

# **St. Munchin's College** **Attendance Policy**

## **Educational Philosophy**

St. Munchin's College is a Diocesan Voluntary Catholic Secondary School for boys only under the patronage of the Bishop of Limerick.

The College motto—

***'Veritas in Caritate'***—is taken from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians:  
***'If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways'***

St. Munchin's College is a caring community, sharing the Christian ideal, endeavouring to create and sustain an environment through which each of our students can grow in all ways— aesthetically, emotionally, intellectually, morally, physically, socially and spiritually.

Staff, students and parents, in partnership, actively promotes an atmosphere that protects and respects the dignity and self-esteem of each individual.

By developing an environment that is favourable to learning and is committed to a just and equitable treatment for all, the College Community tries to ensure that its students are given an education and a value system which will enable them to become responsible members of an ever- changing society.

In keeping with the aims of its founders, the College is also mindful of its role in encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

## **Scope**

### **Basic Principles**

- This policy is a school-wide policy, for implementation by all staff, students, parents and Board of Management.
- This policy strives to set out the basic principles upon which the School Attendance Strategy will be implemented, sustained and evaluated in our school.
- This policy itself has been developed (through a partnership) with the Board of Management, parents, staff, and students

## **Rationale**

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation such as:
- The Education Act 1998
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 (Amended by the Child and Family Affairs Act 2013)

### **The Education Welfare Act 2000 :**

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of students attending school

- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer/Tusla of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our students' learning
- In this school we are educators first. Education is the foundation stone upon which a child's development for later life is built. Parents are the primary educators and as such are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children receive the education which they have a right to and deserve. The school is here to support and enhance this education.
- Attendance at school and full participation in school life is therefore extremely important.
- Research has shown that poor attendance and poor participation are directly linked to low educational achievement and early school leaving.

#### **Creating an Environment where students want to come to school:**

- The school wants to work in partnership with parents to ensure that an environment is created where children want and look forward to coming to school and participating in school life.
- The school wants to create conditions where children see that it is in their own interest to come to school regularly.
- The school and parents have certain obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 regarding attendance and participation.

## **Aims of the Strategy**

#### **This Strategy Statement will:**

- Raise awareness of and develop a positive approach to the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality
- Promote the early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance and punctuality. (Phone call home on third day of consecutive absence)
- Seek to reduce the rate of absenteeism and encourage full attendance where possible.
- Identify pupils at risk of leaving school early.
- Promote and foster positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensure that parent(s)/guardian(s) would appreciate the vital role that they play in their child's school attendance.
- Ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation i.e. The Education Act 1998, The Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) / Guidelines from the NEWB.
- Assist towards developing a school environment where all students feel welcome in the school, and where their educational and personal needs are met within the resources provided to the school.

- Implement the monitoring and recording aspects of the School's Attendance Strategy
- Highlight the importance of regular attendance
- Encourage regular attendance and participation in school life
- Encourage good communication between parents and the school.
- Establish procedures for the monitoring of attendance and non-attendance
- Establish procedures for attendance record-keeping for the school, students, parents and TUSLA
- Develop working partnerships between the school and other relevant Agencies and services, such as TUSLA.
- Support students and parents where there are attendance problems

## Creating a Positive Approach to Attendance and Punctuality

- Good attendance is promoted in the school by a **culture of high expectations**. Such expectations are fostered by the overall school climate and classroom climate. Teachers are informed in so far as is possible about students who may have **low self-esteem** and who do not have belief in their own academic ability. (This information is often derived from the Primary school or indeed parents/guardians). Such students will inevitably have low expectations for themselves, are fearful of the embarrassment of doing poorly at school or feel they have little control over their lives. In all cases teachers in the College strive to create daily successes for every student in their care.
- **Differentiation** is foremost in every teacher's classroom given that the majority of classes are mixed ability. Teachers in the College have high expectations for their pupils an effect that operates over and above the students' own expectations of themselves.
- **Appraisal:** Teachers encourage the student's self-belief by having **one to one conversations** with pupils at risk , by **appraising the work** completed by all students so that **praise becomes a part of classroom practice** and thereby reduces the possibility of embarrassment should a teacher praise a student's work. At both Junior and Senior Cycle **academic interviews** are held with students in an effort to identify areas of school life that the individual student may need help with. High expectations are also viewed in the high volume of students across the board who are encouraged to take higher level papers. This information is gleaned from annual exam analysis carried out by all Departments as part of their Departments Evaluation.
- **A sense of belonging and connectedness** in school is developed through participation in school life. This is fostered through recognition of the fact that all students have varying areas of interest. Thus schools sports, music, lunch time clubs etc. attempt to cater for the vast array of interests that all of our students appear to have an interest in. Enrichment activities (music, chess, art therapy, games club, German club, meditation room lunch time space, walking club before school and at break times) and sporting activities (both team and individual) strive to support students in both their academic achievements and their social and personal development. Both activities (enrichment and

