals office.
- Contact will be made with parents/guardians from this office regarding collection of the student.
- Students should not contact parents via mobile phone if feeling unwell. When in school, students are under the care of the school and the school is responsible for their welfare and needs to make a judgment call on student well-being. Likewise parents have handed care of their daughter over to the school during the school day and should be able to continue with their work and other responsibilities when their child is in school.
- A permission to leave school early slip will be completed by the internal school office and this slip is to be placed in the Year Head box.
- A parent or designated adult must sign in at reception and collect the student.

APPOINTMENTS:

- Parents/guardians are requested not to make appointments during school hours.
- When this is unavoidable a permission to leave school early must be completed by a parent/guardian and presented to the Principal or Deputy Principal by 10.00am on the day of appointment. An appointment card should accompany the note.
- Parents or a designated adult must sign at reception and collect their daughter.
- If a pattern of school early slips are noticed the Principal and or Deputy Principal will request to meet with the parents/guardians.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE STUDENT PARTICIPATION:

St. Aloysius' College encourages the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life and aims to maximise their personal development, good citizenship and academic progress. This is achieved through various programmes in the school.

Curriculum:

- The school offers a wide range and variety of subjects at Junior and Senior level.
- The school also offers a Transition year programme.
- Career guidance and counselling are also available in the school as is resource teaching.
- These programmes provide scope for personal development as well as preparing students for their participation in society.

Methodologies:

- In the teaching of these programmes the teacher endeavours to use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students.
- The school management provides and supports the professional development of the teachers by permitting them to attend in-service courses/workshops and by offering staff training days.

Extra-Curricular:

- The school's programme of extra-curricular activities caters for a wide range of activities in order to maximise student participation. Activities range from sports, music, drama, visits, charity awareness, competitions, newsletters and field trips.

Pastoral Care:

- The school's pastoral care structures and class organisation arrangements endeavours to enable all students to participate in the life of the school.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

- Attendance awareness is embedded in all our teaching and learning
- A positive attendance culture exists in the school
- To regularly monitor and evaluate the techniques used and attendance
- Parents, students and teachers are satisfied with the effectiveness of this strategy.
- Targets to be formulated at the beginning of each year, based on data collected from VShare from the previous year.
- These targets to be shared with staff, students and parents at the beginning of the each academic year.
- Students with improved attendance to be recognised and rewarded using the school Merit system.

REVIEW PROCEDURES:

- The procedures will be reviewed annually and discussed at the beginning of the year staff meeting.
- Views and experiences of teachers, students and parents will be surveyed in relation to the success criteria.

Passed by the Board of Management – December 2017

Appendix 1

ATTENDANCE RUBRIC	
Name:	
No of lates to date:	
No of absences:	Unexplained:
	Illness:
	Agreed e.g. Work experience
	Holidays:
What are the main causes:	
What have I done to make the situation worse?	
What can I do that will help me improve my attendance?	
What can my parents do to help improve my attendance?	
What is the school doing to help improve my attendance and punctuality?	