

Coachford College Draft Attendance Strategy

1. General:

1.1 Scope: The policy applies to all students of Coachford College (70960D), their parents/guardians and the school's staff.

1.2 Relationship to the schools characteristic spirit:

Coachford College is a community in which mutual respect is shared in a positive environment. We seek to develop individual potential in all fields, and hold student wellbeing at the core of all we pursue. In order to achieve such goals, it is expected that all students registered at the school attend all class and events organised for them, both in and out of school.

Education plays a vital part in ensuring that children grow to independence and derive maximum benefits from life's opportunities. In Ireland, education is a right that is prescribed and protected in Article 42 of Bunreacht na hÉireann. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out a number of statements including a state's role to 'take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools'. This Attendance Strategy seeks to assist parents in achieving the best outcomes for their children. It has been drawn up by the Board of Management in consultation with all the school partners, and in keeping with the requirements of Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, with a view to fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending Coachford College, and in so doing, encourage excellent attendance on the part of each student.

1.2 Context:

This policy has been devised in consultation with all members of the school community and in keeping with the school's characteristic spirit. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Health and Safety Statement, Pastoral Care Policy, Discipline Policy, Extra-Curricular Activities Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy and Child Protection Policy. Coachford College encourages the pursuit of excellence and strives to create an environment conducive to the highest standards of achievement with the well-being of every student at its core.

1.3 Rationale:

This policy was devised to

- Work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and wellbeing of the students;
- Facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process;
- Ensure that students benefit fully from opportunities that this school offers them;
- Ensure all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance;
- 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:
 - a) A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days;
 - b) The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty;
 - c) A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal;
 - d) A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly.

2 Objectives

2.2 The Objectives of this Strategy are:

- To maintain accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours and in so doing protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all students in the care of Coachford College and to maximize their learning opportunities;
- To encourage students to learn to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance;
- To encourage parents to appreciate the vital role they play in their child's school attendance;
- To encourage good communication between parents/guardians and school;
- To ensure minimum rates of absenteeism;
- To detect and correct the patterns of poor attendance;
- To support and nurture a school environment in which student wellbeing is core;
- To highlight and encourage regular attendance;
- To establish and maintain procedures for monitoring attendance and good record keeping;
- To develop working relationships with relevant agencies such as the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB);

3 **Strategies to encourage good attendance**

- Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.
- Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Well-being programme.
- The Year Head and/or member(s) of the Wellbeing Team meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.
- Reports to Parents/Guardians include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question.
- The School has assigned staff members to support the implementation of the Attendance Strategy.
- Through the promotion and nurturing of a friendly, caring environment in which human flourishing is prioritized and by encouraging all students to realise their potential, it is hoped that students will attend regularly.
- Through monitoring and effective recording of non-attendance students with attendance issues are to be identified support is offered to both parents/guardians and students through teachers, Tutors, Year Heads and/or NEWB.
- Through the provision of a wide range of subjects, the school aims to cater for the diverse needs of all its students.
- Through the provision of an extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular programme, students are strongly encouraged to participate and thus, attend school regularly.
- To reflect the school's characteristic spirit by dealing with all cases of regular non-attendance in a fair and sensitive manner.

4 **Roles and responsibilities:**

Student:

- To punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so;
- Following an absence from school, to present a written explanation in the designated section of the School Journal on the day of return to class;
- If arriving late for school, to have a note from his/her parent/guardian providing an explanation for the late arrival, and to sign in in accordance with the school's procedures.

Parent/Guardian:

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000);

- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences;
- To provide a written reason for the student's absence immediately on return to school;
- To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers 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 acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues;
- To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays;
- If arriving late for school, to provide a note explaining the reason for the late arrival.

Principal:

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students;
- To monitor attendance records regularly;
- To ensure that reports are made to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000;
- To remind all school partners of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.

Deputy Principal:

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, and administration staff and Attendance Officer to implement this Strategy;
- To liaise with Year Heads and Wellbeing Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.

Subject teacher:

- To record the attendance in every class every class and to ensure that accurate attendance records are entered on VS Ware. Whether teaching or substituting, the teacher will take attendance records;
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and punctuality;
- To check absence notes from parents/guardians;
- To liaise with the Year Head in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance.

Class Tutor:

- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and punctuality;
- To check and sign absence notes from parents/guardians;
- To liaise with the Year Head in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance.

Year Head:

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on VShare;
- To liaise with the Pastoral Care team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance;
- To meet with those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue;
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/or when patterns of absences are developing and to notify the Deputy Principal of same;
- To remind pupils of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Officer:

- To work in conjunction with the Administrator in the School Office in submitting the four reports to the NEWB;
- To support new staff with regard to recording attendance;
- To attend meetings with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads, to discuss matters relating to attendance.

Administrative Staff:

- To input attendance data from Class Teachers when required;
- To amend records on VShare in cases of partial absence;
- To work in conjunction with the Attendance Officer to submit the four reports to the NEWB;
- To administer the signing in and out of students.

5 Procedures

- a) The roll is recorded at the start of each class and recorded on VShare at assigned times. Data is collected from VShare at the end of the first class period daily.
- b) Those arriving after school has commenced are required to sign in at the School Reception in accordance with the School Rules (5. Attendance and Punctuality).
- c) Students who wish to leave the school during the day due to illness must be given consent to do so by a Year Head, Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal or Principal, and collected by a parent/guardian who signs him/her out at School Reception.
- d) Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, this is entered on VShare by staff as *school business*. The teacher who is responsible for the activity prepares a list of the names of all those travelling. (S)he posts this to staff and provides a copy of the list to the Deputy Principal and/or Principal a minimum of a school day ahead of the scheduled event. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the school office of same.
- e) The school will provide a calendar for the opening and closing times of the school, the school holidays and information about Parent-Teacher meetings and staff meetings.

- f) Parents should try to avoid taking their children on holiday during school term. A signed application should be made to the Principal should such an absence be unavoidable.

Medical Appointments/Illness

If a student has permission to leave school early e.g. in advance for a medical appointment, parents/guardians ensure that he/she has a signed note in his/her school journal. He/she should be signed out at the school office by his/her parent/guardian.

If a student becomes unwell at school he/she should follow the procedure laid out in 5c) above. If he/she needs to leave school as a consequence, he/she must be signed out at the school office by his/her parent/guardian.

Contacting the School in cases of absence

Parents/guardians should keep the school informed in the case of extended absences. If the extended absence is for medical reasons a doctor's note should be sent to the school.

6 Recording of non-attendance

Recording of extended absences:

When a child is absent for a prolonged period, parents/guardians will be contacted by the school. The primary concern of Coachford College is the welfare of the child, and regular contact and communication is vital. End of term reports will also contain Attendance Records.

Suspension:

On rare occasions a student may be absent from school due to suspension for breach of discipline. In such instances parents will be consulted in advance and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies. In such instances, where a student is suspended, they should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications.

Partnership arrangements:

The school will liaise with relevant bodies and engage with services where there is a concern regarding attendance.

7 Success Criteria

Success criteria may include:

- Improved attendance rates;
- Improved communication with parents/guardians and/or explanations for absences;
- Improved work input/homework;
- Reduced number of reports to National Educational Welfare Board.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____.

It has been made available to all members of the school community.

It will be reviewed on an annual basis and/or as deemed necessary.

Signed by:

Chairperson of the Board: _____

Date: _____

School Principal: _____

Date: _____