

Loreto Secondary School

Attendance Strategy



Review Dates

Stakeholder	Date	Draft/review/ratified
Staff		
Parents		
Student Council		
BOM		

Signed _____

(Chairperson of BOM)

Date _____

Due for next review on _____



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 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 – 12.55. No student, with the exception of Transition Years, 5th and 6th years, may leave the school during these hours without permission. Only Transition Years, 5th and 6th years may leave the school grounds during lunchtime.
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. A text alert is sent to parents after 9.20am if a student is marked absent.
4. All students must attend scheduled classes every day and on time unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
5. Parents must submit an absence request via VShare app by 8.30am if a student is going to be absent on any given day
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 all such appointments should be registered, in advance, through the VShare app. Students must still 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 appointment.
7. We would prefer if Junior students, 1st to 4th year (16 and under) are 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.
8. If, for any reason, a student must leave school early this absence should be registered in the vshare app by a parent/guardian, with the reason given prior to departure.
9. Under no circumstances can a student leave the school without advance notice and permission. This is considered a serious breach of the code of behaviour.
10. 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.
11. Students who miss school or persistently sign out without prior consultation between Year Head/Deputy Principal and Parent/Guardian, will be issued a detention and in more serious cases may result in a suspension.
12. In cases of absence, students must catch up on the work missed at the earliest opportunity.
13. 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. Students should not contact home requesting to leave using their own mobile phones.
14. Students who arrive to school late, after 08.35, must sign in at reception. The students will present their journal to be signed in their first class of the day 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, persistent late arrivals will result in sanctions in accordance with the school code of behaviour.

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 child attends school on time every day during the school year.
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. In the event of unavoidable appointments, documentation should be made available, upon request.
4. Parents must not share their vsware app login details with their daughters.
5. All student absences should be registered through the vsware app before 8.30am, at the latest, on the morning of the absence.
6. In the case of emergency or for short-notice absences parents should register the appointment on vsware and then email or phone the school office, then the student can be retrieved from class.
7. Parents should not contact students on their personal phones about such absences and we respectfully ask that parents do not contact their daughters on their phones during the school day requesting them to leave.
8. A medical certificate should also be presented in the case of long term or persistent absences, where applicable.
9. Parents/Guardians should monitor punctuality and attendance at school by checking the journal for late stamps and VSware for lates, attendance and absences.
10. In the event of an unexpected late or absent notification Parents/Guardians should respond to a school text/notification by phone call or email.

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 for first class in the morning the class teacher must sign the journal in the punctuality section when 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 Year Head, 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 Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).
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. Students arriving late to school register with the office staff who then amend the student record accordingly.
4. Administrative staff will facilitate students leaving the school during the school day by allowing them to sign out at the school office and check vshare for the registered absence
5. 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 Year Head, 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.

All absences are explained by notes from parents/guardians on the vshare app and Year Heads will monitor attendance through this system.

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 Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).

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 Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) 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.