sporting) act to support the students in their school attendance difficulties and in particular when they are scheduled at times of the school week when patterns of poor attendance are apparent.

- **Leadership Development Programmes:** Within the school there are several opportunities for the students to practice their leadership roles. The College has a very active Student's Council, a vibrant Green School's Committee and Transition Year students also participate in An Taisce. As a result of the above programmes students feel empowered to have a say in their school community and improves students' engagement with school life, with follow on benefits for school attendance. Very often, students with poor attendance feel disconnected from school leadership structures and so such students are given encouragement by their Tutors, Year Heads, Deputy Principal and Principal to participate.
- **Practical Business and Enterprise Skills:** Students in the College are exposed to enterprise programmes such as Mini Company, Young Social Innovators and First Aid courses. The above programmes focus on building practical business/ enterprise and life skills which can support students who find it difficult to engage with the formal curriculum. The acquisition of practical business and enterprise skills support a student's life skills, which can have positive benefits for school attendance.
- **Homework Classes and After School Study:** Students that are identified by their class teachers/Tutors/ Year Heads as needing extra support in relation to the completion of homework are timetabled for a homework class (One per day). In this class they receive assistance from a teacher within the SEN Department. After school and night study is also provided to all students. Where students cannot afford to pay the fee the school will sponsor that student to ensure that every student is afforded the opportunity to complete their homework in a quiet and studious environment. In addition one week of Christmas and Easter Supervised Study is provided for our Leaving Cert and Junior Cert Students. This provides a structure for exam students during the holidays and gives them the opportunity to complete 5 hours of structured study (daily) in a studious environment.
- **Enrichment/Sporting Activities:** At Junior Cycle Digital Media and Coding are two new Short Courses offered to first year students. In Transition Year Digital Media and Film Studies along with Driver Theory Test are also available to students. Such programmes are extremely popular with our students particularly those who find it difficult to engage with the formal curriculum. A combination of academic and vocational skills provides a more appropriate skills mix for some of our students and the fact they are happy in school makes school a more enticing place to be.
- **"One Good Adult".** As part of our well-being programme which has been in place for many years now, we encourage all students to identify one good adult within the school community whom they can rely on and trust. With regards to first year students they are encouraged to identify that one good adult as their Tutor, Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal from September to Christmas. Following the Christmas break all first year students

are then asked to identify their one good adult as at this point students have become familiar with their teachers and have learned to trust a particular person. Every student in the school has their “One Good Adult” a person within the school community that they can turn to should they encounter a problem or a difficulty.

