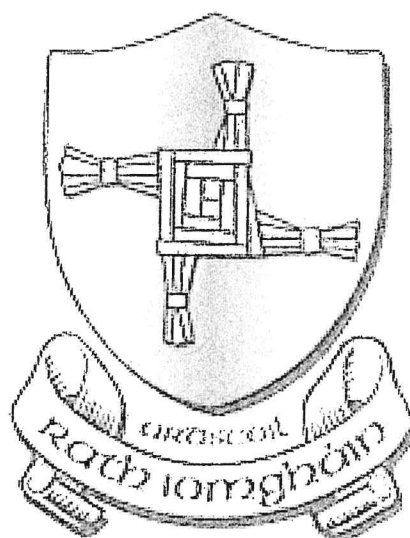


# **Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin**



## **Attendance Policy**

## **List of Abbreviations**

EWO - Education Welfare Officer

EWS - Education Welfare Service

HSCL - Home School Community Liaison

SCP - School Completion Programme

TESS - Tusla Education Support Services

WTO - Working Things Out

## **Mission Statement**

Our school, being a source of pride in the community, aspires to the holistic development of all its students, embracing the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of their lives.

Students should be challenged and encouraged to achieve their full potential through recognition and reward of their effort and responsibilities, allowing them to feel confident in their ability to take their place as valued members of our society. Cultural differences should be respected.

The good name of the school and reputation of the school as an institution must be nurtured and protected for the benefit of all pupils. Each of the partners, teachers, parents, has roles and responsibilities which must be fulfilled if successful educational outcomes are to be achieved.

## **Scope**

This strategy applies to the students, staff and parents of Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin and relates to all aspects of school attendance and punctuality. This strategy is drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, staff, parents and students.

## **Introduction**

A meaningful education provides every student with the best possible start in life and it helps them to mature and develop into conscientious young adults. The purpose of this policy on attendance is to encourage regular school attendance, full participation in the education system and give students good preparation for the responsibilities of third level and employment. Moreover, it endeavours to promote self discipline, commitment and responsibility within the student body. Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin is aware of its responsibilities to those students who experience difficulties and through encouragement and support will assist those students to reach their full potential.

## **Legal Requirement Education (Welfare) Act 2000**

The purpose of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in education for as long as possible. The Educational Welfare Services of

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, operate under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The statutory and school support services of Tusla's Educational Welfare Services work collaboratively with schools and other relevant services to secure better educational outcomes for students.

As a school, we are obliged by law under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to submit reports on school attendance to the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school whichever comes later.

## **Context for the Attendance Policy**

This policy outlines the approach and strategies used in Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin to fulfil the obligations of the school under section 22(1) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 which stipulates 'The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, 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 (hereafter in this section referred to as a "statement of strategy")'.

## **Aim**

The aim of the School Attendance Strategy is to provide an environment that encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually. The best gift that anybody can give a child is to offer a child the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential.

## **Rationale**

- To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the students.
- To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process.
- To ensure that students benefit fully from opportunities that this school offers them.
- To ensure all parents/guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance.
- To ensure the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and other relevant acts.

- Under the Act, Education Welfare Boards have been established to oversee school attendance nationwide and each school has been assigned an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge. The Principal must inform the EWO where any of the following occur:
  - A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days
  - The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty
  - When relevant, a student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal
  - A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly

### **Ardcoil Rath Iomgháins positive approach to Attendance**

- Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.
- Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme.
- The Year Head meets with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue.
- Records of attendance and punctuality are available to parents to view on VShare by logging in using the unique password for that student.
- The school's reward system acknowledges excellent attendance.
- A sense of belonging and connectedness in school is developed through participation in school life and/or extra-curricular activities.
- Attendance is monitored by Principal, Deputy Principals, and Year Heads.
- School Completion Courses are offered to students with poor attendance in an effort to improve the same. These courses include Decider Skills, Why Try, Ignite, Alert, WTO.
- HSCL will make visits to assist in the improvement in school attendance.
- The school participates in the Every School Day Counts programme and awards are given to students with improved and full attendance.
- Attendance Strategy Committee in place which reviews the effectiveness of the Attendance Strategy Plan each year.

### **Roles and Responsibility:**

## Parent/Guardian

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000).
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unnecessary absences. Students who do not have acceptable attendance and punctuality may not be able to attend school activities/ extra curricular activities.
- Where possible, to arrange appointments outside of school time.
- Download the VSware App and provide a detailed note electronically to VSware under your child's/childrens profile explaining absences.
- Medical certificates provided to the school for full and or partial missed days are counted as explained absences and will be recorded on VSware. Once students have exceeded 20 uncertified days the school is obliged to inform Tusla.
- To inform the school in advance of any planned and unavoidable absences from school through the VSware App.
- To avoid taking students on holidays during term time as these absences will count as unexplained absences.
- To provide to the school with reliable and updated contact telephone numbers, alternative 'emergency' numbers and email addresses.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- Signing in and out of school: Parents/ guardians must update the VSware App with an electronic note detailing the reason for a student leaving the school premises early. When arriving late to school students must sign in with the Principal or Deputy Principals. Parents/guardians must update the VSware App before the end of the school day.
- Students taking ill during the school day: Students must go to the Principal or Deputy Principals, who will contact home and update the VSware.
- Student taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises: In the event of a student taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises the school must be notified immediately by a parent / guardian with a phone call then update the VSware App before the end of the school day.

