

SAINT CATHERINE'S COLLEGE

Coláiste Chaitríona, Ard Mhacha



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Revised June 2020

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential.

Saint Catherine's College will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Our school Mission Statement

Saint Catherine's College is committed to providing excellence of educational provision for an ever changing society through:

- commitment to providing a sound, balanced, Catholic education which promotes the all-round development of each individual pupil;
- ensuring the attainment of the highest possible academic standards;
- preparing our young people for independent thought and adult life;
- maintaining and developing links with the local and national community;
- contributing to the social, economic and cultural life of the community

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Saint Catherine's College.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with Education Welfare Service.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School

To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2013/13

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis.

The Principal at Saint Catherine's College has overall responsibility for school attendance. The Pastoral Vice Principal should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

The Pastoral Vice Principal is the designated member of senior staff responsible for attendance. She works in conjunction with Form Tutors to monitor attendance levels in the school on an on-going basis.

The Pastoral Vice Principal also works as a member of the School Improvement Committee, established in September 2015, charged with developing strategies to improve whole school attendance rates. She monitors attendance on a fortnightly basis and, after liaising with Form Tutors, meets with the school's Education Welfare Officer once per fortnight to decide on actions to be taken.

Year Heads work closely with Form Tutors to identify any trends in attendance that are giving cause for concern.

Form Tutors monitor the attendance rates of all pupils in their Form Class and discuss these on an individual basis with pupils when the need arises. In addition, they pass any concerns to the Year Head/Pastoral Vice Principal.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of every lesson.

Parents/Guardians

Saint Catherine's College is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents have a legal duty to ensure:

Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise. (Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)

It is a parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This can be done by completing an Absentee Form on the school app, via a phone call or text on the day of the absence or confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required. If a child appears reluctant to attend school parents are encouraged to discuss the matter promptly with Year Head or Head of Key Stage to ensure that both the parent and child receive maximum support.

Pupils

Each pupil at Saint Catherine's College has a duty to ensure that they attend school regularly and punctually.

Procedures for signing in late

Pupils should arrive at school by 8.45am. School commences with registration at 8.55am – 9.10am. It is imperative that the school has an accurate register of all pupils for health and safety reasons.

Any pupil arriving to school between 9.10am – 9.45am MUST sign the late book immediately on arrival. Failure to do so will result in Retention being imposed.

Pupils arriving after 9.45am must report to the Pupil Hub and sign the late book before going to class. Lateness due to attendance at a medical/dental appointment must be covered by a letter from parents.

Sixth Form Consortium pupils must register after Period 2 class in the Pupil Hub.

Reporting absences

Parents are asked to complete an Absentee Form on the school app on the first morning of their child's absence. Alternatively, they may leave a message on Option 1 of the school's

auto attendant message service or text the school to report an absence on +442031371856. Failure to do so may result in a follow-up phone call/text message.

In the absence of an Absentee Form, phone call or text, parents/guardians must complete an Absence Pro-forma in the School Planner on return to school in order to authorize the absence. Sixth Formers in receipt of EMA must also provide a completed Absence Pro-forma in addition to an Absentee Form on app/parental phone call/text in order to authorize an absence.

Procedures for signing out

- Pupils are not permitted to leave school during the day except for specialist medical or emergency appointments. All other appointments should be made after 3.25pm.
- Parents are asked to use the PERMISSION TO LEAVE function of the Saint Catherine's app when requesting permission for their son / daughter to leave school early. Any parent who does not use this method of communication to request that their child leaves school early and who arrives into school unexpected will be asked to wait until a break between classes before their child can be sent for. This is to minimize disruption to classes.

KEY STAGES 3 &4

- Any Year 8 – 12 pupil given permission to leave school (for specialist medical or dental appointments only) must be collected personally by a parent/guardian from the Pupil Hub where they are required to sign the Out Book.
- Any parent/ guardian unable to collect their child personally must indicate the name of a designated adult (**aged 18 or over**) who will collect their child using the FURTHER INFORMATION section of the PERMISSION TO LEAVE pro-forma. No child will be allowed to leave school with any person not identified by parents/guardians via the app.
- On signing their child out, parents/guardians assume full responsibility for pupils leaving early during the school day.

