



Rath Dara Community College

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Rath Dara Community College is committed to ensuring that all students benefit fully from the education provided by regular and punctual attendance at school. Rath Dara Community College creates an environment that encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually. Full Attendance and Punctuality enable a student to fulfil his or her potential. This policy applies to the students, staff and parents of Rath Dara Community College and relates to all aspects of school attendance and punctuality.

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.

The Education Welfare Act of 2000 places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents to provide for the optimum attendance of every student. Under this act, Education Welfare Boards have been established to oversee school attendance nationwide and each school has been assigned an Education Welfare Officer whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge.

The College Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer 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
- 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/they are registered, not attending school regularly.

A positive approach to attendance and punctuality:

Good attendance in Rath Dara Community College is fostered by encouraging each student to take responsibility for his/her/their own learning and to achieve their full potential through regular presence in class.

Throughout the academic year, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance and continual lateness.

The above is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme whereby the Year Head meets with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue. Reports to Parents/Guardians include an account of attendance for the period in question.



Responsibilities and Roles:

Students:

- must attend tutorial to register their attendance before 8:45am by their tutor/class teacher. This is recorded on the school administration system, including Vsware which is available to parents on the parents app.
- If absent the student must present, on the first day of their return, a parental note in their journal explaining the reason for their non-attendance.
- Must attend scheduled classes every day and be on time unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- If leaving school, students must present a parental note to be signed by their Year Head. Students must sign out at the school office, giving the time of departure and the reason for leaving. Students can only sign out once their Year Head has informed the office of their permission.
- In cases of absence, it is the student's responsibility to catch up on the work missed at the earliest opportunity.
- If a student feels unwell during the day, they must inform their Tutor /Year Head who will request the office to call home. Students will not be allowed leave if given prior permission by a parent/guardian until the office has confirmed permission with a phone call.

Parent/Guardian:

- parents must make whatever arrangements necessary to ensure that their child attends school on time every day during the school year.
- Parents/guardians should not withdraw students from school during the academic year, unless for extraordinary reasons. Where possible parents should ensure that medical or other appointments and family holidays take place outside school hours/academic year.
- Parents should inform the school of the absence on the day of the absence by calling the school or completing the absence section on the school app. **When the student returns to school note is to be written on the 'Explanation for Absence' slips in the journal and presented to their class teachers on return.**
- A medical certificate should also be presented where applicable.
- Parents/guardians should monitor punctuality and attendance to school by checking the journal/Vsware for late attendance and absence.
- Parents/guardians should also respond to a school text that will be sent out when a late or absence occurs.
- Set high standards of their child in relation to attendance and punctuality and Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem;

Class teacher:

- The class teacher monitors and records the punctuality and attendance of all students through the Vsware facility at the beginning and end of every lesson.



- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance and set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms.
- If an attendance or punctuality problem becomes persistent the teacher implements appropriate restorative actions.
- If there is no resolution the teacher refers the matter onto the Year Head.
- Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis;

The Role of the Year Head:

- Is responsible for monitoring patterns of attendance and punctuality across their year group.
- Will liaise with parents where a pattern of absence or lateness to school emerges. In some instances the Year Head may feel that referral to a member of the Student Support Team is an appropriate strategy in improving attendance.
- Ensures that all absences are explained by a note from parents. In a minority of cases the year head may have difficulty in accessing a note from home - the Year Head will contact home to ensure all absences are explained.
- Will liaise with School Completion to notify parents with a written letter when a student has in the region of 15 absences, a second letter will be issued when a student reaches 20 days, and this report will be sent to the National Educational Welfare Board. All events are recorded on VShare.
- The school is sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of its students and is aware that some students need encouragement to attend school regularly. The Year Head plays a role in supporting students overcome difficulties relating to attendance. This can be done by liaising with relevant staff, working closely with parents, initiating a referral to the Student Support team and regularly reviewing strategies that have been put in place.

The Role of School Management:

- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance;
- Management have put in place suitable programmes which can be accessed by all students to foster good punctuality and attendance
- Has established a pastoral care programme which monitors attendance and punctuality which includes an intervention with parents and student should the occasion arise.
- Leads the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- The school has set up an electronic system for recording attendance and given tuition to parents through the school website and in school training to enable them to access the VShare facility.
- This is followed by a further communication to parents once a student reaches 20 absent from school. This communication informs them that these absences will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer



- Initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues;
- Ensures Notification to Tulsa's Education Welfare Services and the EWO of problems in relation to attendance and ensures support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties.
- School management has put in place a sanction system for students who consistently breach punctuality rules regarding attending school on time or classes during the school day.

The role of the School Completion Team

- Identify and support students at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of poor attendance, participation and retention via a suite of initiatives such as breakfast clubs, in-class supports, student support programmes, Traveller mentoring programme, attendance monitoring and tracking programme, MAP programmes, and therapeutic interventions using evidenced-based programmes.
- Work in partnership with school management, school staff, HSCL Co-ordinator, BFL and community agencies to provide best possible outcomes for targeted students and their families
- Gather and analyse attendance data and share as appropriate with school staff and management. Liaise with SMT and student support team re EWO referrals, supports and strategies.

