**ST PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL**

**ST PATRICK’S CLOSE**

**DUBLIN 8**

**School Attendance Policy**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on:

Review due:

**ST PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL CHOIR SCHOOL**

**ST PATRICK’S CLOSE**

**DUBLIN 8**

***Roll No: 19480V***

**School Attendance Policy**

**Introduction and Rationale**

This policy was formulated to provide information, guidelines and good practice regarding pupil attendance at St. Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School. This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, the Board of Management and the parent body. It follows the template for the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance as set out in Tusla – Child and Family Agency’s guidelines for schools (2015, p. 42).

**Our school’s vision and values in relation to attendance**

The Board of Management of St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School recognizes the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. We recognize that high attendance is linked to pupils staying at school completing and doing well in the Leaving Certificate and further studies. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and to learning (McCoy et al, 2007)

. The Board also recognizes the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student’s life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).

Since absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management views each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. The Board of Management is committed to striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by students, and the support and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

School starts at 8:25am for all pupils and ends at 1:00pm on Wednesday and 2.30pm on all other days. The school follows the standardized school year as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills and is open for 183 days of the year.

**Our school’s high expectations around attendance**

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. In this regard, the Board of Management of St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School has a high expectation of pupil attendance. Pupils are encouraged to come to school every day and the school’s approach to, and promotion of, attendance is outlined below. Tusla and the Board of Management of St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School strongly advise that parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. Holidays should be taken during the allocated holiday time as outlined in the school calendar.

The Board of Management acknowledges that there are cases where a child has a genuine reason for absenteeism, including illness, urgent family reasons, expulsion, suspension, or transfer to another school.

**How attendance will be monitored**

All class teachers take a daily roll call which is recorded on the school’s data software program ‘Aladdin’. If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open, their absence will be recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin. If the teacher has been made aware of the reason for absence, this is also recorded on Aladdin. If a teacher is concerned about student absences, they alert relevant staff, i.e. the Deputy Principal or Principal. The annual attendance of each pupil is recorded by Aladdin and is printed in the end of year school reports.

Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged unless necessary. All late arrivals will be recorded on Aladdin. For early departures, a parent/carer must sign their child out of school at the early departures record book at school reception.

**How punctuality will be monitored**

School begins at 8:25am for all pupils. All pupils and staff members are expected to be on time. All pupils arriving late to school will be recorded on Aladdin. The school will contact parents/carers in the event of pupils being consistently late. The school principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report pupils who are persistently late to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

**Our school’s approach to attendance**

* **Targets**

The average attendance in the 2015-2016 school year was 94.2%. The average attendance in the 2016-2017 school year was 95.8%.

Upon reflection on these statistics, we have set the following targets:

1. To improve student attendance by 3% in 2017-2018 and 5% in 2018-2019.
2. Because of our small numbers the absence of one/two students due to ill health/family reasons has significantly reduced our attendance. We expect this to correct itself as students have transitioned to Secondary School.
* **Our whole-school approach**

At St Patrick’s Cathedral Choir School, pupils, parents, staff and Board of Management work in partnership to provide the best education for our pupils and believe that consistent attendance is necessary to facilitate the education of the pupils. The whole-school approach to attendance is as follows.

* promoting a positive learning environment
* Promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
* facilitating children to have a voice in school matters
* encouraging full attendance where possible
* encouraging punctuality
* fostering an appreciation of learning
* Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
* raising everyone’s expectations of our school attendance
* ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
* ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
* ensuring awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
* identifying pupils at risk
* developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
* identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
* rewarding good attendance and improvements in attendance
* **Promoting good attendance**

The following are strategies employed by the school to promote good school attendance, promoting a positive learning environment

* Staff meet and greet with families at the Blue Door
* Discussion about attendance at PTA meetings, annual parent-teacher meetings, class meetings at the start of the year and information evenings with new parents
* Children are informed of their attendance
* Positive affirmation of attendance when the roll is being taken
* Highlight the importance of attendance during school assemblies
* End of year service where children with full attendance for that term are awarded certificates and a prize
* Record of attendance in pupil’s annual school report
* Distribution of Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services’ leaflet entitled *‘Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out’* at new parents’ information evening.
* Children engage in Choir activities and Service after school
* Parental involvement in school in delivery of craft lessons/career day and sporting events
* The school calendar for each academic year is distributed the previous June to make parents/carers aware of school holidays, to avoid holidays being taken during term time.
* **Responding to poor attendance**

The Board of Management acknowledges that despite the best efforts of the school and of families, some pupils will need extra support to prevent patterns of poor attendance developing. The following are strategies employed by the school to respond to poor attendance.

