



Attendance and Punctuality strategy 2018/19

Loreto College, Cavan

School Roll number: 61070P

Relationship to the School's Mission Statement:

As part of the family of Loreto schools and in cooperation with parents and the community, we are dedicated to Christian education. We aim to provide a balanced education, academic, pastoral and physical for all students, affording space for reflection and for learning through experience. We seek to promote self-esteem, self-discipline and the goal of self-fulfilment and to foster in our students the virtues of courage, sincerity and truth.

In keeping with this philosophy our Attendance Strategy emphasises a culture of high expectations, encouraging each pupil to take responsibility for their own learning and to achieve their full potential through regular presence in class.

Rationale:

Loreto College Cavan wishes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of attendance throughout the school year.

We endeavour:

- To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the pupils.
- To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process.
- To ensure that pupils benefit fully from the opportunities that this school offers them.
- To ensure parents/guardians, pupils and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance.
- To ensure that the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and other relevant acts.

Aims:

- To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate records of pupils' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
- To encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
- To inform parents/guardians on the vital role they play in their child's school attendance and punctuality.
- To reduce the rate of absenteeism and encourage full attendance where possible.
- To detect and correct patterns of poor attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Procedure:

The school day begins at 8:40am and ends at 3:45pm (Monday to Thursday), and ends at 1:05pm on Friday.

The attendance system used in Loreto College Cavan is the 'VS Ware' Attendance System.

- Each student's attendance is marked in every class period by their teacher. Students arriving late and leaving early are monitored by the school office.
- Students who arrive late must sign in and have their journals stamped at the school office. They must also have a note from parents regarding their lateness. Students leaving early must 'sign out' at the school office, with their note which has been signed by their parents/guardians and class tutor.
- Text messages are sent to parents/guardians of students who are not present for their first class. Parents/Guardians are asked to contact the school office to explain the student's absence.
- Should a student be marked present previously and is not in class, the teacher will immediately notify the school office. The office will let the teacher know if that student has 'signed out' with permission. If the student cannot be located a phone call is made to their parent/guardian to inform them that their daughter is not on the premises.

Consequences for unauthorised Non-Attendance

The sanction for a student who is absent without permission from school is initially after school detention. The duration is commensurate with the time absent without permission and will allow the student time to complete all work that was missed.

Procedures for Monitoring Punctuality

Punctuality is a valuable aspect of class management. It is essential that students attend class punctually to ensure an orderly learning environment.

- All students are expected to be punctual for each class, each day.
- Students who arrive after 8.45 a.m. must sign in and have her school journal stamped at the school office.
- Parents/Guardians of students whose punctuality to school is problematic receive a letter from the Head of Year requesting them to support the school in matters of punctuality
- Students who report late to class at other times will be sanctioned by the class teacher – a note should be recorded in the student's journal.

Procedures for Students who Feel Unwell During School Time

- A student who feels unwell must report to the Deputy Principal, having first sought permission from her class teacher. If the student is unable to return to class, the Deputy Principal will telephone her parents/guardians and make arrangements to have the student collected. Students who feel unwell may only leave the school in the company of her parent/guardian or a nominee of her parent/guardian.
- Parents must provide the school with emergency contact numbers and ensure that there is always someone available for the school to contact, should it be necessary.
- Should the student need to leave the school, she must sign OUT at the School Office, accompanied by her parent/guardian or a person nominated by her parent/guardian.
- On the student's return to school, parents/guardians must give explanation note to the class tutor.

Appointments during school hours:

Parents are asked to make every effort to arrange medical and dental appointments after school hours. In cases where this is impossible, pupils should be instructed, if possible, to return to school after the appointment.

The following procedures must be followed by pupils leaving the school during the school day:

- (i) Pupils going to appointments must present their parent's note to their tutor to be signed.
- (ii) In exceptional cases a parent may ring the school to inform the Deputy Principal of an appointment. This must be followed up with a signed note of such an appointment.
- (iii) All pupils must sign-out and sign-in upon return in at the Secretary's office.
- (iv) All pupils must leave the premises from the Main Office.

Roles and Responsibilities

To deliver the highest quality of education for each pupil attending Loreto College Cavan, it is essential that excellent attendance standards should be maintained. Absences from school affect not only the absentees but also those who are present in terms of the overall morale and the necessity for teachers to repeat material which has been missed. Working together, the home and school can ensure that pupils will realise their potential by regular attendance.

Pupils are asked to:

Punctually attend all classes every day.

To present a written explanation to their Form tutor in the school journal on the day of return to school, following an absence.

To follow the procedures in place for illness and appointments during the school day.

To follow the procedures in place for lateness to school.

To catch-up on any classwork and homework missed upon their return to school.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are asked to:

Explain all absences by note which should be sent to the Form Tutor. The note should clearly state the reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent for three consecutive days, a telephone call or message should be sent to the school.