The role of the HSCL Coordinator

- To assist parents in identifying causes of and solutions to attendance issues;
- To identify and support parents to engage with in school and out of school supports to address attendance issues;
- To promote positive engagement between the home and school;
- To contribute to ensuring a whole school approach to improving attendance.

The role of the BFL Teacher

- To use targets, rewards and strategies to help students overcome challenges and improve outcomes in the areas of attendance and punctuality
- To monitor progress and offer support to help change patterns of failure and indifference when attendance and punctuality is an issue
- To outline to students the negative consequences of poor attendance and tardiness



Procedures:

Procedures to be followed if a student is absent from School

- If a student is marked absent on the roll in the morning parents/guardians will receive a text from the school noting that he/she /they are absent. If a parent/guardian believes that their son/daughter is in school, they are asked to contact the office immediately.
- Following a student's absence from school, parents/guardians are obliged by the Education Welfare Act (2000) to provide a note explaining the absence. The school should be informed of the absence on the day of the absence by calling the school or completing the absence section on the school app. **When the student returns to school a note is to be written on the 'Explanation for Absence' slips in the journal and presented to their class teachers on return**

Procedures to be followed if a student is late

- If students are late after 8.40 am in the morning and 1.45 pm in the afternoon they must report to the office.
- If the student has a written note from a parent/guardian explaining the lateness or is accompanied by a parent/guardian who provides an explanation, then the student will get permission to enter class and be marked present on the roll.
- If a student does not have a written note from a parent/guardian or is not accompanied by their parent/ guardian, then they will be put on detention. After 8.40 am Morning: 20 min. same day detention at lunchtime. After 1.45pm in the afternoon: 20 min. same day detention at 3.45pm. Notes received the next day will not be accepted. The student will then get permission to enter class and be marked present on the roll by the admin staff.
- If a student is late on a regular basis they will be referred to Year Head. Students who are regularly late after lunch will be referred to lunchtime clubs to ensure good timekeeping.
- Only 2 explained late are permissible per week after this the student will need to complete late detention. Punctuality is a key skill for life therefore it is important that students develop this during school.



Procedures for Leaving School Early

It is essential that wherever possible appointments are made for outside of school time and students should only leave early in unavoidable circumstances.

Should a student need to leave school early there are three steps to be followed:

- He/she/they must present written consent from a parent/guardian to the Year Head or at the office. The Year Head will inform/email the office to give permission for the student to leave at the stated time.
- Students can only be given permission and collected by guardians listed on VShare. If they are not available, they must call the school to sanction a different person.
- **Parents must collect students from the office if they are leaving early or provide a note from the parent/guardian giving them permission to leave school.** The student will present the note to the Office staff and complete the sign out process.
- **A student who leaves school without permission from management may be suspended from school.**
- On return from an appointment, the student must sign in at the office again.

Recording and reporting procedures to promote Attendance and Retention

- Roll call will be taken on VShare at the start and end of every class.
- A text will be sent to parents by 11:00 a.m. approximately if a student is marked absent on VShare.
- 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 on VShare system. This means that when a teacher takes the roll call on VShare they will see who has a legitimate reason to be out.
- If a student arrives late to school in the morning, they are to be marked late on the VShare system.
- If students sign out early, then the office staff will put this into the system and teachers will be able to see that they left early with permission.
- Only parents can sign students out from the office.



- Class teachers/ Year Heads will request notes from students on their return from absence. Parents to write a note in the Student Journal to explain absence. Year Head will follow up if note is not received. Class teachers/ Year Heads will update VShare if there is a note.
- After a noticeable absent of 5 to 8 days in a calendar month the Year Head will contact the parent/guardian to discuss absence and provide support to encourage attendance.
- After 15 days' absence, the Year Heads will have a meeting with the parents/guardians to put strategies in place to support attendance.
- After 20-25 days absence, there will be an Attendance Council meeting.
- The Attendance Officer will compile a report at the end of each month showing number of lates and absences. This will be analysed by the Year Heads, HSCL Coordinator.
- If a student is in Junior Cycle or under 16 years of age misses 20 days, The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed. A formal referral may be made.
- The school accepts that there is a big difference between a student missing 10 days by the end of October and a student missing 10 days by the end of March. This procedure is for obvious problems.
- The school recognises medically certified absences, but parental advice of illness of more than 3 days' duration is not acceptable and will be registered as unexplained absence.
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- The school recognises medically certified absences, but parental advice of illness of more than 3 days' duration is not acceptable and will be registered as unexplained absence.

Strategies to Promote Student Participation:

The school recognises that good attendance is achieved when students feel happy, secure and part of the school community. It is through encouraging the full participation of all students in all aspects of school life that Adamstown Community College hopes to maximise attendance patterns. We aim to do this in the following ways:



- **Curriculum**

offer a wide range of subjects at both Junior and Senior cycle. A comprehensive Transition Year programme and LCA programme is also offered. Students have the support of a Career Guidance Counsellor, BFL teacher, School Completion, HSCL, Chaplain, Student Support Team and resource teaching where appropriate.