- **A comprehensive early detection system** is maintained with a child’s parents/ guardians by notifying them by **phone call** on the third consecutive day’s absence noted by the class tutor. Once the student has accumulated 5 days absence a letter is sent home via post. Once again when the student accumulates 10/15/20 days school of absence we will write to the parents. We fervently believe that early detection and the signalling of a potential problem is key to enhancing school attendance
- **Caring Environment** – We aim to ensure that children are taught in a safe, secure and caring environment where their intellectual, physical and spiritual development is catered for. Our Pastoral Care Team are always vigilant to the needs of more vulnerable students. All of our staff consider themselves to be part of the Pastoral Care Team (teachers, ancillary staff etc.) and so the students at risk have a greater chance of being detected and thus of obtaining help.
- **Anti -Bullying Policy:** We always remain vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early and action taken to counteract these barriers to attendance. **Our Anti-Bullying Policy** is one where students are encouraged to **Reject, React and Report** any instances of bullying. Through research (prior to implementing our Anti Bullying Policy) we found that bullying was a big factor in deterring students from attending school. Students are explicitly taught the main elements of this policy repeatedly throughout first year. If the student trusts and believes that their issue will be dealt with then the student will be happier and absence days due to being bullied will be curbed.
- Over the past six years we have worked diligently to ensure that our students are given ample opportunities (through regular class surveys) to report bullying. The overall aim here is the creation of a safe environment where students are happy to be and feel safe.
- **Special Educational Needs** – pupils requiring support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems put into place in the timetable so as to ensure that students benefit from SEN as soon as is possible.
- **#Soundeffects:** We emphasise **positive achievements** (academic, contribution to school life, sporting, music, co-curricular) and do all we can to enhance self-esteem. We have introduced a new initiative (2017/18) referred to as **#soundeffects** to acknowledge the positive contributions that our students make to their peers lives on a daily basis and to their teacher’s lives on a daily basis. Actions considered to be “Sound” are written up on a post it by the teacher and this action is then displayed in our **#Soundeffects** cabinet on the main corridor of the school. This initiative positively acknowledges and affirms all of the good actions (“sound actions”) made by teenagers towards their peers and their teachers witnessed (by teachers) on a daily basis.

- **Transition from Primary to Post Primary Programme**– New pupils and their parents are supported by a comprehensive Transition Programme. Students are met regularly by their class tutors and by members of the Pastoral Care Team. The Programme Includes:
- **Formal Visits to Primary Schools:**As a school we coordinate **formal visits to the feeder schools** and have an open day for parents, students and the staff of the feeder schools. This ensures that parents know how to best relay information about the child to the school – e.g. the individual to whom they should talk to – and assure them that such communication is welcome
- **Parents:** Parents are **invited in on the first day** (in the afternoon) to assist their First Year child with his books for his locker. While this may seem insignificant it is extremely instrumental in building relationships between the school community and parents. This we feel is important because First Year parents can often be apprehensive themselves about secondary school so any activity that can alleviate that apprehension is a positive. This partnership between parents and the school community is underpinned by sections 26 and 27 of the **Education Act 1998**, which place an onus on the School’s Board of Management to promote parent and student involvement in the school. We believe that parental involvement in all aspects of school life should be promoted and encouraged. Involvement leads to parents viewing the school positively, which in turn leads to their children having a positive attitude towards school and thus a greater respect for our policies and procedures including attendance. Maintaining regular contact with parents and involving them in all aspects of school life is essential to the building of trust and good relationships.
- **Testing:** Our **comprehensive testing of first year students** is undertaken to ensure that teachers have a clear picture of the student’s ability in various subject areas. This ensures that teachers are informed of a student’s areas of strength and weakness and can differentiate accordingly. Such testing is carried out in the months prior to September (March, April and May). **In this way the students have become familiar with the school building prior to their first day in September.** This is significant in that it eliminates all of the nervousness and tension invested in that “First Day at Secondary School”. By the time the first year student attends the school officially on his first day, he will have visited the school for the open night and well as attending the school on 3 further occasions to complete assessments. This familiarity is important for all students but particularly for students with ASD who need to know what their new environment will look like.
- **Communication with Primary School:** We have liaised with feeder primary schools and have **gathered relevant, up-to-date information** from the appropriate partners to facilitate the application for suitable resources as early as possible. Resources do not automatically transfer and it important to note that parental consent is required to access and use professional reports that may be needed for such applications. The need for this kind of communication and consultation is noted by the National Council for Curriculum and

Assessment (NCCA) in its Guidelines for the Teaching of Students with General Learning Disabilities.

