

Attendance Policy

St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoyle



Updated to include Attendance Strategy 2026–2027

Introduction

In accordance with our ethos and mission statement, St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoyle aims to create and foster an environment that promotes the personal integrity and dignity of all members of the school community. We encourage full and punctual attendance at school, in compliance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Under Section 17 of the Act, a parent must cause their child to attend a recognised school on each school day.

Ethos and Mission Statement

The Attendance Policy is rooted in the religious and educational philosophy of the Le Cheile Trust and the Religious Sisters of Charity.

Mission Statement:

- We aim for high academic standards and emphasise the moral, religious, and social development of each student in a caring community.
- We work in partnership with parents to prepare our students to be independent, tolerant, and compassionate.

Promoting Full Attendance

- Full and punctual attendance is actively promoted through a positive approach embedded in a culture of high expectations.
- Students are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, understanding the cumulative nature of education and how regular, on-time attendance supports long-term success.
- Teachers emphasise the connection between consistent engagement, punctuality, and academic achievement.
- The Pastoral Care Programme provides ongoing encouragement and support.
- Full attendance and improved punctuality are celebrated and rewarded annually at the Prizegiving Ceremony.
- Reports to parents/guardians include attendance records, ensuring families remain informed and engaged.

School Attendance Strategy

The Board of Management, in collaboration with staff and parents/guardians, is committed to the following strategies to promote and ensure attendance and punctuality:

- Developing an appreciation of education for the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural, and moral development of all students.
- Creating an environment, within available resources, that encourages full participation in school life.
- Providing an educational environment based on Christian principles of respect for the dignity and worth of others.
- Identifying students at risk of attendance or punctuality issues at an early stage and intervening appropriately.
- Collaborating with Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) Educational Welfare Officers to assist students at risk.
- Submitting attendance reports to Tusla (TESS) as required, including Student Absence Reports for students absent for 20 days or more.

Attendance Strategy 2026–2027

Focus: Punctuality – Purpose – Prepared for the Future

Rationale

Analysis of attendance data from the 2025–2026 academic year indicates a significant shift in patterns of lateness. For the first time, the highest incidence of morning lateness occurred among First Year students rather than within the senior cycle. This emerging trend is a cause for concern, as early habits of poor punctuality can negatively impact student engagement, academic performance, and long-term attendance patterns.

This strategy prioritises early intervention at junior cycle level to establish positive routines, reinforce expectations, and prevent the development of persistent lateness behaviours.

Aims

- To reduce incidents of morning lateness, particularly among First Year students.
- To establish a strong culture of punctuality across all year groups.
- To promote personal responsibility and preparedness for school.
- To ensure consistent and transparent systems for recording and monitoring lateness.
- To engage parents/guardians in supporting punctual attendance.

Key Targets

- Achieve a measurable reduction in lateness among First Year students by the end of the academic year.
- Reduce repeat lateness incidents across junior cycle through early intervention.
- Ensure 100% compliance with new sign-in procedures for late arrivals.

Core Strategy

Punctuality, Purpose of Learning, Pride in Myself

We will promote the following messages:

- Be on time to support all learning.
- Arriving on time shows pride in myself.
- Being punctual helps me focus on my future.

Key Actions

Promote Purpose (Why Punctuality Matters)

- Explicitly link punctuality to learning in assemblies, SPHE, and tutor time.
- Teachers reinforce how lateness affects understanding and progress.
- Share student-friendly messages: "Every minute counts" and "Don't miss the start – it matters most."

Build Pride (Student Ownership)

- Develop a positive culture where punctuality is seen as a sign of respect and self-pride.
- Introduce recognition systems such as punctuality awards, year group acknowledgement, and tutor group targets.
- Use student voice, including prefects and Student Council, to promote punctuality as part of school identity.

Strengthen Systems (Consistency and Clarity)

- Ensure consistent recording and monitoring of lateness across all classes.
- Implement clear, staged responses to repeated lateness, including tracking, parent contact, and support.
- Use regular data reviews by Year Heads and senior management to identify patterns and intervene early.

Support Improvement (Targeted Interventions)

- Identify students with repeated lateness and provide early support, including check-ins, mentoring, and practical solutions.
- Engage parents/guardians promptly where patterns emerge.
- Address barriers such as transport, organisation, and morning routines through guidance and support.