**A student who leaves school without permission from management may be suspended from school.**

## Student

- To arrive at school on time.
- To arrive in class on time avoiding any unnecessary delays.
- To ensure that they have all necessary material required for class.
- Should ensure that they avoid any unnecessary absences from class.

- Students who do not have acceptable attendance and punctuality may not be able to attend school activities/ extra curricular activities.

## **Principal**

- To lead the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy
- To put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- To monitor attendance records regularly.
- To refer to Tusla's Education Welfare Services and the EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensure support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties.
- To inform parents/guardians of referral to Tusla's Education Welfare Services and the EWO.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences withdrawal of students from the school.
- To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.
- To provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.

## **Deputy Principals**

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Class Tutors, administration staff to implement the Attendance Policy.
- To liaise with the Year Head to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Year Head, the students and parents/guardians regarding any
- unauthorized absence from class.
- To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- To provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.

## **Year Head**

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on VShare for the given year.
- To liaise with the tutors and class teachers to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance.
- To meet those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected, and/ or when patterns of absences are developing and notify the Deputy Principal of the same.

- To remind relevant year groups of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage students to take personal responsibility for their own learning.
- To contact home to raise concerns about patterns of poor attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise with the HSCL about patterns of poor attendance and discuss strategies/interventions in an effort to encourage an improvement in attendance.
- To meet along with the Deputy Principal with parents/guardians and or child to discuss poor attendance.
- To document interactions with students, parents/guardians and school management relating to a student's attendance concerns.
- To provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.

### **Home School Community Liaison**

The HSCL Coordinator is a teacher from your child's school who provides support through Home Visits, Parent classes/courses (recreational and educational), Transition Programmes and offers information on other family supports available locally. The HSCL helps to assist with the improvement of educational outcomes for those students most at risk of poor attendance, participation and retention.

- Contact all parents/guardians of first year students' and students new to the school to ease the transition.
- When notified by the Year Head of an attendance issue, the HSCL will contact parents/guardians and may arrange a home visit.
- Liaises with School Completion Programme Coordinator to provide programmes to promote and encourage school attendance. These courses include Decider Skills, Why Try, Ignite, Alert, WTO.
- Supports parents/guardians where there are school avoidance issues.
- Encourages partnership with parents/guardians through the provision of courses.

### **Class Tutor**

- To record the attendance on VShare of the tutor class at 8.46 am each morning.
- Help identify students that may have poor attendance concerns and inform Year Head.
- Get to know the students in their tutor group, read out important school updates, wellbeing and ethos announcements and acknowledge student achievements, both curricular and extracurricular.
- Develop a positive school community, school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.



## **Class Teacher**

- To record the attendance accurately of every class, every day on VSware.
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.
- To notify the Principal/Deputy Principals where a student is absent from class without permission.
- To alert Year Head and relevant Deputy Principal if there are concerns about student absences.
- Develop a positive and welcoming classroom environment, further promoting the schools ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.

## **Procedures to be followed if a student is absent from School**

- If a student is marked absent on VSware first thing in the morning parents/guardians will receive a notification from the school noting that he/she is absent. If a parent/guardian believes that their son/daughter is in school they are asked to contact the office immediately.
- Where a student is absent from school, parents/guardians are obliged by the Education Welfare Act (2000) to provide a note explaining the absence. This explanation **must** be added electronically to VSware.

## **Recording and reporting procedures to promote Attendance and Retention**

- Students' attendance will be recorded on VSware in every class.
- We will send a notification to parents if a student has an unexplained absence on VSware in the morning. If the system is down the notification will be sent as soon as possible.
- If any teacher is taking students out of their normal class for any activity they will mark that student as being on a school activity (SCH) on VSware system. This means that when a teacher takes the roll call on VSware they will see who has a legitimate reason to be out.
- When arriving late to school students must sign in with the Principal or Deputy Principals. Parents/guardians must update the VSware App before the end of the school day.
- Students who need to leave unexpectedly during the school day must go to the Principal or Deputy Principals, who will contact home and update the VSware.
- Year Heads/Relevant Deputy Principal will inform the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) if there is a pattern emerging or a concern regarding attendance.

- The Attendance strategy committee will compile a VSware report at the end of each month showing the number of late mornings, attendance and the number of times they left early for every student. This will be analysed by the Year Heads and HSCL.
- Where a concerning pattern of poor attendance begins to develop the parents/guardians will be contacted.
- Once students have missed 10 days in school, a standard non attendance letter will be sent home and the parents/ guardians may be invited into the school to attend a meeting .
- Once students have missed 15 days a second standard non attendance letter will be sent home informing parents/guardians that once a student has missed 20 days the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed.
- During this process, Year Heads/Relevant Deputy Principal may request parents/guardians to attend a further meeting to discuss poor attendance of their student.

