



## Attendance Strategy

### General Statement:

Loreto Secondary School Fermoy is committed to ensuring that all students benefit fully from the education provided by regular and punctual attendance at school. Regular and punctual attendance is crucial for effective progress and for academic achievement in school. The Education Welfare Act of 2000 places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents to provide for the optimum attendance of every student.

Under this 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.

- In keeping with our Mission statement Loreto Secondary school Fermoy seeks to ensure that all its students receive a fulltime education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise her potential. All school staff work with students and their families to ensure each student attends regularly and punctually
- The school challenges the behaviour of those students who give low priority to attendance and punctuality
- The school continues to develop a system of incentives to encourage positive punctuality and attendance
- The school aims to provide a positive caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure

The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:

- A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days
- The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty
- A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly.

### A Positive Approach to Attendance and Punctuality:

Good attendance at Loreto Secondary School Fermoy, is fostered by encouraging each student to take responsibility for his/her own learning and to achieve full potential through regular presence in class.

Throughout the academic year, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance and continual lateness.

### Students:

1. Students are expected to be punctual, attend a full school day and be regular in attendance.
2. School hours are between 08.40 and 15.35 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday. On Wednesday school hours are between 08.40 – 1300. No pupil, with the exception of Transition Years, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years, may leave the school at lunchtime during these hours without permission.
3. In Loreto Secondary School Fermoy, students' attendance is registered first class by the Class Teacher. This is recorded on the school administration system, VShare.
4. If absent, the student must, on the first day of their return, present a parental note in their journal explaining the reason for their non-attendance.
5. All students must attend scheduled classes every day and on time unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
6. To protect the integrity of the school day and not to compromise class dynamics as well as carefully planned lessons we would ask that all appointments with Doctors and Dentists etc, be arranged as far as possible during a suitable time after school hours. In the event of appointments being made during the school day an appointment card and a "Permission to Leave School" slip (in journal) signed by their Parent/Guardian must be shown to the relevant Year Head or Principal/Deputy Principal. Students must sign out using the attendance book at the school office, giving the time of departure and the reason for leaving. Parents/Guardians must be contactable by phone to confirm note.
7. We would prefer if Junior students ( 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year, 16 and under) could be signed out by their parent guardian. If parents/guardians are unavailable, they must ring reception to inform the school of the necessity and plans for the departure. Or if for any reason a student must leave school early, written permission from parent or guardian must be given beforehand in her journal. The journal must be presented to the office before first class.
8. If there is a reason why a student needs to leave school on a regular basis for something other than a medical appointment then that matter may be discussed with the Principal or Deputy Principal in order for a procedure to be put in place.
9. Students who miss school or persistently sign out without prior consultation between Management and Parent/Guardian, will be issued a detention and in more serious cases may result in a suspension.
10. In cases of absence, students must catch up on the work missed at the earliest opportunity.
11. If a student feels unwell during the day, they must first get a note from their Class Teacher/ Tutor /Year Head before going to the office to ask the secretary to call home. Students will only be allowed leave the school grounds if given prior permission by a Parent/Guardian.
12. Pupils who arrive to school late, after 08.40, must sign in at reception. The pupils journal will be marked with a late stamp, indicating their time of arrival. Lateness due to exceptional circumstances which is explained in a note by parents/guardians may be excused by the Principal/Deputy Principal. Otherwise, those students will attend a detention.

### Parent/Guardian:

1. Parents /Guardians should ensure that their daughter arrives to school punctually. Students should arrive in school five minutes before the start of lessons am and pm e.g. if classes are

scheduled to begin at 08.40, students must be present in school for 08.35, at the latest. This will give them time to organise themselves before class.

2. Parents are responsible for making whatever arrangements necessary to ensure that their daughter attends school on time every day during the school year. Please refer to points 6, 7 & 8 under student responsibilities.
3. Parents/ Guardians should not withdraw students from school during the academic year, unless for extraordinary reasons. Where possible, parents should ensure that medical or other appointments and family holidays take place outside school hours/academic year.
4. If a student is absent it would be helpful if the parent/guardian could ring the school to inform them of the absence on the day. It is vital that a written note explaining reasons for absence be supplied to the school on the day of the students return to school for our records. A medical certificate should also be presented where applicable. A space is provided for these notes in the student's journal.
5. Parents/Guardians should monitor punctuality and attendance to school by checking the journal for late stamps and VSware for lates, attendance and absences.
6. Parents/Guardians should also respond to a school text that will be sent out when a late or absence occurs.

#### **Class Teacher:**

1. The class teacher monitors and records the punctuality and attendance of all students through the VSware facility at the beginning of every lesson.
2. If a student is late first class in the morning the class teacher must ensure a late stamp in the journal is presented. The class teacher will amend the attendance record on VSware in the event of a late morning and afternoon.
3. If the problem is persistent the teacher implements appropriate sanctions.
4. If a student is missing from class but has been present earlier in the day, this absence must be reported to reception and passed on to the Deputy Principal or Principal.
5. If the class teacher is concerned about the punctuality or absenteeism of a student, they will report their concerns to the Year Head.
6. The class teacher can communicate any such concerns to the parent through the students journal in the first instant but will inform the Year Head first.
7. In the event of a day trip or sports event, the organiser will present a list of students attending the event to the administrative staff.

