



# St. Mary's Secondary School



Convent of Mercy, Newport, Co. Tipperary, V94 RY18

Telephone 061-378344 Fax 061-378358

[www.stmarysnewport.com](http://www.stmarysnewport.com)

Registered Charity Number: 20148379

## **School Attendance Strategy, Attendance and Participation Policy**

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport, is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of C.E.I ST. (Catholic Schools, An Irish Schools Trust). The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills, and is a co-educational school.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School is a statutory Board, appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### **Mission Statement:**

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport operates as a Catholic co-educational Secondary School, to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality for the benefit of the community which it serves.

### **In pursuing this mission we aim:**

- To provide a quality educational experience that caters for the full range of academic aptitude and abilities.
- To foster the intellectual, physical, social, cultural, moral and religious development of our students.
- To enable pupils to achieve their full potential academically.
- To promote the Catholic ethos and faith.
- To cater for the needs of the local community in so far as ethos, resources and facilities permit.

**Ethos:** As a CEIST school, St. Mary's seeks to promote the five key elements of the CEIST charter.

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person.

Creating Community.

Being Just and Responsible.



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## School Attendance Strategy

### Aims

The aim of this strategy is to promote a school environment which encourages all students to attend St. Mary's Secondary School regularly and punctually.

The school aims to

- Maximise and maintain student attendance throughout the students' second level education
- Encourage students to reach their full potential by remaining in school for the full 5/6 years
- Ensure that adequate and accurate records of attendance and absence are maintained
- Use our VSware system to support the effective and efficient monitoring of attendance
- Report on attendance to TUSLA based on their guidelines, and in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Work in partnership with parents and students to achieve the maximum possible attendance of all students throughout the academic year.

### Rationale

Progress at St. Mary's Secondary School requires the best level of attendance and punctuality, because both are essential for efficient class work, and in order to optimise educational outcomes. (Analysis of Leaving Certificate results 2022 correlated with attendance of students, as presented by DO'C to Board of Management, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2023, and to Parents Council, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2023). St. Mary's Secondary School staff and Board of Management have high expectations regarding school attendance. The Year Heads regularly communicate to parents/guardians the importance of high attendance, and the link between student attendance and student academic achievement. It is recognised that some students and their parents/guardians need to be supported at certain stages, in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities. This rationale is consistent with the **St. Mary's Secondary School Code of Behaviour** (*Attendance and Punctuality, pages 6 and 12*)

This policy has been reviewed in accordance with St. Mary's Secondary School Child Safeguarding Statement, and in line with the Children First Act, 2015, and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017. While reviewing this



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School Attendance Strategy and Participation Policy, due consideration has been given to all aspects of the wellbeing of students and staff of St. Mary's Secondary School.

General Data Protection Regulation came into force in 2018, and this policy has been reviewed in accordance with best practice, as detailed in that legislation.

## ***Related policies***

This policy should be read in conjunction with St. Mary's Secondary School's Admissions Policy, the Code of Behaviour, and any other relevant policy, all of which are available on the school's website [www.stmarysnewport.ie](http://www.stmarysnewport.ie)

## ***Policy content***

Students must attend school daily for the full school year, and they must arrive on time for school. At present, students are expected to attend school from 8:45 am until 3:55 pm daily, with the exception of Friday when classes finish at 1:20 pm. If a student is absent for any reason, parents/guardians must notify the school as soon as possible. Parents are required to submit an absentee note to the relevant Year Head upon their child's return. Communication from parents/guardians reporting student absences are entered appropriately on the VShare absenteeism monitoring system.

Only students whose parents/guardians have satisfactorily communicated with the school are allowed to leave the school premises during the school day. Students who leave the school premises, with or without permission, are no longer the responsibility of the school. Students who leave the school with permission are required, along with their parent/guardian, to sign the in/out book at the reception area.

## **The role of the parent/guardian**



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Parents/guardians are obliged to fulfil their legal responsibilities, and to ensure that their registered child attends school.

Parents/guardians must contact the school as soon as possible whenever their child is unable to attend school, as required by the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, section 18 which states *"Where a child is absent from school at which he or she is registered during part of a school day, or for a school day, or more than a school day, the parent of such a child shall, in accordance with procedures specified by the school, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence."*

Family holidays are not an acceptable reason for absence, and should be taken during the school holidays.

Children who have not reached the age of 16 years, or have not completed three years of post-primary education, whichever occurs later, and who have accumulated more than 20 days of absence in a school year, will be reported by the school authorities to TUSLA as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, section 21.

Records of attendance and punctuality are available to parents/guardians to view on VSware. Parents are requested to monitor their child's attendance, and punctuality on a regular basis.

A doctor's certificate must be provided, where appropriate, to the Year Head in the case of student absences due to illness. In the event of a long absence, parents/guardians are asked to maintain contact with the relevant Year Head, and to meet with them before their child's return to school, in order to put a support plan in place (See our Code of Behaviour).

## Attendance Procedures

### Monitoring Daily Attendance

- a) Constantly, through all contact and meetings with parents/guardians and students, the school encourages full attendance.
- b) The school does not condone absences for family holidays etc. during term time, and seeks to maintain the integrity of the school year. This is communicated to parents/guardians on an annual basis, along with the school calendar for the year.