- **Information Packs/ Leaflets/ Induction Booklets for Parents;** The school has provided **information packs and information booklets** which provide details on subject curricula, extra-curricular activities, resources, school procedures a version for both students and parents. Such information packs provide information on the various professional roles to the primary school staff, parents and students, along with any relevant procedures – for example, the roles of the year head, class tutor, SEN coordinator, special needs assistant, etc. We find that this is extremely important as all schools vary so it is essential that personnel in our feeder schools are familiar with our procedures here in the College. This creates a more effective platform on which our transition programme can be built.
- **Induction Activities;**We have developed specific **induction activities** during the first week after enrolment which is covered during class at tutor time. We have also introduced a new induction booklet “**Stepping Up**” for students to fill out daily so as to improve their understanding of what it is to be a post primary student.
- **Mentoring;** Over the last few years the school has introduced a **mentoring system** whereby for example older students from Transition Year take some responsibility for first years within the induction week and for the school year.
- **Name Badges:** All first year students have **name badges** as well as **name badges for teachers**. This is useful for first year students in the first few weeks to familiarize themselves with the teachers and vice versa.
- **Special Educational Needs:** Our **SEN Team Provide opportunities for subject teachers to learn about specific needs and establish a formalized system (one note) for the dissemination of appropriate information to teachers at the start of the year and during the school year**. In school CPD days are set aside for our SEN team to update our staff on new teaching techniques and methodologies that come on stream to enhance the teaching experiences of students with specific learning difficulties. This ensures an inclusive classroom for all.
- **SPHE:** As part of the SPHE programme a module on Induction to Secondary school clearly explains both school and class organisation (e.g. We explain how to read timetables; Explain and model how to record homework in a journal; Explain about the use of lockers, canteen and other such day-to-day organizational issues)
- **Colour Coding;**We have introduced **colour coding** of timetables and books to help in assisting the students with organisational skills
- **Mass:** The school celebrates **an Opening of the Year Mass**, which focuses on the positives of being in a new school and welcomes the first years to our school community while welcoming back the existing members of our community.
- **Relevant Curriculum:** The school **offers ‘taster’ subjects** to be offered during first year (September to Christmas). A parent information evening is

held to explain the main concepts involved in each subject and also to identify to parents the specific skill set required to study specific subjects.

- **Empathetic Personnel:** If a difficulty persists, the relevant school personnel meet with parents and a strategy/strategies, pertinent to the needs of the individual child, is/are agreed and implemented.

## Content of Policy (Roles of the main stakeholders)

### Students

- The school expects **all** students registered in the school to attend all timetabled classes every day.
- Students must present absence notes to their Class Tutors on the day that they return to school.
- It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation (e.g. notes) and present them to their class tutor for all appointments that will prevent him from attending a class. Such documentation should be presented prior to his release from school.
- Should a student arrive late to school and thereby are absent from tutor time (this is the time that the roll is taken) they must go to their tutors room to inform the tutor that they are if fact present. **This is the only way that the absence recorded at tutor time can be amended to a late.** If students do not inform their tutor then the absence remains and this absence is the code that is recorded. A student's presence or absence at school is read from what is recorded at tutor time so it is imperative that students **ensure that an absence is changed to a late.** The tutor will not seek out the student.
- It is the responsibility of the student who was absent from tutor time to inform their tutor that they were late as opposed to being absent. This can be clearly seen if you view your son's attendance on VS ware. The red colour denotes a full day's absence. A yellow colour denotes a partial absence i.e. absent from one or more classes throughout the day. You can view what classes the student has missed by clicking on the yellow day and this will pull up for you the classes that your son has not attended. If the first class in the morning (tutor time) is marked absent then your son is marked as absent for the day despite being marked as present for the remainder of his classes. This is due to the fact that our **roll call** is taken at tutor time (8:45-8:55).
- Students arriving to school after 9:35am must sign in through the main reception. The secretary present will ask the student to sign in manually and she will then amend the absent record logged at tutor time to a late entry. The time that the student signed in will also be logged on VS ware.
- If a student returns to school during class time at any stage throughout the day (e.g. returning from a dental appointment) then the student must sign in at reception.

### Parents:

If a student is absent then the school will require an explanation in writing from the parent. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) occupy a pivotal role in promoting good school attendance. Parents have a huge influence on their child's school attendance. Those parents who are engaged with the school and feel part of the school community will have a greater commitment to education. Therefore the College consistently encourages parental involvement and views it as of paramount importance to students' well- being and success generally and, in particular, their attendance at school.

