



## Template for the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	St. Paul's Community College
Address	Browne's Road Waterford
Roll Number	72241E
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>Regular attendance at school in <b>St. Paul's Community College</b> is essential for all students so that they may reach their potential. Our school aims to foster a culture of regular attendance at school for all students. In addition, we seek to identify and support those students who are experiencing problems with attendance at school.</p> <p>The development of this Statement of Strategy for School Attendance is provided under the statutory instrument of Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Section 22(1) of the Act, states:</p> <p><i>'the board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the Principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students recognised at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board [of Tús] a statement of strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students'</i></p> <p><b>Rationale</b></p> <p>This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance is considered necessary because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are a number of legislative requirements arising from the Education Welfare Act 2002 and Education Act 1998.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. The changing fabric of our society.</li> <li>3. The role of Túsla</li> <li>4. The requirements of the Department of Education and Skills.</li> <li>5. The educational interests of our students.</li> </ol>
<p>The school's high expectations around attendance</p>	<p><b>Mission Statement</b></p> <p><i>St Paul's Community College is a multi-denominational, co-educational school providing an inclusive learning environment for all. We recognise and respect each student as an individual, embracing a variety of learning and teaching styles and aspiring to encourage each student's unique skills and talents. St. Paul's Community College encourages the involvement of parents through home school contacts and through the involvement in the development and growth of the Parents Council.</i></p> <p>St. Paul's Community College strives to attain a 100% attendance figure across all years. The whole-school staff - Principal, Deputy Principal, Assistant Principals, teachers, SNA's, school attendance secretary, HSCL and Attendance Team - work very hard on improving attendance each year. The non-attendance rate over the past three years hovers around the 11% mark on average and all in St. Paul's Community College would like to improve on this. The school has set high expectations around attendance through its positive discipline system, information to students and parents at morning assemblies for students, parent-teacher meetings, parent information meetings, home visitation by the HSCL teacher and attendance project strategies carried out by the Local Education Committee and by rewarding our students for good attendance.</p>
<p>How attendance will be monitored</p>	<p><i>"A parent is obliged to cause a student between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at 'a national school or other suitable school' on each day that the school is open for instruction."</i> Education Welfare Act 2000</p> <p>Students are expected to remain in school for a full school day. First Year, Second Year and Third Year students must remain on the school premises during lunchtime every day. Students will only be allowed out early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.</p> <p>The student must be collected by a parent and the parent must have given prior permission by note or a phone call.</p>

Any student who leaves the school premises without such authorisation will be deemed to have breached the school code of discipline and appropriate sanctions may be applied.

**When a Student is absent:**

- A note in the journal is provided by parents explaining the absence in accordance with the Education Act 1998. Parents may also ring the school or use the School App to report absences.
- All explanatory notes from the parents are kept in the student's file.
- Each student's absence is recorded on VS Ware and in the Green Registers.
- The category of absence is also recorded e.g. Absence Excused, School Activity, Receiving Resource Teaching etc.
- If a student misses a half day a verbal or written explanation is required from the parent.
- If a note isn't forthcoming the Year Head will contact the parents requesting a letter of explanation.

**Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick student from school**

If a student needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter/note in journal should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents.

If a student is sick during the school day, the Year Head/Secretary will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. It is up to the parent to ensure all phone numbers on our school system are up to date.

When collecting the student, the parent should report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the student out in the register provided at reception. If the child is not already in the Reception area of the school the parent may wait here while the secretary collects the student from the classroom.

On returning the student after the appointment, the student will sign back in in the sign-in book at reception.

No student will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless a letter has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the student. Personal identification may be sought to confirm the identity of the person collecting the student.

**Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency**

Our school day begins at 9.00am. If a student has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents. The school roll is taken daily at 9.00am and 1.15pm. In this case the roll will be kept open for this student until 12.35pm (maximum). After this time, the student has missed half of the school day and will be marked absent.

**Emergencies**

The parent should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The secretary can then have the student collected from the class and ready to meet the parent. The parent will be asked to sign the student out in the book at reception.

No student will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless the parent themselves has been in an accident. In such cases, the student will only be released to an immediate family member (personal identification may be sought to confirm the identity of the person collecting the student) known to the Principal & staff, as named as the Emergency Contact person.

**Punctuality**

Rolls will be called at 9.00am in the morning and at 1.15pm in the afternoon. If a student arrives to school after 9.00am or after 1.15pm each day, they must sign in at reception.

The HSCL teacher / Year Heads / Principal will meet with the parents of student who are continually late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.

	<p>If following school intervention &amp; strategies punctuality does not improve, the Principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.</p> <p>A copy of this policy will be given to members of staff, Board of Management, and available to parents to view in the school.</p>
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target setting and targets</li> <li>• The whole-school approach</li> <li>• Promoting good attendance</li> <li>• Responding to poor attendance</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEIS Plan Target Setting</b></p> <p>In accordance with our DEIS Plan baseline targets we will endeavour to decrease our annual non-attendance rates from an annual average of 11% for each school year to 9% this year.</p> <p>St. Paul's Community College always adopts a whole-school approach to promoting and responding to poor attendance. The whole-school approach is referred to in the next section of this policy framework document (<i>School roles in relation to attendance</i>) and in the previous section above (<i>The school's high expectations around attendance</i>).</p> <p><b>Promoting Attendance and Responding to Poor Attendance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our school attendance motto is based on 'Every Day Counts'</li> <li>• St. Paul's Community College promotes attendance through ongoing praise of good attendance by students.</li> <li>• The class teacher will highlight good attendance in the classroom.</li> <li>• The Year Head will regularly highlight good attendance at assembly.</li> <li>• The HSCL teacher will always highlight to parents the high importance of full and punctual attendance by their child at school. This will be done at parent information meetings, the first year parent induction meeting and during home visits to support families over the course of the school year.</li> <li>• Specific incentives may be offered to particular students to encourage attendance.</li> <li>• The student's total of absent days is recorded and reported to parents on Christmas and Summer exam reports.</li> </ul>

- At the Induction meeting for parents of new first years each year, the “Every Day Counts” leaflet will be distributed.
- In the interest of health and safety of the student, parents are reminded that external doors are closed at 9.30 each morning.

#### **Communication**

- Parents who fail to send in a letter of explanation of absence will be contacted by the Year Head.
- When a student reaches 10, 15 and 20 days absence, a letter will be automatically sent in each instance to parents informing them of this.
- A report on school attendance for each student is sent to Túsla by the school twice a year in complying with this statutory requirement.

#### **Removal of a Student during the School Day**

Students are expected to remain in school for a full school day. First Year, Second Year and Third Year students must remain on the school premises during lunchtime every day. Students will only be allowed out early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments. The student must be collected by a parent and the parent must have given prior permission by note or a phone call. Any student who leaves the school premises without such authorisation will be deemed to have breached the school code of discipline and appropriate sanctions may be applied.

#### **Aims:**

- To highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day
- To ensure the safety of all students in our school by having all visitors and parents report to the school office
- To ensure the accountability of all students during any emergency evacuations
- To retain a record of students regularly leaving school early

	<p><b>Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick student from school</b></p> <p>If a student needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter/note in journal should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents.</p> <p>If a student is sick during the school day, the Year Head/Secretary will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. It is up to the parent to ensure all phone numbers on our school system are up to date.</p> <p>When collecting the student, the parent should report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the student out in the register provided at reception. If the child is not already in the Reception area of the school the parent may wait here while the secretary collects the student from the classroom.</p> <p>On returning the student after the appointment, the student will sign back in in the sign-in book at reception.</p> <p>No student will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless a letter has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the student. Personal identification may be sought to confirm the identity of the person collecting the student.</p> <p><b>Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency</b></p> <p>Our school day begins at 9.00am. If a student has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents. The school roll is taken daily at 9.00am and 1.15pm. In this case the roll will be kept open for this student until 12.35pm (maximum). After this time, the student has missed half of the school day and will be marked absent.</p> <p><b>If there is a difficulty with punctuality or poor attendance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Year Head will talk to the parent about the matter and remind them of their statutory duty as parents to ensure that their child is sent to school.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Year Head may refer students' absences to the Attendance Team (including the HSCL teacher).</li> <li>• When a student has missed 10, 15 and 20 days, a letter is sent home each time to parents highlighting this and encouraging improvement.</li> <li>• If there is still no improvement the Principal along with the Year Head/ HSCL teacher will have a further discussion.</li> <li>• The Principal would formally meet the parent outlining that the Board of Management of the school will be informed about the poor attendance. Túsla will also be informed. A Referral may be made to Túsla.</li> <li>• Túsla will be contacted regarding any student who is a chronic or persistent non-attender at school and who is without a genuine reason for non-attendance. The Education Welfare Officer, Principal, Year Heads and Attendance Team (including the HSCL teacher) will work together to support families of students with particularly poor attendance.</li> </ul>
School roles in relation to attendance	<p><b>Principal:</b> Overall responsibility for students including attendance.</p> <p><b>Deputy Principal:</b> Liaise with Principal on all issue re. students including attendance</p> <p><b>HSCL Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports families/parents around their child's full attendance at school</li> <li>• Takes referrals from Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads and teachers where there are any concerns around attendance</li> <li>• Works as part of the Attendance Team in the school</li> <li>• Liaises with EWO and SCP around attendance</li> </ul> <p><b>Year Head:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor attendance in Year Group and make students aware of importance of regular attendance.</li> <li>• Make contact with parents/guardians in an effort to improve attendance and ascertain reasons for non-attendance.</li> </ul>

