

COLÁISTE MHUIRE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



2024/25

Mission, Context and Rationale

Colaíste Mhuire is committed to excellence. We provide a caring and disciplined environment in which all students are challenged to reach their academic and personal potential. In Colaíste Mhuire we aim to continue to provide a caring community and a supportive environment which encourages each student to develop her full spiritual, intellectual, moral, emotional and social potential/conscience. Education in this school is both student-centred and holistic.

Colaíste Mhuire Mullingar is an all-boys Secondary School run by a Board of Management under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The ethos of the school is informed largely by the five pillars of the ERST charter which read as follows:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership.

Overall Objectives

Through the implementation of this strategy, Colaíste Mhuire:

- Expect all students to be in attendance for the entire duration of each school day
- Highlights full attendance amongst students, parents and guardians to improve the educational welfare of our students
- Positively enforces punctual attendance each morning and for each class period during the day
- Maintains an effective attendance record-keeping system through our VSWare system
- Develops suitable intervention strategies to further improve school attendance and punctuality
- Actively monitors and rewards student efforts for committing and engaging with school life

Punctuality

In Colaíste Mhuire, we encourage students to be punctual and have the necessary books, resources and equipment to participate fully in lessons. In this regard, students should:

- Arrive at school before 8.40 am each morning to organise themselves and ensure that they are prepared for the commencement of lessons at 9 am
- Utilise their locker at the appropriate break times to organise themselves for subsequent lessons
- Late arrival for school/ class will be noted by the school
- A reason for lateness should be given by the parent/guardian in an instance of late arrival to school and the student should report to the school office on their arrival into the school environs. If a student arrives late to school with no reason provided by the parent/guardian, the student will serve a 20-minute lunchtime detention on that day. This will be monitored each morning by the Senior Management Team in consultation with the Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team
- In cases of recurrent issues with punctuality, the circumstances will be considered and the matter may be referred to the student support team

Compliance

1. National Educational Welfare Board

Under legislation every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete a minimal three-year education in a post-primary school; whichever comes later. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.

2. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 18

Where a child is absent from the school at which he is registered during part of the school day, or for a school day or more than a school day, the parent of such child shall, per procedures specified in the Code of Behaviour, prepared by the school under section 23, notify the school of the reasons for the child's absence/partial absence.

3. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 21 (4)

The School Principal shall inform the TUSLA Educational Welfare Officer via the appropriate communication channels where:

- A. A student is suspended from a recognised school for not less than 6 days
- B. The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during the school year is not less than 20 days.

Colaíste Mhuire Secondary School recognises the importance of good attendance and punctuality to support and improve the educational attainment of our students. Regular or prolonged absences will have a negative impact on a student's learning and development and therefore should be avoided. The school has an Attendance Strategy in place, the aim of which is to promote good attendance in the school. Poor attendance and punctuality have a similarly negative impact on the learning of the student and have the further effect of disrupting the wider school community particularly the class into which the student is arriving late.

High Expectations

Colaíste Mhuire expects all students to attend for the full school day. This expectation is evident through the strategies employed by the school in this document and is communicated strongly to students and Parents/Guardians at opportune events throughout the academic year.

On a day where a student is required to arrive late or leave early, a note must be shown to a member of the Senior Management Team and the student must sign the log book located in the School Office. The school will update this information on our software platform, VSWare, at that time. Regular excused tardiness is discouraged. However, individual student circumstances are taken into consideration.

The school has an **Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team** that works closely with the Senior Management Team in identifying irregular attendance trends and addressing these trends using school resources e.g. student support teams.

Monitoring of Attendance

Attendance is monitored using information inputted into the VSWare software system. The **Deputy Principal Team** is responsible for ensuring attendance is recorded for each lesson of each school day. Any inaccuracies or amendments to be made are done so in consultation with the Deputy Principal Team.

The **Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team** monitor all attendance in consultation with the Senior Management Team and seek reasons for absenteeism, record this information on VSWare and liaise with Year Heads and the Senior Management team regarding appropriate actions where required.

The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team meet regularly and work with the Principal in meeting the legislative responsibilities of the school regarding making suitable contact with TUSLA and/or the Education Welfare Officer.

The school's approach to attendance:

STEP ONE

On every day of absence:

The parent/guardian is expected to contact the school on the morning of absence to inform the school and provide a reason, where appropriate. A school answering machine service is in operation for such messages. The school inputs this information into the VSWare system.

