



**St. Mary's
Knockbeg College
Attendance and
Punctuality Strategy**
December 2024



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St. Mary's Knockbeg College Attendance and Punctuality Strategy

Scope

This strategy applies to the students, staff, and parents of St. Mary's Knockbeg College and addresses all aspects of school attendance and punctuality. It has been developed in collaboration with all school stakeholders, including the Board of Management, staff, parents, and students.

Mission Statement

Our school exists to provide a balanced and holistic education for each of our students. Our aim is to enable and empower for each of our students to acquire the self-confidence, academic qualifications, life skills and attitudes for leading satisfying lives which should contribute to the betterment of the Church and society. We regard ourselves as a Christian Community where the values of the Gospel find daily expression in our Catholic ethos and all our policies and practices as we nourish a spirituality of compassion, justice, and forgiveness.

The Board of Management of St Mary's Knockbeg College recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular student attendance and pupil progress. This strategy applies to the students, staff and parents of St Mary's Knockbeg College and relates to all aspects of school punctuality and attendance. This strategy was drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, staff, parents and students. (See Code of Behaviour).

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all students, parents, and staff. It is designed to support consistent attendance and punctuality, ensuring students maximise their educational opportunities. It aligns with relevant legal requirements and the broader aims of our school community.

Key Principles

- Attendance and punctuality are essential for academic success and personal development.
- Strong partnerships between the school, students, and parents are critical in addressing attendance concerns.
- Positive reinforcement and early intervention are central to promoting regular attendance.

Objectives

1. To instil an appreciation for learning and emphasise the importance of consistent attendance.
2. To always encourage punctuality.
3. To maintain accurate and comprehensive attendance records.

4. To develop proactive strategies for addressing attendance issues.
5. To recognise and reward excellent attendance and significant improvements.

Relevant Policies

This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour, and in particular sections which outline the Punctuality and Attendance Codes.

Legal Framework

National Educational Welfare Board/TUSLA

- Under legislation 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 National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.
- As a parent you must notify the school if your child is absent and the reason why. It is school policy that explanations must be given in writing, via email or via the Vsware App. The school will notify the Educational Welfare Board if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise for concern. This is outlined below:

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 18

Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she 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, in accordance with procedures specified in the Code of Behaviour, prepared by the school to notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

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

The Principal of the school concerned shall inform, by notice of writing to the Educational Welfare Officer, where:

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

Aim

The purpose of this strategy is to create an environment that encourages all students to attend school consistently and on time, enabling them to reach their full potential.

By law, every child is required to attend school regularly until the age of sixteen or complete at least three years of post-primary education, whichever comes later.

Objectives

The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Promote consistent school attendance.
- Stress the importance of punctuality and attendance to students and parents.
- Keep comprehensive records of attendance and absences as required by the *Education Act 2000*.
- Provide attendance reports to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.
- Implement effective interventions to enhance attendance and punctuality where necessary.

Policy Content

Expectations

St Mary's Knockbeg College promotes a culture where there is high expectation from all partners (Parents, Teachers, BOM, and Students) for student attendance and participation in learning and school life. There are strict Standard Operating Procedures in place regarding attendance, leaving school and punctuality, to promote and achieve this aim.

