**Coláiste De La Salle**

**Attendance Policy**

**De La Salle College,**

**Macroom,**

**Co. Cork**

**Roll No. 62310O**

The Education Welfare Act stipulates that the names of students who are absent for twenty days or more in any one school year have to be reported to the Educational Welfare Board. The Act also stipulates that parents will be held responsible for explaining their child’s absence. The school is obliged to provide TUSLA with reasons for absences.

The National Education Welfare Board is responsible by law, to make sure that pupils are attending school regularly. The National Education Welfare Board employs Education Welfare Officers to oversee this duty.

The legal situation is:

The minimum school leaving age is sixteen or the completion of three years of Post Primary Education, whichever is the latter.

**Our vision and values on attendance in De La Salle**

At De La Salle we wish to see that our pupils get the best chance in life and education is one of the chances.

Good school attendance is one of the main factors in determining a child’s future and life opportunities.

A good education gives a student the best possible start in life.

With good attendance a student will be better able to keep up with schoolwork and school will be more enjoyable.

Good attendance habits developed in school makes one more reliable for employers in the future.

Students who attend school are less likely to be drawn into anti-social behaviour.

Good attendance is fundamental to all future learning.

**The Expectations for De La Salle**

We expect, only, that each stakeholder realises and fulfils each of their responsibilities and duties in relation to attendance. We look for active collaboration and a partnership approach to the implementation and monitoring of this attendance strategy.

**Parental Responsibilities:**

* Must ensure that their children attend school punctually every day unless ill.
* Must send their children to school until they are sixteen years of age or the completion of three years of Post-Primary Education, whichever is the latter.
* Must inform the school of their son’s absence and the reason why.
* Must avoid unnecessary absences or withdrawals from school, e.g. holidays during term time.
* When withdrawing students during school hours, parents/guardians notify the school secretary either by way of a phone call, email or vsware.

**School Responsibilities:**

* Must keep a school register, attendance records and codes of behaviour.
* Must put a school attendance strategy in place (See Appendix 1).
* Must inform **TUSLA** if**:**

1. Students have missed more than twenty days,
2. Students have been suspended for more than six days.
3. A student’s name is removed from the school register.

**N.B.** If the student is under the age of 16, has missed more that 20 days and no explanation has been offered for his absence then the school is legally obliged to report such cases to the Educational Welfare Officer.

**Student Responsibilities:**

* Must make every effort to attend school punctually on all school days.
* Must communicate all absences to the Office, Class Teacher, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.
* Must never leave the school premises during the school day without signing out in the office.

**Effects of poor attendance**

Students miss work particularly if their teacher begins something new.

Students have difficulty in making and keeping reliable friends.

Students can develop behavioural problems in and out of school.

Students will have difficulty with schoolwork and homework.

Poor attendance will result in a student missing out on foundational aspects of a subject which leads to problems later.

Poor attendance leads to early school leaving.

**Monitoring procedure**

If a student is to be absent from school on a particular day, it is essential that this information be communicated to the school through the main office before 10am by a parent/ guardian. Absences are recorded daily at 10am. De La Salle uses VSware to record all absences.

All staff members are expected to mark the attendance on VSWare for every class. The roll taken for the second-class period is of particular significance. Any student who is marked absent for this class and whose parents have not contacted the school giving reason for his absence will trigger an automatic text response on the school system. That child’s parents/guardians will receive a text notification to say that their son has been marked absent from school. Notification of absentees is automatically provided to all staff who log onto the VS Ware system for the remainder of the day. The teacher may update the roll by marking the student as present in class if that student has eventually arrived to school.

The school sends a text message to a parent’s mobile phone at approx 11.00am stating that their son has failed to register attendance in school that morning. An exception to this will be when the school has been informed in advance that a student will be absent on a particular day. Additionally, communication may be made with home by phone to ascertain the whereabouts of a student if this is deemed necessary. If absent from school, an explanation must be provided by means of phone call, email or vsware stating the reason for the absence.

**Procedure to be followed by students who are leaving school during the day:**

No pupil has permission to leave the school premises during school hours without the express permission from the Principal/ Deputy Principal. This permission is sought by means of phone call, email or vsware by the parent/ guardian of the pupil in advance. Junior cycle students do not have permission to leave the school grounds once they arrive at school in the morning unless they have written parental/guardian permission.