(Summary of Key Points)

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- Notifying the school if their child cannot attend for any reason
- Working with the school and Education Welfare Service to resolve any attendance issues
- Ensuring that their children understand that **parents support** good school attendance
- Discussing planned absences with the school
- Refraining if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time (please see below under heading Holidays)
- Showing an interest in their child's school day and their children's homework
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities
- Praising and encouraging their son's achievements
- Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school of their child(ren). (*Please see below for further details*)
- Ensuring, insofar as possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about a child's school absence or other related school matters

**Legal Responsibility:**

- If a student is under 16 or he has not yet completed 3 years at post-primary school, it is the **legal responsibility of parents/ guardians** to ensure that the student attends school every day, and that if he is absent, that the parent/guardian explain to the school why he has been absent.

**Referral to Tusla:**

- If a student is absent for a total of 20 days or more during the school year, the school is obliged in law to report this to TUSLA. **This report must be made irrespective of the reasons your son is absent.**

**Procedure for when a child reaches 20 days absence**

- It is school policy that when a child has been absent for 20 days the Deputy Principal writes to the students parent(s)/guardian(s), notifying them and drawing their attention to their child's level of absence.
- This letter is downloaded directly from VS ware. A sample letter is attached to this policy for clarity.
- The parent(s)/guardian(s) are invited to contact the school and to arrange a meeting to discuss same if necessary.
- When a child has been absent for 20 days the school notifies the Educational Welfare Services section of Tusla - Child and Family Agency.
- The School has no discretion over handing this information on to Tusla – Child and Family Agency, regardless of the reason for absence.
- However, Tusla – Child and Family Agency will take account of the explanation of absences due to illness, bereavement or other such circumstances, provided evidence of, or testimony of which, has been provided by the parent(s)/guardian(s), in the form of a medical certificate or a note/letter from themselves to the school.

- Tusla – Child and Family Agency request an Annual Report at the end of each school year.
- If the school is very concerned about the pattern of your son's absences, then the school is also obliged to inform TUSLA.
- The school will always inform you if a report is being made to TUSLA

#### **Procedures for Serious Absences:**

- Where class tutors observe a pattern of poor attendance emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents at an early stage. The school firmly believes that poor attendance patterns are more easily altered if attention is drawn to them at an early stage.
- **The Educational Welfare Act, 2000** requires schools to notify the Educational Welfare Services section of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) of pupils who have been absent for 20 days and who are under the age of 16. However, in this school, we monitor the attendance patterns of children from the start of the school year, in order to seek to address the matter and deal with it as early as possible.
- Where the School has cause for concern over a pupil's attendance for whatever reason and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level and in collaboration with the home a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service after an EWS Pre-Referral Checklist has first been completed.

#### **Responding to Poor Attendance :**

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) states: 'The parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each day'.

Strategies used in the event of poor attendance :

- Contacting parents on a formal basis when a child is absent regularly i.e. 5/10/15 and 20 days and arranging a meeting with them.
- Discussing school attendance with the student (where appropriate), with a view to finding an explanation for the absence and thereby a solution.
- In the event of prolonged absence/irregular attendance, the school will request a meeting with the parent to try to identify and resolve any barriers to attendance.
- Contacting the N.E.W.B. / E.W.O.

#### **School Calendar and Timetable**

- Please see the School calendar (in Student Journal and on School web site) for the opening and closing times of the school, and the school holidays. Also contained is information about parent-teacher meetings, exam timetables and staff meetings etc.
- In advance of Parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings, parents will be sent a reminder through e- mail.

- Parents need to ensure that they are familiar with their son's class timetable. This can easily be accessed through a student's own unique password and username for VS ware.
- All students will be expected to be in school during the normal school hours each day

### **Medical Appointments**

- If a student has permission (from a parent/ guardian) to leave the school early for e.g. a medical appointment, parents/ guardians need to ensure that they have given him a note in his School Journal. On leaving the school he will, in the presence of the parent/ guardian, need to sign out at the School Office.