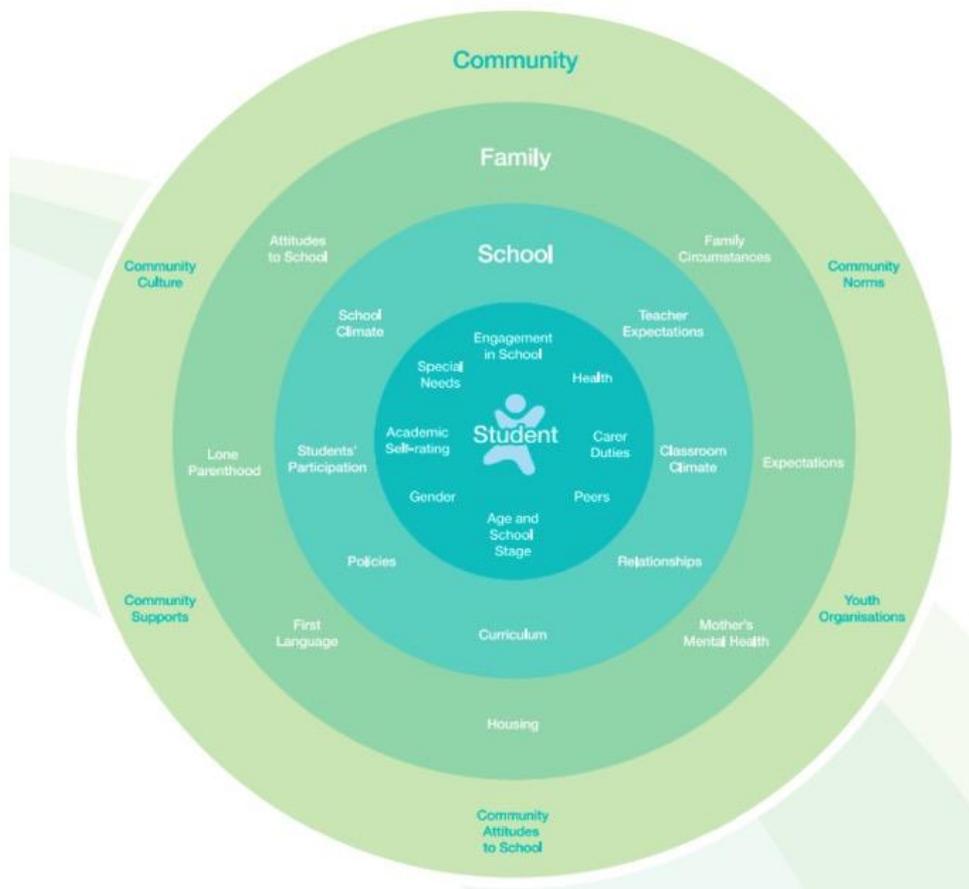
Parent/Guardian Expectations

- Parents/Guardians are also involved in setting high standards and maintaining expectations. The connection between attendance and attainment is highlighted to the school community regularly via Parent Information Evenings, Staff Meetings, Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Team Meetings, Year Assemblies, Awards Night and Parent/Guardians Newsletters to raise awareness.
- Parents/Guardians and students can access the school website, school App, social media to find out; opening times and procedures to leave school.
- The AEN team and pastoral care teams communicate directly with parents/guardians where necessary. St Mary's Knockbeg College strongly discourages parents/guardians from bringing students on holiday during term time.
- If a parent/guardian decides to take a student out of school for holidays, they are requested to provide the principal with letter explaining that they are aware of the educational impacts of doing so.

Student Expectations

- Attend school regularly and punctually to maximise learning opportunities.
- Arrive on time, prepared, and ready to participate in lessons.
- Follow school procedures for reporting absences promptly.
- Provide valid reasons for any absence, supported by documentation if required.
- Take responsibility for catching up on missed work due to absence.
- Prioritise consistent attendance to support academic progress and personal development.

Figure 3: Spheres of a child's life that impact on school attendance



Source: Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (Tusla)

Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential for students to achieve academic success and fully benefit from their education.

Roles in Implementing the Attendance Policy

Senior Management Team

- Oversees the implementation and regular review of the Attendance Strategy.
- Establishes a school culture that values high attendance and engagement
- Engages with other schools and relevant organisations regarding attendance matters.
- Notifies Tusla about chronic attendance issues and supports the work of the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Year Head

- If a student is absent for 5 days without explanation the Year Head will have an in-school discussion with the pupil to ascertain the reasons/circumstances for their absence.
- If a student accumulates 10 days of unaccounted absences the Year Head contacts Parents / Guardians by letter. If a student accumulates 15 days of

absence which are unexplained causing concern, the parent is invited in to meet the Year Head.