- **Methodologies**

In teaching the curriculum teachers will use a variety of methodologies, which encourage and facilitate the participation of all students. The school management provides and supports professional development of teachers by facilitating their attendance at in-service sessions and by offering staff training days.

- **Extra-Curricular**

The school's programme of co-curricular and extracurricular activities caters for a wide range of interests in order to maximize student participation. Activities range from sport, drama, tours, outdoor education, charity awareness/events, STEM club, Journalism club and field trips.

- **Pastoral Care:**

The school's pastoral care allows for all students to participate in the life of the school in a way that promotes their personal development and educational enlightenment.

- **Class Tutor /Year Head:**

The positive atmosphere nurtured by the class tutor also encourages full participation in school life. The tutor, supported by the Year Head plays a role in instilling a good class spirit to promote friendship and learning. This structure also provides a medium through which parents can contact and meet with teachers.

The Year Team is also responsible for ensuring that standards of attendance and punctuality are a priority within the Year Group. This can be done through Year team meetings, assemblies, certificates, end of year prize giving etc.

- **Student Support Team Meetings:**

SST meetings are put in place to support any student who is experiencing difficulty which may impact on their school life. Students on this list are supported by the Guidance Department who inform staff of the names of these students.

- **LCA:**

Teachers, tutors and the Year Head work closely with students to ensure that the Department of Education and Skills requirement of 90% attendance is met, as failure to reach this will affect the student's results.



- **TY/Work Experience:**

Two periods of assessment are put in place of which attendance and punctuality are key components of the credits awarded to all subject areas. Student are expected to apply the same expectations of attendance and punctuality for Work Experience as they do for school.

- **Parents' Participation:**

Parents participation is encouraged through various opening evenings and meetings e.g. parent/teacher meetings, Parent's Association meetings, etc which are held during the school year.

- **Reward system:**

One hundred percent attendance is rewarded through a merit and certification initiative at the end of each term.

Interventions:

The school provides universal interventions to all students and targeted interventions to certain students.

The school recognises that certain groups or individuals may need additional support with attendance and this is provided through targeted and intensive interventions. These groups include:

- Students with special educational needs
- Students with health needs
- Students who have experienced bullying
- Students experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties
- Students disengaged from the curriculum
- Students from the Traveller or Roma communities
- Students who are experiencing homelessness
- Students who are asylum seekers or living in direct provision centres
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students
- Students in foster care
- Young carers or young parents
- Students whose parents have not had a positive school experience
- Students from families where there has been a history of poor school attendance
- Students from socio-economically deprived family or community.



Universal Interventions

- The school will endeavour to provide a safe and orderly environment for students in accordance with the Code of Positive Behaviour.
- The school will deal with all bullying related matters in accordance with the Bi Cinealta policy.
- First years will be provided with an induction programme.
- Students who have excellent attendance are presented with awards at the end of every month and excellent attendance is to be awarded at the end of year awards.
- All students are provided with a SPHE/Wellbeing programme to assist them throughout their schooling.
- All students are offered the support of a Tutor every morning as part of the pastoral care system.
- A breakfast club is offered to all students each morning by the SCP.
- School Lunches are provided to every student.
- The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities to all students in sport, music, drama, art etc.
- All parents will receive details on days absent and days late in reports home twice times a year. Parents can also access attendance data at any time on the Parents App.
- All parents are provided with a unique username and password which allows them to go look at their son/daughter(s) attendance information on VSware.
- Students are provided with a broad curriculum with subjects that suit talents of all students.
- All parents get a text home if their son/daughter is absent.

Targeted Interventions

- The school offers a check and connect programme for targeted students.
- The SCP provides breakfast for all students.
- The school provides supervised study/tutorials for examination students.



- The school facilitates online academic supports and targeted work experience and preparation for work courses
- JCSP students are offered rewards for good attendance.
- The guidance counsellor may work with targeted students who are having anxiety or mental health-based absenteeism.
- Families may be supported by the Home School Community Liaison Teacher.
- Meetings may be held with the Year Head/class teacher/Deputy Principal/Principal, the parents/guardians and the student(s) concerned.
- The HSCL Coordinator may provide activities/courses for the parents of targeted children.
- The SCP project worker and HSCL Coordinator and EWO may work with targeted students.
- The school works closely with projects such as the Youth Diversion Projects, Foróige, disability organisations, support groups, Drugs Awareness groups etc. to assist targeted students.
- The school may offer a differentiated curriculum to certain targeted students.
- The school may seek the assistance of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Barnardos, Tusla – The Child and Family Agency and any other organisation that may be of assistance.

Intensive Intervention

- Students may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer for support and will work closely with the EWO to support the student.
- The Behaviour for learning teacher can assist with students whose behaviour is an obstacle to school attendance.
- Students may with the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer be offered reduced timetables or alternative educational programmes.
- Students who are out of school will be offered the assistance of the School