**Ashbourne Community School**

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE:

This policy is based upon the Strategy Statement on Attendance which was ratified by the BOM in June 2011. It seeks to promote attendance and participation by all students in the full life of the school and it features the policies and practices of the school that promote an appreciation of learning and good attendance.

RATIONALE:

Legislative context:

Education Welfare Act 2000 s22(1)… that schools prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students….

*'If students do not feel missed then there is a problem. They are tourists in the classroom not citizens of the classroom.'* (Prof. Dolf  Van Veen., in NEWB Conference 2008, School Attendance and Participation: What Works and Why? Report)

Education (Welfare) Act s10
   (a) to promote and foster in society, and in particular in families, an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education, in particular as respects the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and moral development of children, and of the social and economic advantages that flow therefrom,
   (b) to promote and foster, in recognised schools, an environment that encourages children to attend school and participate fully in the life of the school.

AIMS:

   ✓ To communicate our high expectations for good attendance.
   ✓ To outline our procedures and data collection regarding attendance which aim to identify quickly any students at risk.
   ✓ To outline our strategies which seek to promote good attendance.
   ✓ To comply with legislation.

LINK TO THE MISSION STATEMENT:

- Our school a place where we foster such values as respect, inclusion and care as evident in our school policy and practice.
- Ashbourne Community School is a partnership of students, staff, parents and guardians, Board of Management and our local and global communities. We value the on-going input of all these partners in the life of the school.
- We pursue academic excellence while recognising the diversity of our student body. Through a relevant curriculum, designed to meet the needs of all, we endeavour to help all students realise their potential.
- Through positive staff and student relationships and a broad extra-curricular programme, we aim to develop in each student a confident, healthy self-image and a sense of personal, local and global responsibility.
- We recognise that each student's personal and spiritual growth is important. We endeavour to co-operate with parents and guardians and religious leaders of all faiths to encourage the development of religious and spiritual values in each student.

LINKS TO EXISTING POLICIES:

The Attendance Policy is linked to the policies and procedures that promote an appreciation of learning and good attendance.  It also incorporates the 4 action plans outlined in the Strategy Statement on Attendance.
- ✓ Code of Behaviour
- ✓ Anti-Bullying
- ✓ Homework
- ✓ Special Educational Needs
- ✓ Whole School Guidance
- ✓ Subject Plans

A whole school approach has been adopted in the development and communication of the Attendance Policy and as with all existing policies it is subject to change as the need arises.

KEY PERSONNEL:

The school community strives for a welcoming atmosphere, positive teacher- student relationships and a supportive teaching and learning environment. It adopts a whole school and consistent approach to managing attendance. It recognises that all staff in school have a role in monitoring and promoting good attendance.
This is in the following ways:
- ✓ Each Subject Teacher & staff member: electronic registration and Teacher's Diary
- ✓ Class Tutor – dedicated time each day
- ✓ Year Head – year group monitoring and regular discussions with parents.
- ✓ Deputy Principals – Junior and Senior School
- ✓ Post Holder with responsibility for Punctuality
- ✓ Guidance Personnel
- ✓ SEN Department
- ✓ Care Team
- ✓ Administration Personnel – daily monitoring, furnishing of data to relevant personnel, NEWB periodic and end of year returns.
- ✓ Homework club personnel
- ✓ Student mentoring/leadership teams

The school community aims to build a culture of high expectations among all staff, students and parents/guardians for all students' learning, participation and attendance. It understands and recognises the benefits of good attendance and the negative impact of non-attendance on the individual student and on the whole school community.

**Benefits for Child**

- ✓ The strength of the link between good attendance and the child's performance in examinations is confirmed in several research studies.
- ✓ School attendance contributes to personal and social development - school is where children make friends and develop social relations with other students and teachers. Good attendance maintains these relations and prevents friend and staff alienation from periods of absence.
- ✓ Self-esteem and confidence are developed as a result of regular attendance at school.
- ✓ Children who regularly attend school achieve the most from their school experience.
- ✓ Better relations with parents and siblings, easing parental stress and creating a good example for siblings.
- ✓ Good school attendance is a positive habit learned and this habit and dedication can be carried on to future studies.
- ✓ Better chances of long-term employment.
- ✓ A good record of performance is attractive to employers.

**Benefits for School**

- ✓ Positive impact on school resources.
- ✓ Harmony within the class and between the students.
- ✓ Good teacher/student relations can lead to improved success.

**Impact of Non-Attendance:**

**Impact on Child**

- ✓ The strength of the link between missing school, underachievement and early school leaving is confirmed in several research studies.
- ✓ Children who miss school on a regular basis will have gaps in their learning which will impact on their ability to engage in future lessons.
- ✓ Children who miss large amounts of school time can experience social and emotional consequences through alienation from peers and staff.
- ✓ Children may be drawn into anti-social behaviour.
- ✓ Children who are away from school may also be at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.
- ✓ Absenteeism is one of the strongest factors associated with early school leaving.
- ✓ Those who frequently miss school are less likely to progress to further study.
- ✓ Children who leave school early tend not to re-engage with education and therefore remain at a disadvantage throughout their lives.