Teachers

- Create a welcoming and inclusive classroom atmosphere that fosters participation and engagement.
- Actively utilise the Attendance Strategy to encourage regular attendance.
- Record and review attendance data accurately in accordance with school policy.
- Notify relevant staff if concerns about a student's attendance arise.
- Assist in implementing attendance plans for students struggling with consistent attendance.

Parents/Guardians

- Set a positive example for their children regarding the importance of attendance and punctuality.
 - Work with the school to resolve attendance challenges.
 - Ensure their child attends school daily and arrives on time.
 - Avoid scheduling unnecessary absences, including holidays during term time.
-

Procedures for Absences

1. If a student is marked absent during morning roll call, parents/guardians will receive a text notification.
 - If the absence notification is incorrect, parents/guardians should contact the school office immediately.
2. When a student returns to school after an absence, they must provide a note from their parent/guardian explaining the absence and handed to the Deputy Principal.

Procedures for Lateness

1. The school day operates from 9:00-3:50 except on Fridays when it ends at 3:10 p.m.
2. Students arriving late must report to the Principal's office to get a Late Stamp in their journal. Five lates during a term results in a detention after school on a Friday.
3. If the student provides a written explanation for their lateness from a parent/guardian or is accompanied by a parent/guardian who explains the reason, they will receive a permission slip to enter class and be marked present.
4. Late notes submitted the following day will not be accepted.

Procedures for Leaving School Early

Students should only leave school early in unavoidable circumstances. Whenever possible, appointments should be scheduled outside school hours.

Steps to follow if a student must leave early:

1. The student must provide a written note from their parent/guardian to the deputy principal or submit a note via Vsware.
2. Parents/guardians must provide a note to the school office, where they will sign them out. The student must present the signed note to office staff.
 - Students who leave without permission may face suspension.
3. Upon returning to school, the student must sign in at the school office.

Suspensions

The school code of behaviour reflects our vision and promotes positive behaviour among our student population. Where there are several students whose behaviour merits sanctions which may include suspension or expulsion. Any days missed from suspension will not appear on a student's attendance record.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

1. Attendance will be recorded on the VSware system in every class.
2. Parents/guardians will receive a text by 10:00 a.m. if their child is marked absent.
3. If a teacher takes students out of their regular class for an activity, they will mark those students as participating in a school activity on VSware (SCH).
4. Students arriving late will be marked present but late.
5. Students signing out early will have this recorded on VSware.
6. Absence notes from students will be updated on VSware when notes are received.
7. Attendance issues or patterns of concern will be flagged by class tutors/year heads and reported to the attendance monitor.
8. Monthly attendance reports will be compiled by the attendance coordinator, highlighting late arrivals, attendance, and early departures for each student. These reports will be reviewed by year heads and class tutors.
9. The following procedures will be followed for students with recurring absences:
 - After 10 days of absence, the Year Head will call home.
 - After 15 days, a formal warning letter will be sent to parents/guardians.
 - After 20 days, the EWO will be informed, and a meeting with parents/guardians will be arranged.
 - After 25 days, the principal will hold a meeting with parents/guardians to address attendance concerns.

Interventions to Promote Attendance

Universal Interventions:

- Maintaining a safe and structured school environment aligned with the Code of Behaviour.
- Addressing bullying issues in accordance with the anti-bullying policy.
- Induction programs for first-year students, such as Meitheal.
- Recognition and awards for excellent attendance at the annual awards ceremony.
- SPHE programs to support student well-being.

- Attendance to be included on Parent/Guardian Teacher Meeting sheets.
- Attendance rewards monthly for the class group each month with the highest attendance.
- Annual awards for attendance, best in class, best in year, and students with perfect attendance.
- A wide variety of extracurricular activities in sports, music, drama, and the arts.
- Regular communication with parents/guardians regarding attendance through reports and the VShare portal.