Reinforce Expectations (Whole-School Approach)

- Staff model and consistently reinforce expectations around punctuality.
- Communicate expectations clearly at the start of the year and revisit them regularly.
- Align punctuality with the school's ethos of respect, responsibility, and readiness to learn.

Systems and Procedures

- All students arriving late must enter the school through the front door only.
- Each year group will be assigned a unique QR code to record lateness through a Microsoft Form.
- The form will capture the student name, class, time of arrival, and reason for lateness.
- The relevant Year Head will have access to Microsoft Form responses to monitor patterns.
- Students must present their journal for stamping after completing the sign-in process, confirming that lateness has been officially recorded.
- Failure to follow the sign-in procedure will result in disciplinary follow-up in line with the Code of Behaviour.

Targeted Junior Cycle Intervention

- First Year students will receive explicit induction on punctuality expectations during their initial weeks.
- Form Teachers and Year Heads will reinforce routines around morning arrival and organisation.
- First Year lateness data will be monitored regularly to identify emerging patterns early.
- Students with repeated lateness will receive staged intervention: reminder and discussion with the Form Teacher; parent/guardian contact; meeting with the Year Head; and referral to senior management where required.

Monitoring, Data and Evaluation

- Lateness data will be reviewed weekly by Year Heads and monthly by senior management.
- Patterns will be analysed by year group, class group, and individual student.
- Particular attention will be given to First Year cohorts to ensure early corrective action.
- Data will inform targeted supports and interventions.
 - The strategy will be reviewed at key points during the year, adjusted in response to trends and feedback, and evaluated fully at the end of the academic year.

Success Indicators

- Reduction in recorded lateness incidents across all year groups.
- Improved readiness and engagement at the beginning of lessons.
- Increased student awareness of the relationship between punctuality, learning, and future goals.
- Positive staff feedback on the effectiveness of lesson starts.
- Measurable reduction in First Year morning lateness by the end of the 2026–2027 school year.

Key Message for Students

“Be on time. Learn more. Take pride. Build your future.”

Attendance and Absence Recording Procedures in St. Mary's Secondary School, Baldoyle.

Recording Attendance

- Attendance is recorded using VSWare at three daily intervals: Morning Roll Call at 8:45 AM; Afternoon Check at 2:30 PM; and 12:00 PM on Wednesdays.
- Attendance and absence data, including the number of classes missed per subject, are available through VSWare for parent/guardian monitoring.

Absence Notification

- Parents/guardians must submit written explanations for all absences through the VSWare App.
- Parents/guardians receive reminders from the school to review attendance information on VSWare.

Late Arrivals and Early Departures

- Students arriving late must enter through the front door after 8:45 AM, complete the QR-code sign-in process, and present their journal for stamping at the office.
- Early departures should be arranged at the end of a class period, recorded in VSWare, and completed through sign-out at the office and exit via the front door.
- Using unauthorised entrances or exits during the school day is a breach of the Code of Behaviour and may result in detention.

Teacher Responsibilities

- Subject teachers record daily attendance on VSWare.
- Form Teachers check absences regularly and discuss attendance and punctuality concerns with students.

Communication, Monitoring and Support

Automated Notifications

- A morning absence alert is sent to parents/guardians if a student has not attended school by the end of the first period.
- Text messages may be sent to remind parents/guardians of significant or cumulative absences.
- Students with frequent lateness may receive detention as part of the attendance strategy and Code of Behaviour.
- Further communication may be issued where absence patterns continue.

Attendance Monitoring and Reporting

- The Attendance Officer works with the Student Support Team to address attendance concerns and may contact parents/guardians directly.
- The Friday Email includes reminders for parents/guardians to monitor attendance through VSWare.
- October, Christmas, Mock, and Summer reports include an Attendance Notice summarising days absent during the relevant period.

- The Student Support Team reviews attendance data to support student wellbeing, involving Year Heads, Form Teachers, and the Attendance Officer.

Recognition and Rewards

- Certificates of Perfect Attendance may be awarded to students and classes demonstrating exemplary attendance.
- Outstanding attendance and punctuality may be acknowledged through prizes and recognition at school ceremonies.
- Positive reinforcement, including awards and public acknowledgement, supports the school's attendance and punctuality culture.

Parental Engagement and External Support

- Meetings with parents/guardians may be arranged to develop tailored strategies and interventions to improve attendance or punctuality.
- The school may collaborate with Tusla TESS Educational Welfare Officers and other appropriate agencies to provide additional support for students with persistent attendance concerns.