**Impact on School**

- ✓ Benefits from teaching are not fully realised as teachers must re-visit topics for absentee students.
- ✓ School time lost in investigation of non-attendance. This is a drain on valuable resources within the education sector.
- ✓ Disharmony within the class.

**Attendance Monitoring & Promotion of Good Attendance at Ashbourne Community School – What we do:**

- Attendance & punctuality are taken very seriously in Ashbourne Community School.
- P/DP and Assistant Principals and other personnel meet & greet students as they arrive in school each morning & at lunchtime.
- Student attendance is marked electronically at morning registration by the class tutor & at every class by the subject teacher throughout the school day.
- Attendance information is available to Administration & other relevant personnel on the E' Portal system.
- Following morning registration, a text is issued to all parents/guardians of absent students.
- Reminders to teachers to take a register are made over the intercom regularly by the school Principal/Deputy Principals and other personnel emphasising the importance of attendance.
- Weekly discussions regarding attendance records, concerns, strategies and necessary follow up take place between Year Heads & relevant Deputy Principals.
- Latecomers after registration must sign in late at the main office. – The Late Books are checked twice a day by Administration & E' Portal updated accordingly.
- Class tutors check & collect notes daily at tutorial time.
- Journals are stamped/signed by relevant personnel.
- Students may only leave with written permission from home & sanction given by Deputy Principals or Principal. Students must sign out providing information relating to reason for leaving.
- Students who are unwell must sign out and must be collected by parents/guardians.
- Students are not permitted to leave school during morning break. This includes Friday morning break.
- On a weekly basis, Class tutors or any staff member who has a concern regarding a student's attendance/patterns of non-attendance/lateness are urged to e-mail/contact the relevant Year Head who will investigate/follow up and determine response.
- Attendance is regularly discussed at Care Team meetings.
- The care team personnel establishes close links with families who are at risk of developing school attendance problems. A focus is placed on factors which may be affecting attendance including issues related to SEN and social and emotional challenges.
- The school facilitates the "Friends for Life" resilience building programme.
- The school fosters links with all feeder schools so that students who may be at risk of poor attendance are identified early and relevant supports are put in place including providing a safe place during lunchtime and break time /and supporting the development of organisational skills.
- The Chaplaincy Team facilitates retreats for first years on an annual basis in Term 1 with a focus on settling into second level school, developing friendships and managing the changes which the transition brings.
- An attendance report form is available to track & monitor the attendance of 'at risk' students.
- Where there are concerns regular phone calls are made to parents/guardians (Year Head, DP/P, POR, Class Tutor). This response is co-ordinated & recorded.
- The Year Head and /or other school personnel may visit the home to discuss attendance, & agree a way forward.
- When necessary the P /DP communicates with the Education Welfare Officer, Juvenile Liaison Officer, Social Workers, Youth Services, and others.
- Attendance is discussed with parents/guardians at P/T Meetings.
- Attendance at Study is monitored daily – each journal is stamped.
- Attendance is commented upon in formal school reports.
- Attendance is core to LCA & TY.

**Leaving Certificate Applied students**

➢ In order to claim examination credit for Key Assignments LCA students must have a 90% attendance record. This record is kept by each of the LCA subject teachers and credit awarded accordingly.

**Transition Year students**

In addition to the standard attendance procedures and guidelines, the following should be noted in relation to Transition Year students:

➢ Students requesting permission to be out of class on an in- house activity must complete a class pass which is signed by the teacher. Any teacher can refuse such a pass.
➢ Students requesting permission to engage in a school activity outside the school premises must complete a student pass which can only be approved and signed by Yearhead/Coordinator. Passes are located in the TY journal.
➢ Students requesting a week long work experience placement must complete an application. The granting of permission is subject to school approval.

**Rewards/Deterrents**

➢ Incentives are provided to encourage full/improved attendance including Attendance Certificates, class/year group trips.
➢ The following deterrents may be used for use for poor attendance and punctuality.
   o Absence from class without permission may result in a detention, a Principal's detention or suspension.
   o Students who have two unexplained "lates" in a week may have to do a one hour morning detention.
   o Failure to do a detention may result in a suspension.
➢ Also, attendance is referenced in letters home each year. In addition specific attendance letters are issued on a regular basis. Formal letters signed by the Year Heads/Deputy/Principal regarding attendance issue at specific agreed number of days, e.g. 5, 10 etc... Although standard, these are individualised and include an invitation to come into school to discuss the situation.
➢ Parents/Guardians are required to notify the school in writing if they choose to take their children out of school to go on holidays during term time. The school strongly discourages this absence due to term-time holidays believing that this impacts greatly on a child's learning. " Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21, EWA2000) Therefore, the school cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time. (NEWB)
➢ The school has invested heavily in its SPHE programme which is available to all students in each year group. A core team facilitates the programme at Junior Cycle and tutors and the Guidance Team facilitates the programme at senior cycle. Within the programme the school hosts whole school initiatives designed to support and raise awareness of the importance of Anti-bullying initiatives, LGBT awareness and Positive Mental Health.
➢ The school is also part of the Meath Jigsaw Schools' programme/partnership. It recognises the close link between positive mental health and effective participation in school life which is in turn is evident in good attendance patterns.