Targeted Interventions:

- Guidance counselling support for students with anxiety or other issues affecting attendance.
- Collaboration with external organisations such as NEPS, NCSE, HSE, and CAMHS to provide additional support.

Intensive Interventions:

- Referral to the EWO for support in chronic cases.
- Development of reduced timetables or alternative educational pathways in collaboration with the EWO.
- Assistance from the SCP Coordinator for students out of school for extended periods.

Attendance Targets

Attendance targets must be specific, relevant, and meaningful to St Mary's Knockbeg College. These targets are set based on analysis of attendance data from the previous year. Each year, St Mary's Knockbeg College submits the Annual Attendance Report (AAR) to Tusla.

Whole-School Approach to Attendance

The importance of attendance is emphasised through various channels, including Parent/Guardian Information Evenings, Open Nights, Parent-Teacher Meetings, and the VshareApp.

First-year students receive support transitioning to secondary school from the Year Head, Student Leadership Teams, and the Care Team.

Supporting Students with Additional Educational Needs (AEN)

The identification of students with additional educational needs (AEN) begins in primary school, with ongoing assessment throughout the school year. Student Support Plans (SSPs) are implemented to address their needs effectively.

Differentiated Teaching

St Mary's Knockbeg College recognises the diverse abilities of its students and employs a range of teaching strategies, including differentiation and co-teaching, to support and engage all learners.

