ST NATHY'S COLLEGE

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Mission Statement:

St. Nathy's College was established to act as a Centre of Learning. We strive to achieve this within a fostered Christian environment which equally provides for the faith and personal development of each student. All of our school endeavours and activities are directed towards these objectives.

Scope:

- This policy is a school-wide policy, for implementation by all staff, students, parents and Board of Management.
- This policy strives to set out the basic principles upon which the School Attendance Strategy will be implemented, sustained and evaluated in our school.
- We as educators believe that there is a direct relationship between a student's success and regular attendance. Students who have a good attendance record enjoy their school experience more than students who do not attend regularly.

Rationale:

- Attendance at school and full participation in school life is extremely important in a child's development.
- To ensure that all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities with regard to school attendance.
- Parents are the primary educators. The school wants to work in partnership with parents to ensure that the environment is created where children look forward to coming to school and participating in school life
- The school and parents have certain obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 regarding attendance and participation.

Goals:

- To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality.
- Keep accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
- Students learn to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
- Parents appreciate the vital role they play in their child's school attendance.
- Reduce the rate of absenteeism and encourage full attendance where possible.
- The early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance and punctuality.

A positive approach to attendance and punctuality:

- 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 Pastoral Care programme.
- In teaching the teacher endeavours to use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. The school management provides and supports the professional development of the teachers by permitting them to attend in-service courses/workshops and by offering staff training days.
- The school offers a wide range and variety of subject at Junior and Senior level. The school also offers a Transition Year programme. Career guidance and counselling are also available in the school as is resource teaching. These programmes provide scope for personal development as well as preparing students for their participation in society.
- The school's programme of co-curricular/extra-curricular activities caters for a wide range of activities in order to maximise student participation. Activities range from sports, music, drama, visits, exchanges, charity awareness, competitions, newsletters, mock interview and field trips.
- The Year Head and/or member(s) of the Pastoral Care 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.
- Records of attendance and punctuality are available to parents to view by logging onto VSware using their own individual password.
- The school's reward system acknowledges excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises students who show significant improvements in attendance and punctuality.

How attendance is monitored:

- All students attend Class Tutor Roll Call at 8.57am.The roll is verified electronically on VSware. Absence notes are submitted to the Class Tutor who then passes them on to the main office where the unexplained absence is then amended.
- Students who arrive at school after 8.57 am are required to sign in at the main office. The record will be amended from unexplained to late.

- Students who leave the school during the day due to illness or appointments must be collected by a parent/guardian at main office and must then sign out. When that student returns to school they must sign back in at the main office.
- Before each class a roll call is carried out and inputted into VSware.
- Students absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, are entered in the system by the administrative staff as school activity. The teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of the names prior to departure and hands in a copy of the list to the main office. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the main office of same.

Strategy Content:

Roles and Responsibilities:

Board of Management:

- Overall responsibility for attendance rests with the BOM.
- To ensure that the policy is developed and evaluated from time to time.
- To approve the policy.
- To consider reports from the Principal on the implementation of the policy.
- Unauthorised absence from school is a major breach of school discipline.

Principal:

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.
- To monitor attendance records regularly.
- To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences and withdrawal of students from the school.
- To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.
- To facilitate mixed ability classes in so far as possible throughout the curriculum.

Deputy Principal:

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Class Tutors, Administration Staff and to implement the School Policy.
- To liaise with the Year Head and Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Year Head, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.
- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- To submit the four reports to the NEWB.

Class Teacher:

- To input the attendance for each class they teach. If the class teacher is substituting during these periods the attendance should be recorded either electronically on VSware or on the class list available for that time and then submitted to the main office.
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.
- Set example by their own punctuality.
- Acknowledge students, welcome them back and support them upon their return to school.
- Teachers need to be made fully aware of their responsibilities regarding the recording of attendance and follow up any concerns regarding attendance. They need to carry out an initial investigation and refer to Tutor / Year Head if the student does not have a satisfactory explanation for absence from your class.

Year Head:

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on the VSware system for the given year.
- To liaise with the Tutors and Pastoral Care team in order to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, 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 the students during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage students to take personal responsibility for their own learning.

Class Tutor:

- The Class Tutor takes the official roll call on Vsware each day at a time specifically allocated to class tutor business. During this time, the Class Tutor follows up on absences and collects letters from parents explaining absences.
- On receipt of a note, the class tutor forwards this on to the main office to make the appropriate changes in VSware.
- The Class Tutors will communicate the names of students of concern to the Pastoral Care Team at their fortnightly meeting. The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Team or outside agency as appropriate.
- Class tutors should promote the importance of good attendance.
- Attention should be paid to lateness as an indication of the beginning of an attendance problem

Pastoral Care Team:

- The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Team or outside agency as appropriate.
- Monitor students referred on an ongoing basis

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 unnecessary absences. Where possible, to arrange appointments outside of school time.
- To provide a written explanation for the student's absence on the first day of return to school.
- To inform the school in advance of any planned absences from school.
- To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers.
- 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.
- Signing in and out of school: Any student who needs to leave school early must be collected by a parent / guardian.

Student:

- To attend school each day.
- To be punctual each day and for each class.
- Students who leave the school during the day are required to sign out at the office, giving the time of departure, the reason (medical appointments etc.) and time of return.

Administrative staff:

- To input attendance data from Class Teachers when required.
- To administer the signing in and out of students.

Evaluation:
The success of this Attendance Strategy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through statistical returns.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher feedback.

Ratification:
This policy has been ratified by the Board of management on 18/10/2017

Signed: ***Kevin Hennigan*** **Date: 28th May 2019**

Chairperson of Board of Management