If late for class in the morning, a student is required to report to the main office and sign in. Punctuality is monitored and may lead to school based sanctions for repeat offenders.

**Approach to attendance**

What are we doing at De La Salle?

The school will avail of every opportunity e.g. student assemblies, meetings of parents, phone call or written communication with home, to emphasise in a positive way the benefits to students of regular school attendance.

Parents are strongly advised to arrange medical and dental appointments for students for outside of school hours, where this is possible.

Family holidays during school term are best avoided as students can experience difficulties making up lost ground. Over time this can put your son at an educational disadvantage.

During the school term, a child under 15 years is not allowed to work at all. At 15 years he is allowed work no more than 8 hours a week. It is against the law for him to work before 8am or later than 8pm. At 16/17 years he must not work later than 10pm.

The VS Ware System provides us with the opportunity to observe trends in attendance as the software automatically collates all information inputted on each student. Pie charts provide a breakdown of a students’; days attended, days missed, days of partial attendance, particular classes missed and how many.

This software is a huge addition to our school strategy as it provides each teacher with the necessary information daily, in turn allowing the whole school staff be actively involved in the monitoring of student attendance.

**Initiatives to promote good attendance:**

Supervised study for students after school each day.

Lunch time activities (table tennis, soccer).

Weekly meetings are held to discuss student issues e.g. absenteeism.

SPHE class for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year groups once a week

Guidance counselling is available for all students.

**In the event of poor attendance:**

Parents are made aware of their statutory duties as outlined in the Education & Welfare Act in relation to their role in ensuring their child attends school.

When the student has a significant number of absent days accumulated, for which no explanation has been communicated to the school, the school will contact parents/guardians to support the family and offer assistance in encouraging the student back to school.

**Current policy on Absenteeism**

The existing code of behaviour outlines procedures employed by the school in the event of student absenteeism. It states initially that no pupil has permission to leave the school premises during school hours without permission from the Principal or Deputy. The granting of this permission is based on procedures outlined above.

If a student is absent on a given day, an explanation will be sought on vsware and must be presented before the students return to school. Under school policy Junior School students are not allowed to leave the school premises at lunchtime.

**Appendix 1:**

**De La Salle College**

**Attendance Strategy**

De La Salle College,

Macroom,

Co. Cork

Roll number 62310O

**Our Vision and Values on attendance at De La Salle**

At De La Salle College we are committed to ensuring our pupils get the best chance in life. Good school attendance is a major factor in determining a child’s future and life opportunities. At De La Salle we are focused on helping our students develop a pattern of regular and punctual attendance. Our school adopts a positive whole-school approach to attendance, with a focus on maximising supports available for those students most likely to struggle with school attendance, participation, and retention.

De La Salle promotes good attendance through a culture of high expectations. We are a school community which focuses on knowing our students, monitoring, and supporting those most at risk or disadvantaged.

We, at De La Salle, make students aware of the importance of regular attendance at school, so they can benefit from the holistic education on offer here. We also make them aware of the negative implications for them of irregular attendance.

Here at the school, we put a great deal of emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging through school life and extra-curricular activities.

**Expectations around Attendance**

The purpose of our attendance strategy is to encourage regular attendance and participation in our school community. It is hoped that with a positive plan for attendance in place, constant monitoring and tracking students’ attendance records, absentee rates will drop and students will feel more connected to their school community and their educational engagement.

De La Salle College will:

* Ensure all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance and punctuality.
* Ensure the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and other relevant acts.
* Develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality.
* Encourage students to take ownership for their own attendance and punctuality.
* Record students’ whereabouts throughout the day accurately.
* Identify poor attendance patterns early and offer support.
* Explain to parents the role they play in their son’s attendance.

**How attendance will be monitored**

* The school day begins at 9.00 and finishes at 15.50 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesday school finishes at 13.15.
* Students are advised to be in school by 8.50 to ensure they are ready with all books and equipment required for classes.
* All teachers take attendance using VS Ware at the start of each lesson.
* Period 2 is the designated class period to record the roll call for the purposes parent communication.
* Students who are absent and whose parents have not contacted the school giving a reason for the absence will trigger an automatic text response on the school system.
* The child’s parents/guardians will receive this text notification to say their son has been marked absent from school at approx. 11.00 am.
* Notification of absentees is automatically provided to all staff who log into VS Ware system for the remainder of the day.
* Teachers may update the roll by marking the student present in the class if that student eventually arrives at school.
* Additionally, communication will be made with home by phone to ascertain the whereabouts of a student if this is deemed necessary.
* Weekly Pastoral Care Team meetings will monitor absenteeism.