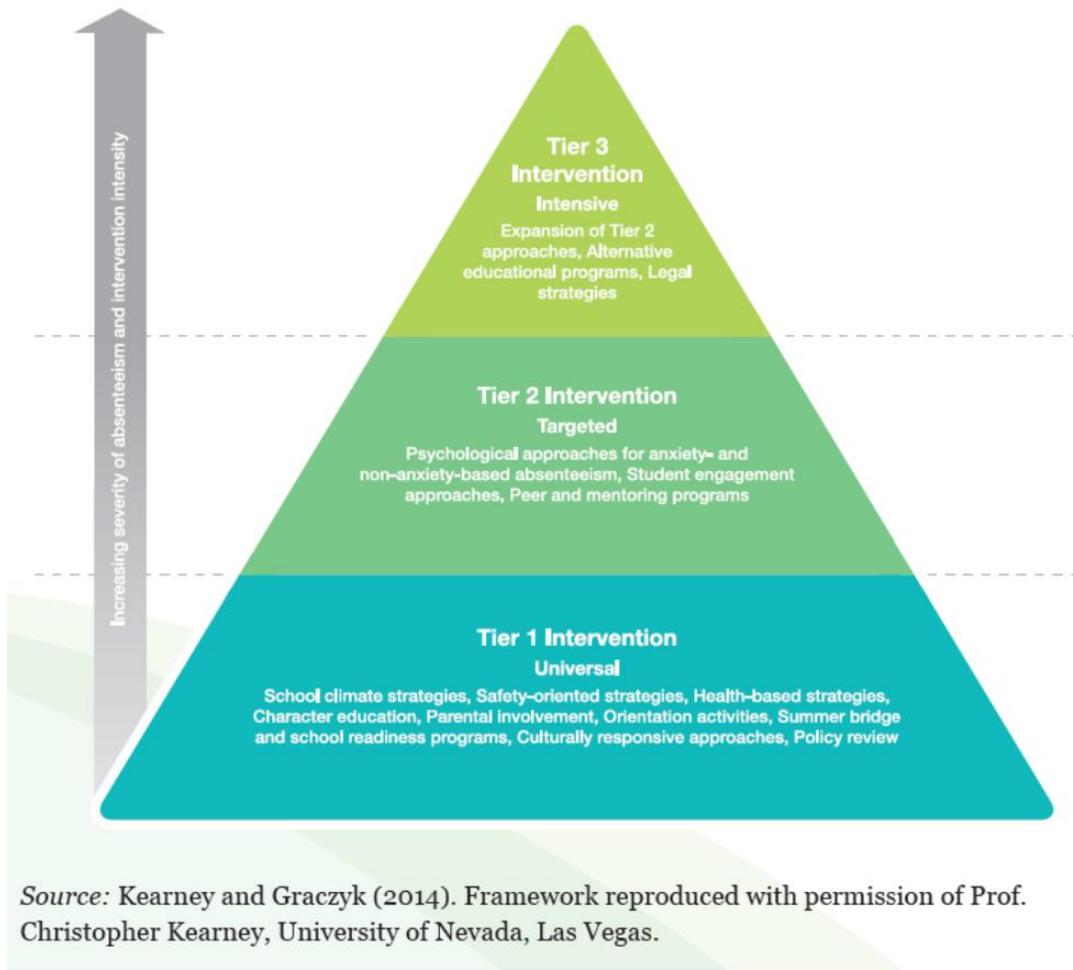
Promoting Good Attendance

- St Mary's Knockbeg College promotes a culture of attendance through awards and recognition programmes.
- All students are encouraged to maintain good attendance through a rewards system. Attendance awards are also presented on an individual or class basis to celebrate success.
- A wide variety of subject options enables students to explore their talents and express themselves.
- Extracurricular activities and lunchtime programmes foster engagement and a sense of belonging.
- The Class Teacher promotes positivity around attendance by providing ongoing support.
- Events organised by teacher and student groups help foster school spirit and connection, encouraging participation and collaboration.

Responding to Poor Attendance

- Parental/Guardian involvement is crucial in addressing attendance issues, with parents/guardians informed of their responsibilities under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Assessments for additional needs can help students achieve success within the school environment, reducing absenteeism.
- Tailored interventions, such as reduced timetables or teacher/peer mentoring, are offered to support students who are struggling, particularly during the transition to secondary school.
- Care team intervention at the earliest possible time is advisable to promote positive school experiences for the student.
- Where there is school refusal (for health or other reasons) St Mary's Knockbeg College encourage parents/guardians to engage with Department of Education to apply for Home Tuition for the student.
- St Mary's Knockbeg College has a positive working relationship with alternative educational systems which provide a different educational experience.

Figure 2: Response to Intervention (RTI) framework



Source: Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (Tusla)

Partnership arrangements (parents/guardians, students, and wider community)

St Mary’s Knockbeg college adopts a holistic approach to the education of the student, which means engaging with the whole school community and outside agencies to get the best outcome for our students.

Parents/Guardians are asked to account for absenteeism, parents/guardians get notifications through the school app, when Year Heads are concerned, parents/guardians are contacted/invited in to discuss. St Mary’s Knockbeg College engages with the student, parent/guardian, teachers, internal care teams and outside agencies some of which include:

- Senior Management Team
- Additional Education Needs Team
- Pastoral Care Team
- Chaplaincy Team
- Student Leadership Teams - Meitheal Team, ... lunchtime activities, extra-curricular activities....
- Education Welfare Office
- Other Schools

- HSE through social workers and family support services
- Garda Liaison Officer

In the pursuit of the best solution or interventions.

How it will be monitored

VSware: Generates data which will be analysed by Year Heads and the Senior Management Team regularly on a daily, weekly, monthly and by term basis. Each concern identified will be investigated and the appropriate response given from talking to the family to engaging with outside agencies.

AP11: An AP11 who has specific duties for recording attendance trends, sharing information and promoting good attendance in a range of methods as outlined in the Attendance Policy.

St Mary's Knockbeg College submits an Annual Attendance Report to Tusla every year.