**Please see the School Code of Behaviour for the procedures which will be followed if a student leaves the school premises without permission**

### **Holidays**

- Please do not take students out of school for holidays. This has the potential to damage his education. It is very difficult for any student to catch up with what has been missed when out of school for an extended holiday.
- There are, of course, exceptional circumstances where parents may have to take their son out of school during term time. However, you should be aware of the potential risk to his education, and therefore these situations should be kept to an absolute minimum
- Please note also that a report will have to be made to TUSLA if the total absences over the year are in excess of 20 days OR if the school is concerned

### **Contacting the School**

- Parents should contact the school as soon as possible to inform us that their son is absent. This can be done by phone to the Secretary's office (061-348922)
- When a student returns to school please ensure that he has a written note in his School Journal, *with an explanation for his absence. At the back of the school journal there are specific notes that you can use to explain your sons absence.*

### **Explanation for Absence**

- If a student has been absent with e.g. sickness for a number of days, he should have a note from the parent/guardian in his School Journal with an explanation for his absence. This note should be shown to the Class Tutor during the Roll Call (Tutor Time) on his first day back.
- If a student has been absent for more than 10 days and has attended a doctor, parents/guardians are asked to send us a doctor's note. Alternatively parents/guardians can make an appointment to see his Class Tutor/Year Head.

- Good communication is vital, and we would prefer if parents/guardians would keep us up-to-date about their son's condition.
- Please keep in touch with (the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Class Tutor etc. ... 061-348922).
- If the school is not satisfied with the level of information about a student's extended absence, then the school may have no option but to make a report to TUSLA.
- Should a parent/ guardian need assistance in ensuring that their son attends school they should contact the school immediately and we will be able to support you. Alternatively you may contact the Educational Welfare Officer (Ms Emma Fahy).

## **Principal**

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students
- To monitor attendance records regularly
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences or withdrawal from the school
- To remind students/parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress

## **Deputy Principal**

- To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Class Tutors, Administration Staff and outside agencies to implement the School Policy.
- To liaise with the Year Head and Pastoral Care Team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Year Head, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.
- To make reports to the EWO as required by the Education Act 2000
- To meet with the Parents of students who have been identified as having difficulties with attending school.
- To run an absence report on a monthly basis
- To e mail relevant Year Heads and Tutors a list of absent letters that were posted to parents on a monthly basis

## **Class Tutor**

- To record roll call each morning at tutor time 8:45am (on VS ware)
- To check absence notes from parents/guardians and to store these safely for the duration of the year.
- To amend daily, a student who was marked as absent but who subsequently attended school late.
- To liaise with the Year Head/ Deputy Principal in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance.

## **Year Head**

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on VS Ware for the given year.
- To liaise with the Pastoral Care Team/ Deputy Principal/ Principal to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- To meet, along with the Deputy Principal, 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 to notify the Deputy Principal of same.
- To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

## **Class Teacher**

- To record the attendance of every class every day. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will take a class registration on VS Ware.
- If there is a technical difficulty the class teacher will record the attendance manually on paper and submit to the School Reception
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality. Students that are regularly late to class will be sanctioned in line with our late detention procedures. The Class Teacher must fill in the name of the student they are placing on late detention on the staff portal.

## **Administrative Staff**

- To input attendance data from Class Teachers when required.
- To administer the signing in and out of students. (To record SO on students profile that have signed out )
- To record students who arrive to school after 9:35am as late and document the time on the individual students VS Ware profile.

## **Recording of Non Attendance**

Each student is registered on PPOD (Post-Primary Online Database)

- The Class Tutor will record each student's attendance or non-attendance at school during tutor time using VS ware before the first timetabled class in the morning.
- These records are registered on the school VS ware computer system. For the remainder of the school day, students are registered for each class throughout the day. A record of late arrival is also registered on VS ware.

- If a student is late he should on arrival go directly to his Tutor with the written explanation from the parent/guardian and have the time of arrival recorded. He will not then be recorded as absent. If he is late without permission from a parent/guardian, this will be recorded and dealt with under the Code of Behaviour (Thurs Afternoon Detention).

## Reminder Letters

- At the end of each month an attendance crosstab is run. If a student has been absent for 5 or more days then parents will receive a letter from us here in the College.
- When he has been absent for 10/15/20 days letters are also issued.
- Parents may be asked to make an appointment with the school (after 10 days absence), and reminded of their responsibilities under the law, and the school's reporting responsibilities under the law.

