



Coláiste Mhuire, Askeaton

Attendance & Participation Policy

25th November 2015

Coláiste Mhuire School Attendance & Participation Policy

Regular attendance at school is essential for all students so that they can reach their potential. Coláiste Mhuire aims to foster a culture of attendance for all its students. In addition, we seek to identify those students who are experiencing problems with attendance at school for whatever reason.

Coláiste Mhuire has traditionally had a very high level of attendance. In addition, our retention rate is very high with the vast majority of our students progressing to senior cycle and completing their Leaving Certificate.

The Board of Management, the Principal and Deputy Principal, the teaching staff and the Parents' Association are keen to ensure that this aspect of school life continues by co-operating to promote a positive appreciation among parents and students of the great benefits to be derived from education and the correlation with high attendance levels at school.

Research has shown that poor attendance and poor participation are directly linked to low educational achievement and early school leaving. Therefore, attendance at school and full participation in school life is extremely important.

Coláiste Mhuire aims to create an environment where students want to come to school by:

- creating a warm and supportive atmosphere in school
- recognising the individuality of all our students and encouraging them to be involved in school activities as much as possible
- implementing a broad-based curriculum which is relevant, flexible and caters for the needs of individual students across a range of ability levels within the available resources
- providing a broad range of interesting and stimulating activities within and outside the classroom
- ensuring that students work in an environment which is safe, secure and conducive to learning
- dealing expeditiously with any issue, such as bullying, which might have a negative impact on school attendance
- acknowledging good attendance by awarding certificates where applicable
- having established procedures for the monitoring and recording of attendance and punctuality

Education (Welfare) Act – Establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, established the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.

TUSLA (*The Child & Family Agency*)

- In 2014, TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency became an independent legal entity, comprising HSE Children & Family Services, Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board as well as incorporating some psychological services and a range of services responding to domestic, sexual and gender based violence.
- The Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency operate under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, a piece of legislation that emphasises the promotion of school attendance, participation and retention. The statutory and school support services of the Child and Family Agency's, Educational Welfare Services work together collaboratively and cohesively with schools and other relevant services to secure better educational outcomes for children and young people.
- The Educational Welfare Services Board's main function is to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.
- The Board deploys Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) at local level to work in close co-operation with parents and school managers to promote regular school attendance and prevent absenteeism and early school leaving.
- The EWO currently attached to Coláiste Mhuire is Ms. Aisling Mulhall.
- The EWO focuses in particular on students at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

- In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, it is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that their child attends school every day.
- In the event that a child is absent from school, in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, it is the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s), to explain to the school why their child has been absent.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should use the note section at the back of the student's journal stating the date(s) of absence and giving a reason for the absence. This note **must** be handed to the **Year Head** on the day of **return** from absence.
- In the case of a prolonged absence, and where the student was under medical care, parents should also include a letter or cert from the attending practitioner.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should endeavour to minimise school absence by making medical and dental appointments, where possible, outside school time and during school holidays.

- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should endeavour to promote school attendance and minimise school absence by not signing their child out of school unless absolutely necessary, for example students should not be signed out during periods of house exams where they have a study slot. Study facilities will be provided in school.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) should endeavour not take students out of school for holidays. This has the potential to damage their education. It is very difficult for any child to catch up with what has been missed when out of school for an extended holiday. There are, of course, exceptional circumstances where parent(s)/guardian(s) may have to take their child out of school during term time. However, parent(s)/guardian(s) should always be aware of the potential risk to his/her education, and therefore these situations should be kept to an absolute minimum.

School Procedures

- In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000,
 - Coláiste Mhuire has established and maintains a register of all students attending the school.
 - Coláiste Mhuire records the attendance and non-attendance on each school day of each student registered in the school.
- Coláiste Mhuire expects all students registered in the school to attend all timetabled classes every day.
- In Coláiste Mhuire, school starts at 09:00am each day. We actively encourage students to be in school by 08.50am in order to attend their locker and be ready for class at 09:00am.
- Students who arrive after 09:00am must sign in at the school office and present a note to explain their lateness. The student's journal will be stamped with the time of arrival. Failure to present a note will result in a lunch-time detention on the Friday of that week.
- Individual student attendance will be recorded through the school's ePortal system during lesson 1 and lesson 7 each day.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive a text message when a student is recorded absent for the roll call in lesson 1.
- A student will only be allowed to leave school earlier than normal school closure on production of a note. The student must be signed out at the school office by a parent/guardian or immediate family member. In the rare circumstance where a parent/guardian/immediate family member is not available to collect a student then the name of the appointed person must be given to the school in advance of the student's departure. This person should be considered trustworthy by the parent/guardian.
- Students over 18 can sign themselves out provided that they have produced a note from parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Attendance data will be reported to TUSLA twice each academic year.
- The attendance figure for each student will be included in the Christmas and Summer reports issued to parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Where the school has concerns about the attendance of a student, the Year Head (in the first instance) will inform parent(s)/guardian(s) of this concern by letter.

- Where the school has continuing concerns about a student's attendance, this concern will be reported to TUSLA and the Deputy Principal will report this concern to parent(s)/guardian(s) by letter.
- Where the school does not have concerns about a student's attendance, but because of the number of absences accrued, the school is required to report to TUSLA the statistical fact, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be informed of this action by letter.
- Appropriate agencies such as the Inspectorate of the Department of Education & Skills and officers of TUSLA have a right to inspect school attendance figures of individual students.
- Coláiste Mhuire will review this policy where appropriate e.g. in the event of a change in legislation.

Referral to TUSLA

Where a student is under 16 or he/she has not yet completed 3 years at post-primary school, the school is obliged to send a report to TUSLA if the total absences over the year are in excess of 20 days. This report must be made irrespective of the reasons why a student is absent. If the school is very concerned about the pattern of a student's absences, then the school is also obliged to inform the TUSLA of these concerns. The school will inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) if a referral is being made to the TUSLA.

Communication

At the core of all relationships in the school is mutual respect and understanding, supported by good communication. Our School Attendance & Participation Policy will only work if there is good communication between the school, parent(s)/guardian(s) and students. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should contact the school if there are any matters of concern. Alternatively parent(s)/guardian(s) may contact the Educational Welfare Officer, or the TUSLA national helpline 1890 363666. All matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 25/11/15.

Signed: **Martin Hawkes**

Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: **Norma O'Brien**

Principal