Chairperson's initials: _____                              Page 5 of 7

**Student Leadership**

The school fosters strong student leadership teams including student Council, Green Schools' Programme, Mentoring, 6th year leadership group and Head Students in an effort to foster the development of "the student voice" in school business and to foster strong links between students in Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. It recognises that, in giving students a voice in school matters, this promotes positive engagement and improves attendance patterns.

➢ The school facilitates a broad curricular and extracurricular programme designed to encourage the full participation of students in the life of the school.
➢ As is evident from the Mission Statement the school promotes positive relationships between staff, students and parents/guardians designed to foster positive interactions in classrooms. This in turn promotes a positive climate of mutual respect and trust in classrooms.
➢ All base classes are organised in mixed ability groupings encouraging greater engagement and positive peer influence which in turn promotes good school attendance.
➢ Staff have high expectations of students with regard to their attendance thus effecting higher expectations of students in relation to attendance, participation and achievement in school.
➢ The school recognises how educational outcomes affect attendance and puts significant support in place for all students - SEN students may have reduced curriculum or access support in withdrawal from some subject areas.

**\***There is always a need to attempt to address the more intensive needs of chronic non-attenders. There are differing and sometimes highly complex factors underlying poor attendance including issues around bullying, safety, identity and mental health; and the need to consider different interventions at this level. These issues emerge consistently at Care Team meetings. In this regard school personnel liaise regularly with relevant agencies including NEWB, HSE and TUSLA. There is also a range of issues which impact upon school attendance such as established norms around late bedtimes, missing school due to holidays, medical appointments or missing up to twenty days as an acceptable practice. These issues are addressed with parents/guardians.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW:

**The implementation of the policy** shall be monitored by the Principal/ and the Deputy Principals and Year Heads.

**Review and evaluation of this policy** will take place each academic year or as necessary in line with changing information or guidelines (e.g. from the Department of Education and Skills or the NEWB), legislation and feedback from parents/guardians, students, school staff and others.

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This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School at its meeting on Wednesday 13th November, 2013 (Ref. Meeting Nr. 191).

Signed: _____       Date: _____
          *Chairperson*
*Board of Management*
*Ashbourne Community School*

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**Following ratification by the Board of Management on 26th June, 2017 this policy has been circulated within the school community.**

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                                    ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
                                    │   Absence = 5 days   │        5 days        ▲
                                    └─────────────────────┘      └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘      │
                                              │                                   │
                                              ▼                                 Prevention /
   ┌──────────────────┐          ◇ Acceptable reason ◇                         Early Intervention
   │ No Further Action │◄── Yes ──◇ provided i.e. authorised ◇                   │
   └──────────────────┘          ◇ absence ◇                                    │
            ▲                             │ No                                   │
            │                             ▼                                      ▼
            │                 ┌─────────────────────────┐
            │                 │ Letter to parents offering opportunity to
            │                 │ discuss and setting target for improvement │
            │                 └─────────────────────────┘
            │                             │
            │                             ▼                              ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
            │── Yes ──────────◇ Does attendance improve ◇                 10 days
                              ◇ to an agreed target level? ◇             └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
                                          │ No
                                          ▼
                              ┌─────────────────────────┐
                              │ Informal face-to-face meeting with parents
                              │ and students to discuss impact of non-attendance
                              │ and to gain their commitment to improve │
                              └─────────────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐                   │
   │ Monitor and Review│◄─ YES ──◇ Does attendance improve ◇             ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
   │   Attendance      │         ◇ to an agreed target level? ◇           15 days
   └──────────────────┘                   │ No                          └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
            ▲                              ▼                                  Targeted
            │                 ┌─────────────────────────┐               (Refer to Section 5.5)
            │                 │ Formal face-to-face meeting with parents.
            │                 │ Ensure that they have addressed all areas
            │                 │ in NEWB pre-referral checklist
            │                 │ (Refer to Section 5.5, Diagram 5.3) │
            │                 └─────────────────────────┘
            │                             │
            │── YES ──────────◇ Does attendance improve ◇
                              ◇ to an agreed target level? ◇
                                          │ No
                                          ▼                              ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
                    ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐             20 days
                    │ Referral to NEWB (Refer to Section 5.6,│           └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
                    │  Diagram 5.5)                          │
                    └──────────────────────────────────────┘
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