#### **School Management:**

1. In Loreto Secondary School Fermoy, School Management have put in place suitable programmes which can be accessed by all students to foster good punctuality and attendance.
2. School Management have established a pastoral care programme which monitors attendance and punctuality, and which includes an intervention with parents and student should the occasion arise.
3. The Year Head will communicate with the parent/ guardian where a student's record shows recurring absence or lates and outline the consequences of allowing further absence.
4. This is followed by a further communication to parent/ guardian once a student reaches twenty days absent from school. This communication informs them that these absences will be reported to the NEWB.

5. In some cases extra structures will be put in place to support a students who find attendance challenging. This will be done in consultation with the parents/guardians.
6. School Management has put in place a sanction system for students who consistently breach attendance and or punctuality rules. These sanctions include detention and may result in suspension for more serious and persistent cases.

### **Administrative Staff:**

1. Administrative staff will check the VShare system daily to identify what students are absent and may notify the parent/ guardian of students who are absent by text message.
2. Administrative staff may contact home to confirm permission to leave school early.
3. Administrative staff may receive calls from parents for absences and update the system accordingly.
4. Students arriving late to school register with the office staff who then amend the student record accordingly.
5. Administrative staff will facilitate students leaving the school during the school day by allowing them to sign out at the school office and record a signed appointment card or permission to leave slip where the time and reason for departure is noted.
6. Appointment cards and permission slips will be handed over to year head by administrative staff.
7. If a class teacher reports a student missing from class who has been in another class earlier to administrative staff, this will be reported as soon as possible to the Deputy Principal/Principal.

### **The Role of the Year Head:**

The Year Head supported by a team of Tutors is responsible for monitoring patterns of attendance and punctuality across their year group. The Year Head will liaise with parent(s)/ guardian(s) where a pattern of absence or lateness to school emerges. In some instances, the Year Head may feel that referral to a member of the Guidance Team is an appropriate strategy in improving attendance.

The Year Head supports the Tutors in ensuring that all absences are explained by a note from Parent(s)/ Guardian(s). In a minority of cases, the Tutor may have difficulty in accessing a note from home. If appropriate the Year Head will intervene to ensure that these absences are explained.

Year Heads will log the absent notes on VShare,

The Year Head will notify parents with a written letter when a student has reached a high number of absences, a second letter will be issued when a student reaches 20 days and this report will be sent to the Deputy Principal. All events are recorded on VShare. The Year Head will assist the Deputy Principal in making a referral to the NEWB (TUSLA)

The school is sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of its students and is aware that some students need encouragement to attend school regularly. The Year Head plays a role in supporting students overcoming difficulties relating to attendance. This can be done by liaising with relevant staff, working closely with parent(s)/ guardian(s), initiating a referral to the Guidance team, exploring support structures and strategies in the school, accessing support from outside agencies, and regularly reviewing strategies that have been put in place.

## **The Role of the Principal /Deputy Principal:**

The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for the effective implementation of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy. The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for making the appropriate attendance returns to the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) and referring students where necessary.

## **Strategies to Promote Student Participation:**

The school recognises that good attendance is achieved when students feel happy, secure and part of the school community. It is through encouraging the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life that Loreto Secondary School Fermoy hopes to maximise attendance patterns. We aim to do this in the following ways:

### **1. Curriculum**

Loreto Secondary School Fermoy offers a wide range of subjects at both Junior and Senior cycle. A comprehensive Transition Year programme and LCA programme is also offered. Students have the support of a Guidance Counsellor and resource teaching where appropriate.

### **2. Methodologies**

In teaching the curriculum, Loreto Secondary School Fermoy teachers use a variety of methodologies which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. School Management provides and supports professional development of teachers by facilitating their attendance at in-service sessions and by offering staff training days.

### **3. Extra-Curricular**

The school's programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities caters for a wide range of interests in order to maximize student participation. Activities range from sport, drama, tours, language exchanges, charity awareness/events, and field trips.

### **4. Pastoral Care**

The school's pastoral care system allows for all students to participate in the life of the school in a way that promotes their personal development and educational enlightenment.

### **5. Class Tutor /Year Head:**

The positive atmosphere nurtured by the Class Tutor also encourages full participation in school life. The Tutor, supported by the Year Head, plays a role in instilling a good class spirit to promote friendship and learning. This structure also provides a medium through which parents can contact and meet with teachers.

The relative Care Team is also responsible for ensuring that standards of attendance and punctuality are a priority within the Year Group. This can be done through Care Team meetings, assemblies, certificates, end of year prize giving etc.

## **6. Support Meetings**

Support meetings are put in place to assist any student who is experiencing difficulty which may impact on their school life. Students on this list are supported by the Guidance Department who inform staff of the names of these students.

## **7. LCA**

Teachers, Tutors and the Year Head work closely with students to ensure that the Department of Education and Skills requirement of 90% attendance is met, as failure to reach this will affect the students' results.

## **8. TY/Work Experience**

Two periods of assessment are put in place of which attendance and punctuality are key components of the credits awarded to all subject areas. Student are expected to apply the same expectations of attendance and punctuality for Work Experience as they do for school.

## **9. Parents' Participation:**

Parents' participation is encouraged through various open evenings and meetings e.g. Parent/Teacher meetings, Parent's Association meetings, Information Evenings etc. which are held during the school year.

### **Monitoring and Review:**

Loreto Secondary School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure the maintenance of best practice within the school.

### **Ratification and Communication:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_

with a redraft ratified during \_\_\_\_\_

It is available on request from the school office. Parents/guardians will be informed of the attendance policy through the school website where the policy is included.