



Presentation Secondary School

Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry



Attendance Policy

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th December 2024



Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident, independent and resilient young adults, who follow their passions, develop a love of learning and become positive role models in society.

1. Introduction

At Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland we recognise the critical importance of regular and punctual attendance for the educational development and achievement of our students. We are committed to fostering an environment that encourages consistent attendance, in line with the Department of Education's guidelines and best practices.

This policy is informed by the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines, and Department of Education circulars and documents including, but not limited to:

- Circular M51/93: "School Attendance"
- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- Department of Education Circular 0038/2011: "Assessment of the Impact of the Revised School Attendance Strategy"
- "School Attendance Guidelines" (TUSLA, 2015)
- Circular 0021/2021: "Exemptions from the Study of Irish"
- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023

2. Aims of the Policy

The aims of this Attendance Policy are to:

- Promote regular school attendance and punctuality among all students.
- Outline clear procedures for monitoring, reporting and addressing issues related to absenteeism.
- Establish a supportive school environment that encourages students to attend regularly.
- Comply with statutory obligations regarding school attendance and reporting.

3. Importance of Regular Attendance

Regular attendance is crucial for the holistic development of students. It:

- Ensures that students benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided.
- Supports academic achievement and progress.
- Contributes to students' social and emotional wellbeing by promoting a sense of belonging and connection to the school community.
- Helps develop habits of punctuality and responsibility which are vital for life beyond school (Growth Mindset).

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Students** are expected to attend school every day and to arrive on time. They must remind their parent/guardian that any absence must be reported using the school app. If there is an issue with the school app or if the leave is urgent, a phone call will be accepted to the front office on 066-7141178.
- **Parents/Guardians** are legally responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They must record any absence digitally through the school app, which then synchronises with our school's digital attendance management system, VSware. If a student needs to leave early, parents/guardians must also complete this request on the school app in advance, following the *Permission to Leave Policy*.
- **Teachers** will monitor attendance and punctuality in their classes, recording attendance daily through VSware for each class and reporting any concerns/trends to the relevant Year Head. They will also remind students who have missed school of the need to catch up on missed work. Students are expected

to find out the work missed from a classmate, prior to returning to school. The teacher is a last resort for this.

- **The Deputy Principal** is responsible for overseeing attendance within the school. He will review attendance records regularly via VShare, liaise with parents/guardians and relevant support services when necessary, including the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- **Senior Management (The Principal & Deputy Principal)** has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school's Attendance Policy is implemented effectively. They will ensure that attendance records are maintained accurately, report cases of absenteeism to the EWO and TUSLA as required, and take appropriate action in cases of chronic absenteeism.

5. Recording and Monitoring Attendance

- Attendance will be recorded daily by teachers using VShare for each class, the school's digital attendance management system.
- The school will maintain an accurate digital record of attendance for each student, including explanations for absences, submitted via the school app.
- Students who are late must sign in at the iPad at the front office and immediately proceed to class. Again, a late note must be submitted by a parent/guardian in advance.
- Persistent absenteeism or patterns of unexplained absences will be identified through VShare, and appropriate follow-up actions will be taken, including contact with parents/guardians.

6. Reporting Absences

- Parents/Guardians are required to report a student's absence on the first day of each absence, using the school app, which connects to VShare. Parents/Guardians will be requested to give the reason and duration of the absence.
- Parents/Guardians must contact the school office if they have any issue with the school app for this purpose.
- Each subsequent absence must follow this procedure also.
- If a student is absent for more than 20 days in an academic year, the school is legally obliged to report this to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

7. Permission to Leave School

Students must adhere to the school's **Permission to Leave Policy** in relation to leaving during school hours:

- **Under 18 Years of Age:** A parent/guardian must complete a *Permission to Leave* note through the school app, which will be recorded in VShare. The student must meet with their Year Head for approval and then sign out at the office via the iPad. Students under 18 cannot leave the school premises unless collected in person by a parent/guardian or a nominated person over the age of 18 by the parent/guardian via the *Permission to Leave* note.
- **18 Years of Age or Over:** Students who are 18 or older may leave the school independently, but only after their parent/guardian has provided a *Permission to Leave* note through the school app, which must then be approved by the relevant Year Head. The student must sign out at the office iPad before leaving.
- Again, a phone call from a parent/guardian will be accepted if there is an issue with the school app or when the leave is urgent e.g. due to illness at school.

