



Attendance Policy

Introduction

Dominican College Wicklow is a privately owned, voluntary second - level, girls-only school, with a Catholic Dominican ethos and under the trusteeship of Le Chéile. It was founded by the Dominican sisters in 1870.

The Dominican motto 'TRUTH' is the inspiration of our work. Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person. Strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential academically, but care is also taken to ensure that each student benefits from an enriching all round education.

The Board of Management and Staff are committed to ensuring that all students are supported in reaching their potential and benefit fully from the education provided by regular and punctual attendance. As a school community we believe that regular and optimum attendance:

- Positively contributes towards students' wellbeing, self-esteem, academic success, social & personal confidence and helps them to benefit greatly from their school experience, and
- Positively contributes to the students' future life chances, opportunities for rewarding employment, positive health and wellbeing.

Policy Context

This policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Dominican College Wicklow
- The Admissions Policy
- The Pastoral Care Policy
- The Code of Conduct and
- The Education Welfare Act (2000).

Dominican College Wicklow fosters and promotes an appreciation of learning and the value of students' ownership of their own learning. Regular and optimum attendance helps to embed students' learning. The Education Welfare Act (2000) places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents to provide for the optimum attendance of every student. Túsla is the agency with responsibility for overseeing school attendance nationwide. Each school is assigned an Education Welfare Officer whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge. The EWO for Dominican College Wicklow is Mr. Brendan Devereux. The 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 she is registered, not attending school regularly.

Promoting a Positive Approach to Attendance and Punctuality

Dominican College Wicklow sets high expectations for students' attendance and punctuality. Every student is expected to take responsibility for her own learning and achieve her full potential through regular and optimum attendance and the highest standards of punctuality. Management and staff regularly inform



students and their parents of the importance of regular attendance and the incremental nature of the learning process, and the negative impact on student learning and student confidence when attendance is not optimised. Full attendance is rewarded every month through a Certificate Award at assembly. All staff, including Year Heads and the Care Team, promote and support full student attendance. Year Heads and School Management liaise with the student and parent and systematically follow up where attendance / punctuality become identified as an issue. Students with full attendance in an academic year receive recognition and affirmation at the annual Prize Giving ceremony where they each receive an award.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students:

- To be responsible for their own learning, attendance and punctuality
- To attend all classes each day unless there is a valid reason in writing from their parent/guardian (or member of staff) for their absence
- To present a written explanatory note in the school journal signed by their parent/guardian on the day of return to class. The student must give the note to the Year Head at 8.50 a.m. registration and retain the signed stub in her school journal
- If absent from / late to a particular class as a result of delay with an individual teacher, to present a signed note from that teacher to the next class teacher
- To ensure that any homework missed as a result of any absence / lateness is sourced and completed as soon as possible
- To sign the 'Late Book' in the Administration Office before going to class if late to school
- To provide a written explanatory note from their parent/guardian explaining the reason they were late. Late arrival to school / class three times is viewed as a breach of the Code of Behaviour and an After School detention will apply (see Code of Behaviour), notwithstanding a sanction imposed by a class teacher for lateness to class. A student who is late to the 9 a.m. class / 11.15 a.m. class / 1.55 p.m. class will be issued a lunchtime detention
- Any unauthorised absence of a student from any class during the school day is viewed as a breach of the Code of Behaviour and an appropriate sanction will apply (see Code of Behaviour)
- To adhere to the requirements of the Code of Behaviour and the Attendance Policy
- On rare occasions a student may be absent from school due to suspension. In such instances parents will be consulted in advance and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies. Where a student is suspended from school (except in the case of in-house suspension) she should not be on the school premises. Any student on suspension is not permitted to in any school activity for the duration of the suspension.

Parents / Guardians:

- To support the Attendance Policy of Dominican College Wicklow.
- To foster high expectations of their daughters for optimum and regular attendance and punctuality
- As the primary educators parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school unless there is an unavoidable and legitimate reason for their absence. A school calendar is supplied to parents to help ensure that discretionary appointments may be made, in so far as possible, outside normal school time. We strongly discourage students being taken out of school for family holidays as absence from school has a negative impact on their learning
- To provide a written explanatory note in the student's journal for her absence on the first day of return to school



- To ensure that student appointments are made for out-of-school hours where possible, thereby ensuring that only unavoidable absences occur during school hours
- When contacted by school authorities, to collect (or arrange a nominated guardian) their daughter who presents as unwell as soon as possible and to seek medical advice as appropriate
- To build resilience in their daughters and help them differentiate between genuine sickness that requires absence / being collected to go home to recuperate, from normal aches, pains and discomforts that, while uncomfortable, should not prevent a student from learning or missing time in school
- To communicate promptly with the Year Head where any issue with their daughter's attendance is anticipated.