| Statement of Strategy for School Attendance | |
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| Name of school | St. Mary's Knockbeg College |
| Address | Knockbeg, Carlow, Co. Carlow |
| Roll Number | 61130H |
| The school's vision and values in relation to attendance | <p>St. Mary's Knockbeg College aims to provide a balanced and holistic education that nurtures the academic, social, and spiritual development of every student. Rooted in its Catholic ethos, the school fosters compassion, justice, and forgiveness, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.</p> <p>Regular attendance and punctuality are viewed as essential for academic progress, personal development, and lifelong learning. The school values partnerships between staff, students, and parents/guardians, recognising that shared responsibility is key to sustaining good attendance.</p> |
| The school's high expectations around attendance | <p>The school promotes a culture of high expectations for attendance and punctuality among all members of the school community.</p> <p>Students are expected to attend school every day and on time, unless exceptional circumstances arise.</p> <p>Parents/Guardians are expected to prioritise attendance, avoid scheduling holidays or appointments during term time, and communicate promptly regarding absences.</p> <p>Teachers and staff are expected to maintain accurate attendance records and actively encourage student participation.</p> <p>The school celebrates and rewards excellent and improved attendance at both class and individual levels.</p> |
| How attendance will be monitored | <p>Attendance is recorded daily through the VSware system at every class period.</p> <p>Text alerts are sent to parents/guardians by 10:00 a.m. if a student is marked absent.</p> |

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| | <p>Monthly attendance reports are generated and reviewed by the Year Heads and Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Attendance patterns and issues are tracked and escalated where necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 days: Phone call home. • 15 days: Formal warning letter • 20 days: Report to tusla educational welfare officer (ewo) • 25 days: Meeting with principal <p>The AP11 staff member and Senior Management Team analyse VSware data daily, weekly, monthly, and by term to identify trends and concerns.</p> |
| <p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target setting and targets • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance | <p>Target setting and targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual attendance targets are set based on the previous year's data. • The school submits an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) to Tusla each year. • Targets are specific, measurable, and meaningful to the school's context, focusing on reducing absenteeism and improving punctuality. <p>The whole-school approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance awareness is embedded in all areas of school life—through Parent/Guardian Information Evenings, Open Nights, Assemblies, and newsletters. • The Care Team, Year Heads, Pastoral and AEN Teams, and Student Leadership groups (e.g., Meitheal) collaborate to promote engagement and support students. <p>Promoting good attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement through monthly and annual awards for best class and individual attendance. • SPHE and Wellbeing programmes address personal and social factors affecting attendance. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of extracurricular activities fosters belonging and motivation. • Regular communication with parents/guardian via VSware, social media, and newsletters. <p>Responding to poor attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification and intervention by Year Heads and Care Teams. • Direct communication with parents/guardians to resolve issues. • Guidance counselling and external support (e.g., NEPS, CAMHS, HSE) where needed. • In chronic cases, referral to the Educational Welfare Officer and consideration of alternative educational supports (e.g., reduced timetables, SCP support, home tuition). |
| <p>School roles in relation to attendance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management Team: Oversees implementation, data monitoring, and communication with Tusla. • Year Heads: Track attendance, initiate interventions, and meet with parents/guardian when absences reach concern levels. • Teachers: Record attendance accurately, promote engagement, and report concerns. • Parents/Guardians: Ensure daily attendance, communicate absences, and model punctuality. • Students: Attend punctually, provide valid absence reasons, and take responsibility for missed work. |
| <p>Partnership arrangements (parents/guardians, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p> | <p>St. Mary's Knockbeg College adopts a holistic, community-based approach to attendance.</p> <p>The school works collaboratively with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Guardians – ongoing communication via app, meetings, and reports. • Students – through leadership teams, pastoral care, and wellbeing programmes. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Schools – for transitions and shared attendance initiatives. • External Agencies – including the Educational Welfare Officer, HSE, NEPS, CAMHS, Garda Liaison Officer, and social/family support services. |
| How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored | Monitoring will occur through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular review of VSware attendance data by Year Heads, Attendance Coordinator (AP11), and Senior Management Team. • Ongoing communication between staff, parents/guardians, and external agencies. • Annual submission of attendance reports to Tusla. • Review of attendance trends and targets at staff and board meetings. |
| Review process and date for review | <p>The Attendance and Punctuality Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team and Board of Management, with input from staff, parents/guardians, and students.</p> <p>Next review date: October 2026.</p> |
| Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management | |
| Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla | |