



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Statement of Strategy for School Attendance Portumna Community School

Name of school	Portumna Community School
Address	St. Brigid's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway.
Roll Number	914130
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>The aim of the School Attendance Strategy is to provide an environment which encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually. The best gift that anybody can give a child is to offer a child the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. Full attendance and participation develops the social, cultural and recreational skills of all parties, thus enabling those parties to play a full part as responsible citizens. Without such a pattern of regular attendance, it is not possible to "develop each student's social, intellectual, physical and spiritual potential..and or the achievement of high standards in teaching, learning and performance" (Reference: The School's Mission Statement) strives to promote high levels of attendance at school, to prevent poor attendance, to intervene where attendance difficulties emerge &amp; to provide support to students whose attendance is a cause for concern. 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.</p>
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>The school has very high expectations around full school attendance. Students and parents are informed about the importance of school attendance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Year Head meetings and assemblies</li><li>• Monitoring</li><li>• Attendance Officer appointed</li><li>• Special award for full attendance</li><li>• Report to Tusla as required</li><li>•</li></ul>
How attendance will be monitored	<p>Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each school must prepare and submit to Tusla – Child and Family Agency a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance. Section 22(1) of the Act states that: 'The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of,</p>

teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the 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 (hereafter in this section referred to as a "statement of strategy").

Furthermore, Section 22(3) of the Act requires: 'The board of management of a recognised school shall, in preparing a statement of strategy, have regard to such guidelines issued by Tusla regarding the preparation and carrying into effect of statements of strategy'.

Thus, the following day to day steps are taken to monitor attendance:

**Day to day implementation:**

- When the first bell rings at 8:55 am students should be equipped and ready to present for class commencing at 9:00 am
- The morning attendance will be recorded into VSware before 9.40am and every class thereafter
- Students who arrive at school after 9.00 am are required to sign in at the School Reception. Any student who arrives late for school must be either accompanied by a parent /guardian or provided with an explanatory note.

The Administrator on duty will amend to record from absence unexplained to late explained/unexplained.

- Those arriving after the start of class are recorded as late by the class teacher.
- Students who leave the school during the day due to illness or appointments must be collected by a parent/guardian at School Reception and must then sign out. The signing out is inputted to VSware by the Admin Staff, this sign out slip will have been preauthorised by the relevant year head or on occasion the Deputy Principal or Principal if the Year Head is unavailable.
- Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, this is entered in the system by Admin staff as school activity. The teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of the names and, prior to departure, provides a copy of the list to Reception. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the Admin Staff of same.
- Absence notes are submitted to the Year Head, He/she will subsequently amend the absence unexplained to absence explained on VSware.

<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>The Whole School Approach</b></p> <p><b>Interventions to Promote Attendance</b></p> <p>The school provides universal interventions to all (support for all) students and targeted interventions to certain students (support for some and a few). 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students with special educational needs</li> <li>• Students with health needs</li> <li>• Students who have experienced bullying</li> <li>• Students experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties</li> <li>• Students disengaged from the curriculum</li> <li>• Students from the Traveller or Roma communities</li> <li>• Students who are experiencing homelessness</li> <li>• Students who are asylum seekers or living in direct provision centres</li> <li>• Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students</li> <li>• Students in foster care</li> <li>• Young carers or young parents</li> <li>• Students whose parents have not had a positive school experience</li> <li>• Students from families where there has been a history of poor school attendance</li> <li>• Students from socio-economically deprived family or community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Universal Interventions-Support for all</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school endeavours to provide a safe and orderly environment for students in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.</li> <li>2. The school deals with bullying related matters in accordance with the anti-bullying policy.</li> <li>3. First years are provided with a comprehensive induction programme.</li> <li>4. All students follow an SPHE programme to assist them throughout their schooling.</li> </ol>

5. All students are offered the support of a Year Head as part of the student support system.
6. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities - sport, music, drama, art etc.
7. All parents will receive details on absence/lateness in reports home twice each year.
8. Students are provided with a broad curriculum with subjects which suit the talents of all.
9. Student Leadership programmes such as the Students Council, Health Promoting Schools and other leadership development programmes are offered.

#### **Targeted Interventions-Support for Some**

1. The school offers the 'Cairde' programme to first year students.
2. The school provides after school and late study for students.
3. The guidance counsellor/Chaplain works with students who are having anxiety or mental health based absenteeism.
4. Families may be supported by the Management Team.
5. Meetings may be held with the Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal, the parents/guardians and the student(s) concerned.
6. The school may offer a differentiated curriculum to certain targeted students or a monitoring card system.
7. 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), Túsla – The Child and Family Agency and any other organisation which may be of assistance.
8. Skills programmes in the areas of behaviour such as the NBSS Alert Programme and the Meitheal Programme are available.
9. Check and Connect
10. Mentoring provided by one significant adult, i.e. Chaplain, Guidance Councillor, Year Head

#### **Intensive Intervention- Support for a few**

	<p>Students may be referred to the Túsla Education Welfare Officer for support and will work closely with the Education Welfare Officer to support the student. Students may, with the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer, be offered reduced timetables or alternative educational programmes, i.e. withdrawal or time-out</p>
<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p><b>Student:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. To punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.</li> <li>II. Following an absence from school, to present a written explanation in the designated section of the School Journal on the day of return to school.</li> <li>III. If arriving late for school, to be accompanied by a parent/guardian or to present a written explanation.</li> <li>IV. If attending a school activity, it is the student's own responsibility to catch up on work missed in class and complete all homework assigned for the next lesson.</li> </ol> <p><b>Parent/Guardian:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities. (Education Welfare Act 2000)</li> <li>II. To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences.</li> <li>III. To provide a written excuse for the student's absence on the first day of return to school.</li> <li>IV. All messages relating to student absences must be confirmed in writing as soon as possible for the attention of the Form Tutor.</li> <li>V. To provide to the school reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary.</li> <li>VI. To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.</li> <li>VII. To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.</li> <li>VIII. To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays.</li> <li>IX. Any student who arrives late for school must be either accompanied by a parent /guardian or provided with an explanatory note.</li> </ol> <p><b>Principal:</b></p>

- I. To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.
- II. To monitor attendance records regularly.
- III. To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- IV. To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences withdrawal of students from the School.
- V. To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.

**Deputy Principal:**

- I. To work in cooperation with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Administration Staff and Attendance Officer to implement the School Policy. To meet with Year Heads on a weekly basis and to discuss attendance as part of our weekly agenda.
- II. To liaise with the Year Head, Student Support Team, Principal, Parents/Guardians and EWO to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
- III. To meet, along with the Year Head and in some cases the Principal or school Chaplain, the students who had unauthorised absence from class.

**Class teacher:**

- I. To maintain accurate attendance records including when substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave.
- II. To input the attendance for all periods into the VShare system. If there is a technical difficulty the class teacher will record the attendance manually on paper and submit to the School Reception.
- III. If a student arrives late to class, teachers must record same on VShare.
- IV. If a student is being withdrawn said teacher must amend roll stating reason in note section.
- V. To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on good punctuality.
- VI. To alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences and to record details of student non-attendance.

**Year Head:**

- I. To monitor regularly the attendance records on the VSware system for the given year.
- II. To meet with the Deputy Principal on a weekly basis and discuss reports provided by the attendance officer.
- III. To liaise with the Student Support Team/Deputy Principal/Principal/EWO to address ongoing difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance when required.
- IV. To meet, along with the Deputy Principal/Principal/EWO, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue when required.
- V. To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and/ or when patterns of absences are developing and to notify the Deputy Principal/Principal of same.
- VI. To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- VII. To check absence notes from parents/guardians and to store these safely for the duration of the year.
- VIII. To amend, ideally on a weekly basis, the records on VSware from absence unexplained to absence explained where relevant.
- IX. To contact parent/guardian in the event of absences not being explained or where any other problems may arise in relation to attendance; suggested guidelines; phone call to parent/guardian at five absences, phone call and letter home at ten absences and phone call, letter home and parents meeting at 15 absences. A pre-referral meeting with EWO may be called between 15-20 absences. Upon reaching 20 absences a referral may be made to TUSLA.
- X. To work in conjunction with the Administrator in the School Office in submitting the four reports to the NEWB.

**Attendance Officer:**

- I. To liaise with and assist class teachers in matters relating to the recording and inputting of the attendance into VSware.
- II. To inform new teachers of their obligations with regard to recording attendance.
- III. To attend meetings with the Principal, Deputy Principal, EWO and Year Heads, to discuss matters relating to attendance.
- IV. To deliver assemblies to all year groups to promote the message "Every Day Counts".

	<p>V. To provide weekly reports to year heads based on the previous week's attendance records for discussion at management team meetings.</p> <p>VI. To recognise perfect attendance twice yearly to those students who have 100% attendance.</p> <p><b>Administrative Staff:</b></p> <p>I. To input attendance data from Class Teachers when school activities are taking place.</p> <p>II. To work in conjunction with the Year Heads to submit the four reports to the NEWB.</p> <p>III. To administer the signing in and out of students. (hard copy and VSware)</p> <p>IV. To amend VSware (AM) for students who sign in late with a late note.</p>
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<p>Families may be supported by the Year Head, the Principal, Deputy- Principal, Principal, Mentoring Team, and the school may offer a differentiated curriculum to certain targeted students.</p> <p>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), Barnardo's, Túsla – The Child and Family Agency and any other organisation which may be of assistance.</p>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	<p><b>Total inclusion involves the whole school body.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation, involving the Attendance Officer/Guidance Counsellor/Year Heads/Class Teachers/Principal/Deputy Principal/Parents/Students, is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Strategy.</li> <li>• Evaluation by means of random surveys and constant checking of Attendance Records by Class Teachers, Year Heads, Attendance Officer/Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor.</li> <li>• The Attendance Officer should regularly explain and re-enforce the effectiveness of the Attendance System to all students and parents. They will also monitor perfect attendance and report on this.</li> <li>• The Attendance Officer regularly updates the Year Heads of their own attendance records.</li> </ul>



	<p>The monitoring of the Daily Attendance Records is a good indicator of the effectiveness of the policy.</p> <p><b>Participation must be observed by all staff</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor signs of exclusion</li> <li>• Monitor willingness to participate</li> <li>• Monitor involvement in co-curricular activities</li> <li>• Monitor willingness to participate in school events</li> <li>• Monitor who is being negative</li> <li>• Discuss at staff meetings/development days</li> <li>• Report regularly to the Management Team.</li> </ul>
Review process and date for review	<p>Reviewed on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2019.</p> <p>This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. The review will take place with the school partners – students, staff, parents and board of management.</p>
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	