**When a student misses 20 days the Principal will make a referral to Tusla Education Support Services (TESS).**



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin
Address	Demesne, Rathangan, Co. Kildare
Roll Number	70730J
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin has high expectations for all students regarding attendance. We as a school strive to work in partnership with parents/ guardians and students to encourage full attendance.
The school's high expectations around attendance	Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin strives to have as much as practicable full day attendance for all students.
How attendance will be monitored	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>(1) Morning tutorial class. This is done electronically via our school Management Information System (VShare).</li><li>(2) Attendance is recorded electronically on VShare.</li><li>(3) Morning notifications are sent to parents/guardians where a student is marked unexplained absence.</li><li>(4) When arriving late to school students must sign in with the Principal or Deputy Principals. Parents/guardians must update the VShare App before the end of the school day.</li><li>(5) Parents are required to add a note electronically to VShare under your child's/childrens profile to explain your child's absence from school.</li><li>(6) Ardscoil Rath Iomgháin requests parents/guardians to provide medical certificates for certified illnesses. Medical certificates provided for full and or partial missed days are counted as explained absences and will be recorded on VShare. Such absences are not referred to TUSLA.</li><li><b>(7) Holidays during the school academic year are not acknowledged as a valid reason for student absences and this will count towards unexplained absences.</b></li><li>(8) Students who need to leave unexpectedly during the school day must go to the Principal or Deputy Principals, who will contact home and update the VShare.</li></ol>
Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:	<b><u>Target setting and targets:</u></b> As a school, we recognise that second and fifth year can

- Target setting and targets
- The whole-school approach
- Promoting good attendance
- Responding to poor attendance

be a time of poor attendance. We propose to increase attendance by 2% in the current academic year. This will be carried out across all year groups but specifically targeting second and fifth year.

**Whole School Approach:**

Promote improved attendance through;

- (a) Parent/ Guardian awareness.
- (b) Student assembly and tutorial group.
- (c) Student incentive.
- (d) Inclusion of 'days missed' and 'partial days' on school reports where possible.

**Promoting good culture:**

- (a) Every School Day Counts where students and parents/ guardians are made aware of the importance of full attendance.
- (b) Attendance awards at the school's annual awards day.
- (c) HSCL promotes good attendance during designated periods and prizes given to students.

**Responding to poor attendance:**

- (a) Poor attendance identified by the Tutor/ Yearhead and Attendance Strategy Committee.
- (b) Our Attendance Strategy Committee monitors and updates a target list.
- (c) Attendance Strategy Committee will follow up on this target list by a variety of methods;
  - (i) Phone call made and documented on VShare
  - (ii) Standard non attendance letters (If there is a 10 day absenteeism by October midterm, a letter is sent home, 15 days absence second letter sent home). Letters are documented on Vshare.
  - (iii) HSCL Home Visit
  - (iv) In school meeting with parents and student
  - (v) Individual in-school targeted support (attendance cards, reward system, mentoring, counselling, guidance counselling, programmes with School Completion Programme Coordinator)
  - (vi) School Completion courses offered to students with poor attendance: Decider Skills, Why Try, Ignite, Alert, WTO. These courses are facilitated by the school Completion Programme Coordinator where students are divided into small groups. In some cases, courses/meetings may be offered to individual students.

	<p>In the event that the above does not result in an improvement in attendance a referral is made to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) of TESS.</p> <p>(vii) Referral to TESS after 20 days absence. The school is obliged to refer to the Education Welfare Service.</p>
School roles in relation to attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Tutors- responsible for registration each morning.</li> <li>(2) Individual class teachers - take roll calls in each class and notify yearhead/ Deputy Principal and Principal if concerned about a student's attendance.</li> <li>(3) Specific coded options for recording absences on VSware to categorise absences.</li> <li>(4) Yearhead - Overall monitoring of a given year groups attendance. Link with parents/ guardians and Attendance Strategy Committee regarding attendance concerns.</li> <li>(5) HSCL Coordinator - Monitoring of target groups and linking with Yearheads/Deputy Principals/Principals/SCP Coordinator/ parents/guardians.</li> <li>(6) Link with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).</li> <li>(7) Deputy Principals/ Principal - Overall responsibility for implementing the above.</li> </ol>
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Link with primary schools- collection of educational passports and gather local/ family knowledge.</li> <li>(2) SCP Cluster - part of the Canal's cluster with four other DEIS Post primary schools. Network and share best practice regarding attendance, participation and retention.</li> </ol>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Attendance Strategy Committee - made up of Principal/ Deputy Principal, relevant Year Heads and HSCL teacher and SCP Coordinator.</li> <li>(2) Tutor/ Yearhead - monitor specific classes and year group's attendance.</li> <li>(3) Teaching staff - marking VSware accurately, notifying management of absence concerns.</li> </ol>
Review process and date for review	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Monitor and measure improvement of attendance based on baseline data.</li> <li>(2) Annual review of the overall strategy by the Attendance Strategy Committee in May of each year.</li> </ol>
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	

*Muller*  
18/5/23