Class Teachers:

- To log all student attendances, absences and lates on eportal and in the teacher's class register/diary for each lesson.
- To promote and encourage regular and full attendance
- To inform the class tutor and Year Head if there is a concern about a student's attendance / punctuality
- Where a teacher is organising an approved activity which necessitates the absence of students from class, a list of such students is posted by the organising teacher in the staffroom / on eportal
- To impose the necessary sanction for unauthorised absences / lates and document same in student journal and detention book.
- To help implement the Attendance Policy.

Class Tutor:

- Ensure that students are aware of the importance of regular attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences, lates and exits
- If available, to contact home if a student is unwell and needs to be collected
- To help implement the Attendance Policy.

Year Heads:

- To promote high expectations of student attendance and punctuality
- To accept, sign and store explanatory notes from parents/guardians, completing the stub in students' journals
- To follow up if a signed explanatory note is not presented by the student
- To keep accurate records daily on each student's attendance & punctuality on the hard copy register templates and on eportal
- To identify students for whom regular attendance is a problem and to meet with students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend. The Year Head may, at this early stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school
- To notify parents/guardians by way of standard letter template where a student has been absent for 10 days
- To notify parents/guardians by way of standard letter template where a student has been absent for 15 days
- To note on eportal any unavoidable & expected student exits authorised in writing by parents/guardians, and exits by students who are unwell and who have been contacted by the Year Head to arrange collection



- If available, to contact home if a student is unwell and needs to be collected
- To meet with an individual student to discuss her attendance / punctuality where an issue is identified
- To administer the 'Attendance Report' system as an intervention strategy when deemed necessary, in consultation with the Deputy Principal
- To impose the necessary sanction for lates and document same in student journal and detention book
- To meet weekly at the Year Head / Care Team meeting to discuss any students about whom they are concerned due to a problem with attendance
- To meet with parents/guardians to discuss any problem with attendance and an improvement plan for attendance, where necessary
- To prepare a short report on a student's attendance / absence if requested to do so by Senior Management, and in advance of the Parent-Teacher meeting to brief staff
- The Year Head has responsibility for monitoring student attendance and alerting the Principal where there is an issue arising with a student's absence
- To help implement the Attendance Policy.

Care Team

- To Promote a positive appreciation among students of the benefits to be derived from education and optimum attendance at school
- To help identify the causes of absenteeism and help develop measures for its prevention
- To provide support to students at risk and those who experience difficulties in school in order to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school
- Communicate with Management and Staff, as appropriate, where issues arise relating to individual student absences, including causes of absence, communication with parent/guardian, interventions, student welfare & learning and improvement plan
- Recommend to the Principal on further courses of action which may be taken. These include Attendance Report, referral to Guidance Counsellor or referral to Túsła
- Support Senior Management in developing a strategic approach to promoting regular and optimum student attendance and dealing with issues of non-attendance or poor attendance
- Monitor students referred on an ongoing basis.

Administration Staff:

- To text home in the morning where a student has not arrived to school and the reason is not known in advance
- To maintain the 'Late Book' and 'Exit Book' in the Admin. office
- To supply a copy of the School Calendar to parents to help ensure that appointments are made for students outside of normal school hours, in so far as possible.

Principal:

- To promote a culture of regular and optimum student attendance and set and communicate high expectations of students for their attendance and punctuality
- To operate the Awards Certificates for students with full attendance each month, positively recognising at Assembly students with full attendance
- To meet weekly with Year Heads / Care Team to discuss supports and interventions for students who are identified as having difficulty with attendance / punctuality



- To prepare a report for Túsla four times a year, listing students under sixteen years of age who have reached twenty days absence (or more) from school
- To meet with the Education Welfare Officer and act on his advice in relation to students whose attendance is identified as problematic
- To liaise / meet with staff, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Deputy Principal and Parents on matters affecting student attendance
- To develop a strategic approach to promoting regular and optimum student attendance and dealing with issues of non-attendance or poor attendance
- Supervision of Lunchtime Detention, including students who have accumulated the required number of repeated lates for Lunchtime Detention, is the responsibility of the Principal
- If available, to contact home if a student is unwell and needs to be collected
- To oversee the implementation of the Attendance Policy.