Exercise discretion in distinguishing between genuine illnesses which requires time off school and minor complaints which do not.

Make every effort to arrange medical and dental appointments after school hours. In cases where it is impossible pupils should be instructed, if possible, to return to school after the appointment.

Support their child's education by refusing requests for unofficial days off for activities which might include shopping, holidays or preparation for social events.

Ensure that their child is not so fatigued from a part-time job that time is missed from school.

Refrain from taking family holidays during school term. The school is obliged to include any such days in the total absences for the year.

Form Tutors are asked to:

Check absence notes from parents/guardians and place them into the appropriate folder.

Follow-up on unexplained absences.

Class Teachers are asked to:

Record the attendance of every class every day using VSware. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will complete registration for that class using the VSware system.

Impress on pupils the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.

Acknowledge pupils returning from an absence by welcoming them back and supporting them upon their return on work missed.

Set example by their own punctuality.

Year Heads are asked to:

Monitor with Senior Management the attendance records on VSware for the given year.

Liaise with the Tutors, LS teachers, Guidance Counsellor, Pastoral Care team and Senior Management to address the difficulties surrounding a pupil's attendance.

Meet those pupils for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem to discuss the issue.

Contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences are suspected.

Remind the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Administrative staff are asked to:

Administer the signing in and out of pupils.

Stamp late arrivals in the pupil's journal.

Create groups for any pupils taking part in extra-curricular activities during the school day and mark them as absent due to Sport or Trips on VSware

Deputy Principal/Attendance Officer is asked to:

Work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Form Tutors, Administrative staff and implement the school policy.

Liaise with the Year Heads, Tutors, LS teachers, Guidance Counsellor, Pastoral Care team to address the difficulties surrounding a pupil's attendance.

Liaise with Administrative staff for pupils taking part in extra-curricular activities.

Meet, along with the Year Head (when available) the pupils who had unauthorised absence from class.

Inform new teachers of their obligation regarding recording attendance and punctuality.

Review attendance rates each year and in consultation with all the relevant partners set yearly improvement targets.

Principal is asked to:

Ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of pupils.

Monitor attendance records regularly.

Make reports to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Inform parents/guardians and pupils of the procedures for the notification of absences/withdrawal of pupils from the school.

Remind pupils and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences in pupil progress.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Good Attendance & Punctuality

Loreto College Cavan endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for students and their parent/guardians. The following are the strategies that assist us to promote good attendance and punctuality:

The calendar for the academic year is published annually in the school journal, published on our website and via FlexiBuzz. It is hoped that this will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is highlighted to students by all staff.

The number of days missed is written clearly on pupils' reports during the school year.

Tusla Certificates of attendance are presented to pupils at two levels:

- (i) Unbroken School Attendance Certificate: Full Attendance for the school year.
- (ii) Consistent & Regular School Attendance Certificate: where cumulative absences in any given year does not exceed 3 days.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and encourages all pupils to get involved in these activities. Involvement in these activities in school can encourage pupils to attend.

In extreme cases where poor attendance is linked with poor behaviour social and emotional challenges, programmes are offered to an individual pupil to support their relationship with school and therefore their attendance. Also, a mentor (usually the LS teacher or SNA) can offer support and encouragement to a pupil in these more extreme cases.

The school continues to develop close links with the main feeder schools. Analysis of incoming pupils' passports helps to identify each pupil's strengths and areas for development and helps with the smooth transition from primary school into post-primary school.

Unexplained absences from school are followed up on by Class Tutors, Year Heads and by the Deputy Principal when necessary.

The school avails of every opportunity e.g. meetings with parents, written communications with home to emphasise, in a positive way, the benefits to pupils of regular school attendance.

Identifying and dealing with attendance problems

The school seeks to reduce these figures and to deal with attendance problems in the following ways:

Reporting to parents/guardians when pupils are absent from school without their permission. A text message is sent to parents at 9.25am, when a student's absence is not explained for that day.

Tracking of pupils through the Year Head/Senior Management meetings.

When a pupil's cumulative absences in any given school year exceed 10 days, the Head of Year will write to the pupil's parents to inform them of this and to seek an opportunity to discuss the matter with parents.

When a pupil's cumulative absences in any given school year exceeds 20 days, the Deputy Principal will make a referral to the Child and Family Agency, as required by law, and will continue to liaise with parents and the pupil to encourage more regular attendance.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy:

Senior Management, Year Heads, Form teachers, Guidance Counsellor, Pastoral Care team, Parents' Association and the Student Council will be central to the monitoring and evaluation of this strategy. This will be done by investigating attendance rates yearly and comparing them to the previous year.

This Statement of Strategy will then be reviewed, and this review will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management.

Approved by BoM 22nd October 2018.