## Communication

- Parental Support - It is our policy to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parent(s)/guardian(s) in their role as primary educators of their children.
- The Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head, Tutors and Teachers are always available, **on an appointment basis**, to meet parent(s)/guardian(s), to discuss pupils' school absences.
- Attendance is one of the issues addressed for parents when their child starts a new school year and is highlighted in the new school year introductory e mail. In addition attendance is brought to the attention of parents at every Parent Information Evening as well as demonstrations as to how a parent can access their son's attendance on VS ware.
- Parents are made aware on different occasions of the requirements of the Education Welfare Act (Letters home/ e mails/ Parent Information Evenings)
- Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance (i.e. newsletters, parent/ teacher meetings etc.). An awareness of the importance of good attendance by the children is kept to the forefront in the classroom by the individual class teachers as well as by SEN teachers.
- The school has developed an excellent relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (EWB) personnel and there is on-going communication in relation to children who are at risk with our local Educational Welfare Officer. Regular contact is maintained between the school and the EWO.
- The school also liaises with other bodies such as Barnardos, Extern, CAMHS, TUSLA and NEPS to coordinate a comprehensive strategy regarding pupils who may be encountering a range of difficulties which may pose as a barrier to their attendance.
- In general, we would advise regular (parental) contact with the school to keep us up to date. If the school is aware of the reasons for absence, and is satisfied with these reasons, there will be less difficulty for all concerned.
- Our primary concern is the student's educational welfare.

- At the core of all relationships in the school is mutual respect and understanding, supported by good communication.
- Our School Attendance Policy will only work if there is good communication between the school, the parents and the students.
- Parents should feel free at any time to contact the school if there are any matters of concern. All matters will be dealt with in the strictest confidentiality.

## Contact Details

The relevant school personnel are:

**School Secretary:** Tel 061-348922

**Class Tutors:** Listed in School Journal

**Year Heads:** Listed in School Journal

**Any member of staff can be contacted through e mail. The same convention is used for all staff members i.e. first initial of name followed by surname @stmunchinscollege.ie.**

**Deputy Principal :** Ms. Lorraine Shiels (lshiels@stmunchinscollege.ie)

**Principal:** Mr. David Quilter (dquilter@stmunchinscollege.ie)

## Target Setting - A Whole School Approach :

St. Munchin's College promotes and encourages full attendance by all of our students. This ethos is communicated to all members of our school community and promoted through :

- ✓ Parent Information Evenings targeted at each year group (Each meeting takes place at the start of the academic year)
  - ✓ Parent Teacher meetings.
  - ✓ B.O.M. meetings.
  - ✓ Staff meetings.
  - ✓ Newsletters/ Information Leaflets
  - ✓ The daily recording of attendance/non-attendance by school staff.
  - ✓ Attendance letter sent out each month and excel spread sheets sent to relevant Tutors and Year Heads to monitor attendance closely
- This policy will be implemented by the Board in a spirit of partnership through consultation with the school partners, within the available resources of the school.
  - The use of school resources is at all times subject to the permission of the Board of Management.
  - The Board of Management, in consultation with the staff and the Parents' Council (and Students Council) will establish criteria upon which the on-going success of the partnership approach is measurable.

## Success criteria may include:

- ✓ Attendance rates improved
- ✓ Improved explanations for absence
- ✓ Improved timekeeping.
- ✓ Happy, confident and well-adjusted students
- ✓ Positive parental feedback
- ✓ Tutor/Teacher/Year Head/ Deputy Principal/ Principal vigilance
- ✓ Overall participation in school – enrichment activities, extra-curricular activities etc.
- ✓ Homework / study: improvements, more participation
- ✓ Less children leaving school before completing the Leaving Certificate
- ✓ Improved communication with parents
- ✓ More awareness amongst parents on the negative impact that absences can have on their son's education and overall development

The Board of Management will carry out monitoring of the policy. Teaching Staff, Parents Council and Students' Council will be central to this monitoring and any evaluation.

The Board of Management in consultation with the school partners will, after one year, and every two years thereafter, review this policy. It will be the responsibility of the Principal to bring the Policy before the Board for review at the appropriate time.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Next Review date\_\_\_\_\_