* Working with groups or individuals who may need additional support (Guidelines for Schools, p.30)
* Tailoring whole-school approaches to group or individual needs
* Engaging in early dialogue with parents and students
* Using internal school processes to provide individualised support
* Using school-led, multi-agency support processes
* Referral to Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services
* **Approach to attendance concerns – School-based**

Where there is a concern regarding a pupil’s level of attendance or pattern of absenteeism, the Deputy Principal or Principal will speak to the parents/carers. A letter will be sent to parents/carers informing them of when their child has reached 10 days, 15 days and 20 days of absenteeism. Parents/carers will also be informed when the school has made a referral to Tusla regarding attendance.

* **Approach to attendance concerns – Tusla**

The school must notify Tulsa if a pupil is absent for 20 days or more, or where absences/patterns of absence give rise to concern. If a pupil is sick or is absent for another explained reason, no action is likely to be taken by Tusla. However, if there is a concern about a pupil’s attendance at school or about the reasons given for absenteeism, families may be visited by an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss the situation. Unexplained absences are of particular concern to the school and to Tusla.

The school is obliged to report regularly to Tusla regarding attendance. There are four reporting periods each year. The report is generated by the school, based on the guidelines provided by Tusla. Any pupil who has missed 20 days or more, or any pupils about whom there are absenteeism concerns, must be reported to Tusla in these periodic reports.

Tusla Child and Family Agency is also informed if a pupil is suspended for 6 days or more, or in the case of the expulsion of a pupil.

**School roles in relation to attendance**

The Board of Management acknowledges a collective responsibility for the promotion of attendance. The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of people within the school community regarding attendance:

**Principal**

The school principal will provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance. It is the responsibility of the principal to lead the development and implementation of this policy, under the guidance of the Board of Management.

The principal undertakes the following responsibilities in relation to this plan.

* Engage with parents/carers regarding attendance concerns.
* Prepare a report on attendance for the Board of Management on a yearly basis, or as the need arises.
* Maintain the Leabhar Tinreamh and print hard copies of this monthly.
* Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school’s Attendance Strategy.
* Initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.
* Furnish pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.

The principal will put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school’s Attendance Strategy.

**Staff**

All staff have input into the implementation of this attendance policy.

**Teachers**

Class teachers (and substitute teachers where relevant) have responsibility for recording daily attendance and for inputting reasons of absenteeism on Aladdin. Class teachers must also record absences on the fire drill list. It is the responsibility of teachers to.

* Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
* Actively use the school’s Attendance Strategy to promote attendance
* Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality in their classrooms
* Set example by their own punctuality
* Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures, as set out above
* Alert relevant staff (i.e. Principal/Deputy Principal) if there are concerns about student absences
* Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis
* Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

**Parents/Carers**

The Board of Management acknowledges the important role of parents/carers in attendance if their children are at school. In line with Tusla's guidelines for school (p.44), parents/carers are expected to.

* Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality
* Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem
* Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time
* Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason
* Avoid taking their child on holiday during term time.

**Partnership arrangements**

The Board of Management acknowledges the importance of partnership arrangements and a multi-disciplinary approach, where relevant, in supporting the attendance and punctuality of pupils at school. In relation to attendance, the school community may involve staff members, parents/carers, students, other schools, community groups and Tusla, among others.

**Monitoring the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

The Board of Management and the principal will monitor the implementation of the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance on an ongoing basis by doing the following:

* Opportunities will be provided for staff to share experiences about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets (in the form of monthly staff meetings)
* The principal will update the attendance levels at each Board of Management meeting, with reference to the school's attendance targets.

**Review Process**

A formal end-of-year review of the Statement of Strategy will be conducted annually as part of the preparation of the Board of Management's annual report on attendance (as per Section 21(6)(a)(b) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000) to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.

**Date the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was approved by the Board of Management**

5th February 2025

**Date the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was submitted to Tusla**

16th January 2025

Signature of Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 The Very Reverend Dr Dean William Morton

Signature of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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