- When necessary make referrals to Attendance Team (including the HSCL teacher)

**Class Tutor:**

Ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences.

**Class Teacher:**

- It is the responsibility of each and every class teacher to register each student (present or absent) in VS Ware for every class each day, for first class in the morning, for first class in the afternoon each day and for all subsequent classes taught by the teacher during the course of each day.
- Should a teacher's computer or laptop not be available or should the Internet/Wi-Fi be down, then it is the responsibility of the class teacher to record absences in writing and submit same to the school secretary in the office at the end of the class period.
- Bring any concerns re. student attendance to the appropriate Year Head.

**School Attendance Team:**

- The attendance Team may take referrals from Year Heads and/or Class teachers and advise the Principal on further courses of action which may be taken. These include intervention by the HSCL teacher, intervention by the school Pastoral Care team; referral to Schools Completion programme or referral to the Education Welfare Officer
- The Attendance Team will monitor students who have been referred on an-ongoing basis.

**Education Welfare Officer:**

- The EWO may visit the school to discuss student attendance on a regular basis
- The Principal will make referrals to the EWO when the need arises as concerns about absent students become clear
- The EWO will liaise with the Attendance Committee around school absences.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EWO will advise the Principal/Attendance Committee around referring students over chronic absenteeism.</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Schools Completion Programme will:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take referrals from Principal and Attendance Team.</li> <li>• Establish contact with students and/or their parents/guardians.</li> <li>• Try to establish reasons for student absences.</li> <li>• Nurture confidence and trust</li> <li>• Encourage students to adopt a positive attitude to school attendance.</li> <li>• Establish contact and trust with students.</li> <li>• Work with students to counteract any 'gaps' in education which may lead to further absences.</li> <li>• SCP will use Restorative Practices to address attendance, participation and retention.</li> </ul>
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents will continue to be made welcome in school by all staff and encouraged to participate in all school meetings and parent-teacher meetings</li> <li>• The HSCL teacher engages parents through home visitation</li> <li>• To increase the frequency of coffee mornings/information mornings for parents throughout the year</li> <li>• HSCL phone number is available to all parents and contact card with mobile and school phone numbers</li> <li>• HSCL to liaise with teachers before and after home visitations</li> <li>• Parents will be developed through courses such as the Parents Plus Adolescents Programme and other suitable programmes (Leisure, Curricular. Personal Development).</li> <li>• Parents receive advice and support with regards to examinations, school programmes, subjects and careers</li> <li>• Parents to be involved in drawing up school policies</li> <li>• Membership of the Parents Council to be strongly encouraged</li> <li>• Parents will continue to be involved in the Local Education Committee and be engaged in working on curricular programmes such as the One Book One Community Initiative, literacy, numeracy,</li> </ul>

	<p>health and well-being and attendance initiatives and other initiatives that impinge on the education of the students in St. Paul's Community College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Students Council in St Paul's Community College will continue to be proactive in promoting attendance amongst its peers</li> <li>• St Paul's Community College will continue to welcome local community groups such as Manor St John Youth Project and BALL Project to the school who provide lunchtime clubs to encourage the attendance, retention and participation of all students in school</li> <li>• St Paul's Community College's excellent school JCSP library will continue to provide curricular and leisure activities and homework club to encourage and promote attendance at school under the careful auspices of our JCSP school librarian</li> <li>• Staff members in the school will continue to be generous with their time in providing sport and other leisure extra-curricular activities for students to encourage attendance , participation and retention</li> <li>• The Student Council will be involved in drawing up and reviewing our School Attendance Strategy and explore initiatives to enhance school attendance rates</li> </ul>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	<p>Monitoring will take place by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school Principal</li> <li>• The School Deputy Principal</li> <li>• The HSCL Teacher</li> <li>• The Year Heads</li> <li>• The Attendance Team (including the HSCL teacher)</li> </ul>
Review process and date for review	The Statement of Strategy will be reviewed on a yearly basis
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	23 January 2018
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	15 March 2018