Deputy Principal:

- To help promote a culture of regular and optimum student attendance and help set and communicate high expectations of students for their attendance and punctuality
- To support the operation of the Awards Certificates for students with full attendance each month, positively recognising at Assembly students with full attendance
- To meet weekly with Year Heads / Care Team to discuss supports and interventions for students who are identified as having difficulty with attendance / punctuality
- To support Year Heads in the administration of the 'Attendance Report' system as an intervention strategy when deemed necessary, in consultation with the Year Head and Principal
- To follow up with students who may have missed a detention due to lateness / unauthorised absence, and liaise with Principal, Year Head, relevant staff and parents where necessary
- To support the Principal in meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and act on his advice in relation to students whose attendance is identified as problematic
- To liaise / meet with staff, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Principal and Parents on matters affecting student attendance.
- To organise annual awards at the Prize Giving ceremony for all students who have achieved full attendance in the academic year.
- To support the Principal in developing a strategic approach to promoting regular and optimum student attendance and dealing with issues of non-attendance or poor attendance
- Supervision of Afternoon Detention, including the administration of students who have accumulated the required number of repeated lates for Evening Detention, is the responsibility of the Deputy Principal
- If available, to contact home if a student is unwell and needs to be collected
- To help oversee the implementation of the Attendance Policy.

Education Welfare Officer:

- Education Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) are employed throughout the country (by Túsla) to offer advice, support and guidance to parents who need support in ensuring that their child attends schools regularly
- If a school contacts an EWO with concerns in relation to a student's school attendance, the EWO will talk to the school principal or designated school staff member and find out what efforts have been made to date to help the child. The EWO may then decide to contact the family and meet with them. Home visits are an essential part of an EWO's work and the first meeting with an EWO



very often opens up a pathway of solutions for a child and family in need. Once underlying problems or issues are identified, the EWO can then seek to address the family's unique set of circumstances in conjunction with school staff and other local support services as necessary

- The EWO focuses in particular on students at risk as a result of non-attendance or concerns around attendance, and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to help resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. He liaises with Senior Management and parents of students of concern. Parents/guardians and their daughters may, where relevant, be required to attend meetings with the EWO & Senior Management.
- The EWO liaises with Senior Management in relation to students identified as of concern as a result of non-attendance or irregular attendance.

Procedure for Managing Daily Attendance

- Every student is expected to be in attendance from 8.50 a.m. until 3.40 / 3.55 p.m. (as appropriate) on every school day
- Students may not be absent from school except when the absence is unavoidable due to illness, urgent family reason or other legitimate and unavoidable reason
- Students arrive to school before 8.50 a.m., affording themselves sufficient time to organise books from their lockers and attend registration in the designated room at 8.50 a.m.
- Students ensure that they are registered during this registration period
- A student who is returning from absence must present an explanatory note signed by the parent/guardian in the journal to the Year Head, who will retain the note and sign the stub
- The Year Head maintains accurate, up-to-date records of each student's attendance and punctuality and may liaise with students, School Management, staff and parents as necessary to support regular and optimum attendance of students
- Where a student arrives late to school she must sign in the 'Late Book' in the Admin. office
- Class teachers take registers and log all attendances, absences and lates on eportal and in their own teacher registers/diaries
- A student who is absent from class due to a school-related extra-curricular activity is entered by the class teacher as 'SA' on eportal
- A student who has an unavoidable appointment during the school day and needs to leave school must present a note (as above) to the Year Head during registration, sign out in the 'Exit Book' in the Admin. office when collected by a parent/guardian, and catch up on work missed, including homework.
- The Administration Staff will notify the parent/guardian of an absent student by text in the morning where the reason for absence is not known in advance

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 26th January 2017

Date of next review: January 2018

Signature (Chairperson): _____