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- c) Attendance rolls are registered on the VSware attendance management system, by student, by class, by day. If a student is marked absent for any class, this can be immediately seen by the parent/guardian once they log on to VSware.
- d) Student attendance is monitored by 1) the subject teacher 2) the Year Head 3) Senior Management.
- e) **All** absences (whether for part of a school day, a full school day, or more than a school day) must be explained, either through the VSware system, or by submitting a written note. This is a legal requirement of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- f) Where recurring absenteeism is noticed, the Year Head will liaise with the student and/or the parents/guardians.
- g) Attendance patterns are routinely discussed at the weekly Year Head meeting.
- h) The Year Head will contact home when concerns arise regarding attendance.
- i) The Year Head will monitor accumulations of absenteeism, and complete a monthly attendance audit, with figures furnished by the Deputy Principal. They will consult with the Student Counsellor/Deputy Principal/Principal as necessary. In cases where specific students have attendance difficulties, the Year Head will liaise with the parents/guardians to put a suitable support plan in place, and to agree acceptable targets with a view to improving attendance.
- j) Túsla will be informed when a student has been absent for an accumulated total of 20 days.
- k) The school will maintain contact with the Educational Welfare Officer. A record of all contact will be kept by the school authorities in this regard. All official reporting will be carried out in compliance with the guidelines set down by Túsla, and in compliance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- l) If Parents/Guardians are aware in advance that a student will be absent for a considerable period of time, they should contact the school to make arrangements for work to be assigned, if appropriate.
- m) Good attendance is praised, recognised and rewarded.

## Monitoring attendance during the school day

- l. A student who arrives late to school must sign in at the front office before going to class. These students are recorded as "Late" on the VSware attendance



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- management system. Concerns arising from persistent lateness will be brought to the attention of the parent/guardian by the Year Head, and dealt with appropriately.
- II. Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the day, without a parent/guardian having signed them out at the front office. Students must sign back in upon their return.
  - III. When a student presents as sick during the school day, the office staff contact a parent/guardian, and the necessary collection arrangements, or otherwise, are made.
  - IV. If a student is absent from class for a school based activity, the relevant teacher supplies the office with a list of those attending and that is marked on the VSware system.
  - V. Students who are absent for part of, or a full school day without parental/guardian's permission or school permission will be dealt with by the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal, in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

## Participation

### Participation in the classroom

Students are required to actively participate in their own learning, especially in the classroom, thereby enhancing student wellbeing. This rationale is consistent with one of the aims of our Code of Behaviour which states that we "aim to prepare young people for adult life, by affirming their own contribution to their educational experiences".

Students at St. Mary's Secondary School must consistently work to the best of their abilities. Equally they must participate actively in class and remotely when appropriate, and do whatever work is assigned to them in a timely manner. Students must have books and equipment needed for various classes. Students must attend Physical Education classes, except when exempted for medical reasons, and must have the appropriate clothing and equipment for those classes. Teachers will use a variety of methodologies to encourage and enable student participation, which may include, among others:

- Pair work
- Group work





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- Peer Assessment
- Project work
- Inquiry based learning
- Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs)
- Leadership development
- Survey based work
- Class discussion and debate
- Encouragement of Debating, Public Speaking and reading aloud
- Development of organizational skills – use of school diaries, lockers etc
- Presentations
- Ted Talks

Students are expected to participate in any activity that the teacher deems conducive to real learning taking place, and which promotes a positive learning environment.

## Participation in St. Mary's Secondary School Community activities

Our school community is an important entity, which aims to offer a courteous, co-operative and caring environment for all. Participation in school community events is a very important aspect of school life here at St. Mary's, and indeed the concept of creating community is a key value of our CEIST Charter. Participation in school community events may require self-direction from our students, and commitment from the teachers. St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport is an open and inclusive environment, respecting the diversity of the school population in relation to religious denomination, sexual orientation and ethnicity, promoting learning and personal development for all.

Some ways in which students may participate in school community events are through involvement with activities such as:

- The Student Council
- Our school Mass and other religious services
- Fundraising efforts
- Our Green Schools initiative



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- Catholic Schools week
- Global Schools initiative
- Seachtain Na Gaeilge activities

to name but a few.

## Participation in extra-curricular activities

Participation in extra-curricular activities enables our students to strive for, and fulfil, their potential in other aspects of their lives. Teachers' unique interests and abilities are tapped into, so that a wide variety of activities is offered to students at St. Mary's. We thereby facilitate students in developing their interpersonal skills, in fostering a team spirit, in improving an individual's sense of achievement and in promoting wellbeing.

It is the responsibility of any student who is absent from class due to extra-curricular activities, to know details of work missed, and to catch up on same.

## **Timetable for Review**

While reviewing this policy, due consideration has been given to all aspects of the wellbeing of students at St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport.

The School Attendance Strategy and Participation Policy will be reviewed as the need arises, and/or every three years. The next review is scheduled for 2026.

Policy review team: Ms. E. Mullally, Ms. G. Foley, Ms. F. McGauley

## **Relevant dates for this policy:**

Policy reviewed and amended by team: January/February 2023

Consultation with School Secretaries: 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2023

Consultation at Senior Management Meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2023





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Reviewed at staff meeting as part of SSE report: 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2023

Consultation with Year Heads: 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 and 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2023

Consultation with Student Council: 29<sup>rd</sup> March, 2023

Consultation with Staff: 20<sup>th</sup> April, 20213

Consultation with Parents Council: 21<sup>st</sup> April, 2023

Draft Policy presented to Board of Management: 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2023

Policy approved by Board of Management: 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2023

Signed: Michaela O'Brien

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 31/5/2023

Signed: John Cusack

Principal, St. Mary's Secondary School

Date: 31/5/2023