SIXTH FORM

- Parents of Pupils in Years 13 & 14 must also use the PERMISSION TO LEAVE pro-forma on the Saint Catherine's College app when requesting permission for their child to leave school early.
- Parents/Guardians of Year 13/14 pupils are encouraged to collect their child personally from school but pupils whose parents do not do so must sign themselves out in the Sixth Form Out Book in the Pupil Hub at the time of departure from school.
- Sixth Formers requesting to be signed out must ensure that they communicate their planned absence to their subject teachers and that all outstanding work is submitted/collected before they are permitted to leave school. Failure to do so will result in a sanction being imposed

Attendance at Funerals

- A pupil, with parental permission, may represent the school at the funeral of someone associated with the school.
- A pupil attending any other funeral is asked to leave from home **in non uniform clothes**, but is strongly advised to attend afternoon classes.

Strategies and Supports to Promote Good Attendance in St. Catherine's College

We recognise the strong correlation that exists between high achievement and good attendance at school and are keen to foster a positive attitude among the student body which leads to improving attendance figures.

- In order to promote improved attendance at school, a number of incentives have been introduced with the aim of rewarding the efforts made by our pupils to strive to improve patterns in their attendance. These include a range of rewards deemed to be age/time appropriate by the relevant Year Head/Head of Key Stage.
- There are clear, fair rules around attendance and pupils/parents are clear about the consequences of truancy and parentally condoned absences.
- Progression into Year 14 from Year 13 is dependent upon a student having a minimum attendance rate of 85%, unless supported by medical evidence.

Monitoring Attendance

- Attendance/absence is recorded at a morning and afternoon registration.
- There are clear procedures in place to identify and follow up all absences and lateness.
- Spot checks may be carried out to monitor post-registration truancy and parents promptly informed
- All unauthorised absences from school must be explained by parents using the Absentee Form on the school app or alternatively using the absence Pro – Forma at the back of the Pupil Planner or by phoning/texting the school. Form Tutors code the reason for such authorised absences on the Weekly View report on SIMs.
- Clear guidance is given by the Pastoral Vice Principal at the start of every school year and on a regular basis on registration/appropriate categorisation of absence in line with the most recent attendance circular
- At Registration period, each pupil in Years 8 – 14 is encouraged to monitor their own daily attendance through regular dialogue with Form Tutors referencing emerging attendance patterns.

- Form Tutors monitor the number of days missed/ percentage attendance rates of all pupils in their Form Class using an attendance report provided by the relevant Year Head on a monthly basis.
- Any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% is interviewed by their Form Tutor and a record of the discussion made using the Improving Attendance Pro-forma on the relevant page of the Key Stage Pupil Planner. This is signed by the pupil and Form Tutor and countersigned by parents.
- In Term 2 of a pupil's Year 12 and as part of the school's post-mock follow up, all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 90% will be asked to attend an Attendance Board with a parent/guardian. Initially this will be with the Year 12 Year Head but should attendance continue to be of concern, this will involve the Head of Key Stage 4/Principal.
- If the attendance rate of a pupil in Year 8-14 continues to fall, without a valid medical reason, the Form Tutor informs the Year Head who will:
 - give the pupil a verbal warning of their concern
 - issue a standard letter of concern to parents if no improvement is noted

This letter of concern re attendance to parents is included in the Year Head handbook and contains an acknowledgement of receipt slip which parents are asked to return to the Year Head.

If the attendance rate continues to depreciate and fall below 85% without any valid explanation:

- A Key Stage 3 or 4 pupil will then be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer by the school's Pastoral Vice Principal. Education Authorities, through the Education Welfare Service, have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

- A Sixth Form pupil / parent will be invited to attend an Attendance Board, made up of the Principal, Head of Sixth Form and Year Head, to discuss further actions (Sixth Form)

Family Holidays during Term Time

Saint Catherine's College discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.