Where contact has yet to be made, a text message is sent to the nominated parent/guardian on the morning of the absence. Included in this text message is a digital link with a request for the parent/guardian to click the link and complete the digital form to confirm and explain the absence. The attendance and punctuality leadership team updates this information on VSWare. The responsibility lies with the parent/guardian to ensure the school is supplied with the correct contact details.

Subsequent Days following absence:

The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team will continue to monitor the attendance and digital link data and liaise as necessary with the support teams within the school as appropriate.

STEP TWO

Following 6 days absent:

Informal Intervention: The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team will engage with the Student Support Team, Year head or Tutor to speak with the student.

STEP THREE

Following 12 days absent:

Formal Intervention: The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team will send a letter of concern home, via email, for the attention of the parent/guardian. The communication will highlight the importance of school attendance, offer school support services, the school's legal responsibility in reporting absenteeism and welcome open communication from the parent/guardian, as appropriate. This communication may be followed up with a care call. Individual student circumstances are taken into consideration during such communications.

STEP FOUR

Following 17 days absent:

Formal Intervention: The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team will send a further letter of concern home, via email, for the attention of the parent/guardian. The communication will again highlight the importance of school attendance, offer school support services and welcome open communication from the parent/guardian, as appropriate. This communication will also clearly outline the schools' legal responsibilities regarding the reporting of absences to TUSLA. The Student Support Team may follow up with a care call and welcome the opportunity to arrange a meeting within the school. This meeting will usually focus on preventing further absenteeism.

STEP FIVE

Following 20 Days absent:

The School makes formal contact with TUSLA and/or the Education Welfare Officer regarding the absenteeism, thus meeting its legal responsibilities. The parent/guardian will be made aware of this action and support will continue to be offered.

The Attendance and Punctuality Leadership Team regularly reviews attendance data and reports this information to the Board of Management for their consideration. Targets are generally set and reviewed at intervals throughout each school year.

Our Whole School Approach to encouraging Positive Attendance Patterns includes:

- A welcoming school atmosphere
- Wide range of Subject Options
- Emphasis on Cooperative Learning Strategies
- Provision of particular courses namely; the Transition Year and Junior Cycle Level 2 Learning Programmes
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Guidance and Counselling Services
- Student-Centred Learning Support Allocations.

Promoting Positive Attendance Patterns is supported through:

- Perfect Attendance Awards
- Encouraging good attendance
- Most Improved Attendance Awards for each year group
- Positive affirmations added to the student's profile on the VSWare System
- Reinforcing the school's positive ethos by welcoming the student on their return to school
- Clear communication with Parents, Guardians and Students, outlining the daily routine and support for a successful transition from primary to post-primary education.
- Continue to work closely with feeder schools to put in place arrangements to make the transition as seamless as possible
- Reminders and re-emphasis each year on the importance of attendance and punctuality through the school journal, assemblies and other communications.
- Maintain and increase parental awareness of attendance and punctuality during parent's evenings, Parent-Teacher Meetings, and information evenings
- Continue to raise parental awareness of attendance-related issues.
- Rewarding and incentivising good attendance and punctuality through initiatives such as the '20 Day Attendance and Punctuality Challenge'

Responding to Negative Attendance Patterns is constructively addressed through:

- Attendance Report
- Attendance and Punctuality Coordinator supports
- Year Head supports
- Tutor supports
- Guidance and Counselling Services
- Learning Support
- Tailored timetables to support students with specific diagnoses
- Formal communication via phone calls and letters
- Peer support
- A statement of dates of absence may be included with term reports for high offenders

Coláiste Mhuire is proud to work with local partners and encourage arrangements to assist in promoting positive student attendance:

- Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Reasonable Accommodations Section of the State Examinations Commission
- Mullingar Arts Centre
- Moate Business College
- Technological University of the Shannon
- iProject, iScoil, Youthreach and other external supports in collaboration with the EWO
- Loreto College
- Local Feeder Primary Schools
- Businesses and enterprises in Mullingar and within its environs

The development of this policy document and its processes are regularly reviewed. All educational partners have been consulted regarding this revised version of the Attendance and Punctuality Policy.



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

The Board of Management reviewed and ratified this policy on 28th November 2024.

Signed: _____

Ms. Moira Mahon
Chairperson of the Board of Management



Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust