Attendance Policy

St. David's College

Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust

Attendance Policy

St David's College

School Address: Artane, Dublin 5

School roll number: 60471F

School Patron: The Edmund Rice Schools Trust

1. Introduction

St. David's College is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes the full and balanced development of every student. Recognising that regular attendance and active participation in school life are vital to both academic achievement and personal development, St. David's College endeavours to work in close partnership with parents and guardians. This policy is designed to ensure that every student is provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential, whilst upholding the values of attendance, punctuality, responsibility and participation in all areas of life.

2. St David's College Mission Statement

St. David's College is a Catholic School, promoting Christian values, that provide opportunities for every student to achieve his/her full potential in academic, artistic, social and sporting spheres in an atmosphere that promotes responsibility, tolerance and respect for others.

3. St. David's College Ethos

St. David's College is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of approximately 500 students. As a Catholic school operating under the patronage of The Edmund Rice Trust (E.R.S.T.), our ethos is rooted in the vision and values of the E.R.S.T. Charter. These principles encompass a spirit of partnership, nurturing faith, excellence in teaching and learning, community building, and inspirational leadership.

4. Legislative Framework

St. David's College attendance policy is implemented in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Key provisions of this legislation include:

- The mandatory maintenance of a school register that records both attendance and non-attendance for every student.
- The requirement for all children to attend school regularly until the age of sixteen or until they have completed at least three years of post-primary education, whichever is later.

- The establishment of a National Educational Welfare Board (now administered by TUSLA) and the appointment of Education Welfare Officers to collaborate with schools in promoting regular attendance.
- Specific conditions under which the school must report to TUSLA (e.g., expulsion, suspension for six consecutive days, cumulative absence of 20 days or more, or removal of a student's name from the register).
- The preparation and submission of a student absence report on a five-times-per-year basis, categorising absences under prescribed headings such as illness, family business, appointments, and unexplained absences.

5. Guiding Principles and Daily Procedures

At St. David's College, the school day is structured to support academic engagement and punctuality. Classes begin at 08:45 am and conclude at 15:35 pm from Monday to Thursday. On Fridays, classes begin at 08:45 am and conclude at 13:04 pm. Students are expected to arrive by 08:30 am each morning to ensure they are prepared with all necessary materials. Attendance in all timetabled classes, including physical education and examinations, is compulsory unless a valid medical certificate is provided. Any request for exemption must be submitted in writing by the parent or guardian and will be considered by school management. Exemptions are typically limited to students with identified Special Educational Needs.

6. Recording Attendance

Attendance is recorded electronically using the VS Ware system, which is overseen by individual teachers under the supervision of the Principal and Deputy Principal. This system records attendance during the first class of both the morning and afternoon sessions and ensures that any absence is immediately communicated to parents/guardians via the VS Ware school App. The recorded data is used not only for internal monitoring but also to comply with statutory reporting requirements to the National Education Welfare Board.

7. Procedures for Absences

Students who are absent from school must provide a note of explanation from their parent or guardian. This note is either submitted via the VS Ware application, the student's journal, or

directly to the school office. In the event of a student leaving school during the day for appointments, family matters or illness, prior notification must be given and documented, ensuring that students sign out appropriately. The parent/guardian may contact the school office directly or a signed note is provided in the student's journal and the student must go to the school office to be signed out.

8. Procedures for Lates

- **First Instance (with a parental/guardian note):** The student reports to the careroom, has their note verified, and then proceeds to class without further sanction
- **First Instance (without a parental/guardian note):** The student reports to the careroom and is required to complete a detention on the same day and parents/guardians are informed via text message
- **Subsequent Instances:** Regardless of whether a note is provided, further occurrences require the student to report to the careroom and complete a detention. Exemptions for exceptional circumstances will be reviewed by the year head e.g. medical cert, family emergency etc.
- **Excessive Lateness:** Arrivals more than one hour late without an explanation incur a VS Ware entry (-2) in addition to detention

9. Interventions and Support Measures

In circumstances where students are absent without explanation, the school follows a graduated intervention process to address chronic or unexplained absences:

- **For 5 to 10 absences where a medical cert is not provided:** The Year Head or the HSCL contacts the parent/guardian in a pastoral manner, informing them of available support services (e.g., school counsellors, pastoral care team, or chaplaincy services) and advising that continued absences may result in referral to the Attendance Co-ordinator and the School Completion Programme Project worker.
- **For 10 absences where a medical cert is not provided:** A referral is made to the Attendance Co-ordinator. Interventions may include placing the student on an Attendance Tracking List, referral to the School Completion Programme, or arranging a home visit by the HSCL.

- **For 11 to 20 absences where a medical cert is not provided:** If no improvement is observed, further actions may include a home visit, an attendance meeting with the parent/guardian and relevant staff members, or involvement of the school principal.
- **For 20 Unexplained Absences:** A formal referral is made to an Education Welfare Officer for students between 12 and 16 years of age. For all such cases, the HSCL works in conjunction with external agencies to address and rectify the attendance issues.

10. Additional Provisions

The policy also addresses situations where students report feeling unwell. In such cases, the student is referred to the School General Office, and the parent/guardian is contacted promptly to decide whether the student should be collected or remain at school under supervision. Moreover, for absences due to participation in school-related extra-curricular or co-curricular activities, teachers are responsible for recording these instances as "School Activity" in the VS Ware system.

For students experiencing extended periods of illness, the school will, where feasible, provide assignments or alternative work to support continued learning at home. However, these measures are not intended to replace the benefits of in-class peer interaction and direct teacher support.

11. Role of the Attendance Officer

The designated Attendance Officer plays a central role in maintaining and promoting good attendance practices. Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring the effective operation of the VS Ware attendance system.
- Coordinating with senior management, pastoral care, and Year Heads to monitor and address attendance issues.
- Contacting parents/guardians when a student accumulates ten days of absence and alerting the Principal or Deputy Principal when the cumulative absences reach 20 days or if a student is suspended for five days.
- Preparing and submitting the annual attendance report to TUSLA.

- Recognising and rewarding exemplary attendance through certificates and other incentives.

12. School Attendance Strategies

The College has implemented a variety of strategies to encourage consistent attendance, including:

- Creating a warm, respectful, and inclusive school environment.
- Delivering a modern and inclusive curriculum alongside an extensive extra-curricular programme.
- Maintaining a robust pastoral care system grounded in the ethos of Edmund Rice.
- Providing an inclusive and challenging Transition Year Programme and an effective Leaving Certificate Applied Programme.
- Facilitating homework clubs and supervised study sessions for all students

13. Reintegration and Return to School

Recognising that prolonged absence can impact a student's reintegration into the school community, St. David's College has developed a structured reintegration process. This process includes:

- A 'Welcome' meeting with a Year Head, Deputy Principal, or the Principal to ensure the returning student is fully equipped for the day's activities.
- Opportunities for the student to express any concerns or anxieties regarding classroom participation.
- Collaborative efforts with parents/guardians to tailor support, which may include temporary adjustments to the student's timetable or exemptions from specific subject requirements. The introduction of a reduced timetable is a formal process and an agreed timeline for a full return to school is detailed in the application form sent to TUSLA.
- Regular monitoring and feedback sessions between the student and designated staff members, which may include the recognition of improved attendance through rewards and certificates.

14. Parental and Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are integral to the success of the attendance policy. They are expected to:

- Emphasise the importance of routine and consistent attendance to students
- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time
- Familiarise themselves with legal requirements regarding school attendance
- Understand the procedures related to absences and provide timely explanations for any absences via the VS Ware system, student journals, phone calls, or email
- Collaborate with school staff, including the HSCL and the School Completion Programme, and attend any meetings related to attendance issues

15. Conclusion

St. David's College recognises that regular and punctual attendance is a cornerstone of academic success and personal development. By adhering to this Attendance Policy, the school, in partnership with parents and guardians, aims to provide a secure, engaging, and supportive environment where every student has the opportunity to excel.

Stephen A Smith

5/3/2025.