**Promoting Good Attendance**

* A range of lunchtime activities are available such as music club, board games room, library, study, soccer etc
* Guidance counselling is available for all students
* SPHE and well-being classes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year groups take place once a week.
* Bonding trips for 1st, 2nd year groups take place yearly.
* Weekly Pastoral Care Team meetings are held to discuss student issues including absenteeism.
* Targeted supports are available to those who are deemed at risk of absenteeism
* Good/effective/open communication is maintained between all staff on student concerns and issues.
* The school has assigned an Assistant Principal role to support the implementation of the Attendance Strategy.
* Records of attendance available to parents on request.

**Responding to poor attendance**

* Attendance will be closely monitored by the school’s Pastoral Care Team.
* When a student has accumulated a significant number of absent days, with no explanation communicated to the school, the school will contact parents/guardians to offer support or assistance in encouraging the student back to school. They will be reminded of the school’s obligation to inform TULSA at the point when a student reaches 20 days of absence.
* After 20 days absence a report is made to TULSA by the school.
* If absenteeism continues the student, along with their parents/guardian, will be invited to meet with school staff to come up with a plan to support the student’s educational journey and improve their attendance.

**Strategy Content**

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Student:**

* The student must make every effort to attend school punctually on all school days.
* They must communicate absences to the Office, Class Teacher, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal.
* They must not leave the school premises during the school day without signing out in the office.

**Parent/Guardian**

* Parents/ Guardians have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school ~~on~~ everyday the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him not to attend. (Section 17 of Education Welfare Act 2000)
* Parents/Guardians must send their son to school until they are sixteen years of age or for the completion of three years of post-primary, whichever is the reached first.
* Parents/Guardians must inform the school of their son’s absence and the reason why, in a timely fashion.
* Parents/Guardians must avoid unnecessary absences or withdrawals during term time.
* When withdrawing students during school hours, Parents/Guardians must notify the school secretary either by email, phone call or VS Ware.
* Parents/Guardians must acknowledge and when necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.

**The Principal will:**

* Promote full attendance and punctuality
* Monitor attendance records
* Liaise with the Pastoral Care team in relation to attendance
* Liaise with school staff and sign off on reports to TULSA regarding concerns about student attendance and absenteeism

**The Deputy Principal will**

* Promote full attendance and punctuality
* Monitor attendance records
* Monitor punctuality
* Monitor and investigate unauthorised absences by students from school or from classes as reported by the class teacher
* Contact Parents/Guardians where unauthorised absences are suspected

**Class Teachers will:**

* Record the attendance of every class they are leading
* Impress on the students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality
* Foster good relationships with students and monitor their attendance and potential issues

**Year Head**

* Liaise with the Pastoral Care Team to address any issues around student attendance
* Meet, along with the Deputy or Principal, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem to discuss the issue
* Contact Parents/Guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected, or patterns of absences are developing, and to notify the Deputy Principal of same.

**Attendance Officer**

* Liaise with and support class teachers in matters relating to attendance on VS Ware.
* Work in conjunction with the Administrator in the School in submitting the required reports to TULSA.
* Liaise with the Pastoral Care team in relation to attendance.
* Liaise with parents/guardians to provide support if students are approaching the 20-day absentee mark
* Liaise with Educational Welfare Officer when appropriate.

**Administrative Staff**

* Monitor punctuality daily and monitor signing in and out book in the office.
* Manage phone calls and emails from parents regarding absence permission.

**School Responsibilities**

* Establish close contacts with families and communities of at-risk students, through parent teacher meetings, phone calls and inviting them to feel part of the wider school community.
* Handle issues in a sensitive and supportive manner
* Must inform TULSA if a student has missed 20 days or more, has been suspended for more than six days, or a student’s name has been removed from the registrar.
* Maintain a relationship with the Educational Welfare Officer.

**Ratified by BOM**

**Next Review**

**Signed:**

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Chairperson of the board of management



Principal

Date: 09/04/2024