8. School Refusal and Support Measures

School refusal can arise for a variety of reasons, including anxiety, personal challenges or other significant factors. At Presentation Castleisland, we acknowledge these difficulties and strive to support students and their families in overcoming them.

- **Initial Response:** When a school refusal is identified, the school will arrange an immediate meeting with the student, their parent(s)/guardian(s), the Year Head and other relevant staff. The goal is to understand the underlying causes and explore every possible support measure.
- **Educational Continuity:** While the school cannot provide live classes in the case of school refusal, teachers will submit work, at agreed intervals (decision made by management) to the student via Microsoft Teams to ensure the student remains engaged with their studies, for a defined period of time. This work will be monitored and feedback will be provided to support the student's learning. In order for work to be sent to the student for a prolonged period of time, the parent/guardian must provide the school with a letter/certificate from a qualified professional. This is intended to be a temporary measure, as the best place for any student to flourish is in the physical classroom. Prolonged school refusal for any reason, will be brought to the Board of Management for the final decision.
- **Exploring Options:** During a meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s), various options will be discussed to support the student, including:
 - **Home Schooling & Tuition:** If appropriate and where the student qualifies, the possibility of home schooling and tuition will be explored, in line with Department of Education guidelines.
 - **Reduced Timetable:** A temporary reduced timetable may be considered to help the student gradually reintegrate into school life. Approval must be received from TUSLA prior to commencement.
 - **Reintegration Strategies:** Specific strategies will be put in place to help the student return to full-time attendance. This may include referral to GP and/or counselling, school-based mentoring, or other tailored supports.
- **Best Interests of the Student:** The primary goal is to bring the student back to school every day in person, as this is in their best educational and social interest. All available supports will be discussed and utilised to achieve this outcome.
- **Ongoing Review:** The situation will be reviewed regularly, with follow-up meetings to assess progress and adjust support strategies as needed.

9. Strategies to Promote Attendance

In line with the Department of Education guidelines, Presentation Castleisland will implement the following strategies to promote regular attendance:

- **Creating a Positive School Climate:** Ensuring that the school environment is welcoming, inclusive and supportive, fostering a sense of belonging and engagement among students.
- **Recognition and Reward:** Acknowledging and rewarding good attendance through certificates, awards, and other incentives.
- **Support Services:** Providing access to guidance, pastoral care and other support services for students experiencing difficulties that may impact their attendance.
- **Parental Engagement:** Encouraging regular communication between the school and parents/guardians regarding their child's attendance and offering support to families where attendance is an issue.

- **Intervention and Support:** Early identification of students at risk of poor attendance and implementation of tailored interventions, including meetings with parents/guardians, individual support plans and referral to external agencies where necessary.

10. Responding to Poor Attendance

- **Early Intervention:** When a pattern of poor attendance emerges, the school will initiate early intervention strategies, including contact with parents/guardians and the provision of additional supports to the student.
- **Referral to TUSLA:** In cases where absenteeism persists despite school intervention, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as required by law.
- **School-Based Supports:** Students with chronic absenteeism will be provided with a personalised support plan, which may include academic support and mentoring.
- **Student Support Team:** The school's Student Support Team, will discuss relevant students, where appropriate supports are needed.

10. Holidays

- Holidays taken during the school year are discouraged, due to the impact on class tuition and project work missed out on.
- Students are expected to attend for the full 166 days of each academic year, where possible.

11. Exemptions from Attendance

- **Illness:** Students who are ill should not attend school. Parents/Guardians should inform the school via the school app as soon as possible if a student is absent due to illness. (A phone will suffice if there is an issue with the school app or if urgent).
- **Special Circumstances:** The school recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances where a student's absence is unavoidable. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and parents/guardians must provide documentation from a qualified professional, where necessary. This will be brought before the next Board of Management Meeting for a final decision.
- **Leaving School During the Day:** Students must adhere to the school's *Permission to Leave Policy* as detailed above. The policy ensures the safety and wellbeing of all students and aligns with legal requirements for student supervision.

12. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Management, in consultation with staff, parents/guardians and students, to ensure its continued effectiveness and alignment with Department of Education guidelines and legislative requirements.

13. Communication of Policy

This Attendance Policy will be communicated to all members of the school community, including staff, students and parents/guardians. It will be made available on the school website.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16/12/24

Signed: Mary O'Keefe

Signed: Pierce Dwyer

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Principal & Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 16/12/24

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