Specialised Support for Students with Additional Educational Needs

- The AEN Team and SNAs support consistent attendance through communication diaries, personalised strategies, and appropriate liaison with parents/guardians.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Senior Management: Oversight of policy and strategy implementation, data review, and policy enforcement.
- Year Heads: Monitoring attendance and lateness data, communicating with students and parents/guardians, and coordinating interventions.
- Form Teachers: Daily reinforcement of attendance and punctuality expectations, and first point of contact for concerns.
- All Staff: Promotion of a culture of punctuality and consistent application of procedures.
- Students: Responsibility for arriving on time, attending regularly, and following sign-in procedures when late.
- Parents/Guardians: Supporting punctual attendance and engaging with the school where concerns arise.

Procedures for Attendance Concerns

Student Support Team

Attendance and punctuality are reviewed at regular pastoral care meetings attended by the Year Head and Student Support Team members.

Year Heads

- Identify and monitor students with attendance or punctuality concerns.
- Review relevant attendance records and lateness data.
- Contact parents/guardians as early as possible when concerns arise.
Arrange meetings with students and parents/guardians where appropriate.

Principal/Deputy Principal

- Submit attendance reports requested by Tusla TESS at specified points during the year.
- Meet students and parents/guardians, where appropriate, to support improved attendance and punctuality.

Tusla Education Support Service

- Parents/guardians of students under 16 with approximately 15 absences may receive a letter outlining attendance responsibilities under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Students with 20 days or more of cumulative absence are included in Student Absence Reports submitted to Tusla TESS, as required.
- Parents/guardians will be notified where a Student Absence Report is submitted.
- Parents/guardians of students over 16 with approximately 15 absences may also receive a letter regarding the consequences of frequent absence.

Educational Welfare Officers

- The school permits Educational Welfare Officers to inspect attendance registers and roll books, and to take extracts, in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal will inform an Educational Welfare Officer in writing when a student is not attending regularly or when a student's name is removed from the register.
- Following a referral, the Educational Welfare Officer may consult with the student, parents/guardians, and relevant persons, and make reasonable efforts to support the student's continued education and full participation in school.

Student Transfer Procedures

- On confirmation that a student has transferred, the Principal will remove the student from the school register in accordance with required procedures.
- Relevant attendance information and educational-progress information will be shared with the receiving school where appropriate and lawful.

Timetable and Attendance Support

- The one-hour class structure supports effective teaching and learning. Breaks between class periods and the early finish on Wednesdays at 1:00 PM provide opportunities for appointments outside class time.
- Check and Connect sessions are held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These 10-minute Form Teacher sessions focus on student wellbeing, behaviour, attendance, and support.

- Parents/guardians are asked to avoid collecting students during class time, requesting student retrieval by intercom, or making same-day early-departure requests by telephone except where necessary.
- Accurate sign-in and sign-out procedures are essential for health, safety, and emergency accountability.

Attendance, Guidance and Wellbeing

Attendance is integrated into the school's whole-school guidance framework, which supports the academic, emotional, and social development of every student. Regular and punctual attendance enables students to benefit from the guidance offered by Form Teachers, Year Heads, and the Student Support Team. Attendance data is used to identify barriers to participation, allowing early intervention and targeted support.

Students are encouraged to participate in sporting events, wellbeing days, and fun days. These activities foster friendships, connection, wellbeing, and a sense of community. Parents/guardians are asked to support attendance on these occasions, as participation is an important part of school life and student development.

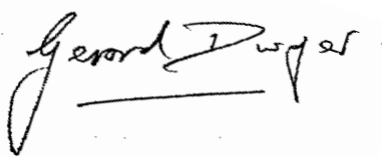
Attendance and the Code of Behaviour

- Persistent absence or lateness is addressed in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Consequences, including detention where appropriate, may be applied in response to recurring lateness or failure to follow sign-in procedures.
- Full attendance and punctuality are recognised through commendation awards, attendance certificates, and other positive reinforcement.
- Students are reminded that regular attendance and punctuality demonstrate respect for their own education and the learning of others.

Review and Ratification

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Board of Management, in consultation with the school community, and in response to legislative, departmental, and Tusla TESS guidance.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 28 May 2026



Gerard Dwyer

Chairperson: _____

Date: 18th August 2026

Evel Greene

Principal: _____

Date: 18th August 2026