*Principal:* Mr. John O'Donovan
*Deputy Principal:* Ms. Anne Cummins




Ballybunion, Co. Kerry.
Telephone: 068 27205 Fax: 068 27511
Mobile: 086 269 0621
Email: sjsb@ireland.com

MEÁN SCOIL NAOMH IOSAIF
ST. JOSEPH'S
SECONDARY SCHOOL

# Attendance Policy

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| **Date staff consulted:** | **May 2026** |
| **Date parents consulted:** | |
| **Date students consulted:** | **May 2026** |
| **Date ratified at B.O.M. meeting:** | 28/5/26 |
| **Date for Review:** | **September 2027** |

Signed _____ Date 28/5/26
*Chairperson, Board of Management*

Signed _____ Date 28/5/26
*Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management*

# Policy on School Attendance

## Ethos is at the core of this policy

St. Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school established in 1952 by the Sisters of Mercy. In accordance with the foundress of Mercy Schools, Catherine McCauley, her gospel and legacy, we show a special interest in the poor and disadvantaged.

St. Joseph's Secondary School is a holistic centre of development and learning where each person is special and treasured as such. We, the staff and students, enjoy working together to realise our full potential in a healthy, safe, stimulating and friendly environment where the atmosphere is one of mutual respect, co-operation and challenge. Christian community is our heritage and goal. The Good News of the Gospel is our story.

While St. Joseph's ensures that school attendance is monitored for all students, it stresses and rewards students who achieve high levels of attendance as well as monitoring those who struggle to attend school and encourage them to improve their attendance. The school recognises the central role of parents in supporting and encouraging good attendance among the student body.

- This policy is a statement of strategies and measures to foster appreciation of learning among pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school.
- Every child has the right to an education.
- The Board of Management and staff of St. Joseph's Secondary School see school attendance as a means of upholding this basic right. The Board of Management and staff view it as their duty to support the child in this right. Absenteeism of any kind is taken seriously.
- Gross or chronic absenteeism is seen as symptomatic of other problems and necessitates further enquiry.
- This policy was drawn up by staff of St. Joseph's Secondary School in consultation with and ratified by the Student Council, the Parents' Association and The Board of Management of St. Joseph's Secondary School. The purpose of the policy is to document current and future practice on school attendance.

## Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Joseph's Secondary School, is a co-educational secondary school which seeks to develop the full potential of each student intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social cultural and religious. To achieve this, the school seeks to recognise and affirm individual skills and abilities through curricular and extra-curricular activities.
We understand school as all school-related activities, sport, liturgies, school outings, seminars, and examinations and parent teacher meetings.

## Aims of Policy

1. To encourage our students to attend school every day.
2. To enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community.
3. To encourage our students to take responsibility for their school attendance
4. To encourage our students' parents to take responsibility for school attendance.
5. To ensure accurate attendance reports are available on all students in the school.

## Procedures

St. Joseph's undertakes to inform parents of their duty to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis. There is an obligation on each parent/guardian to ensure that their child's **absence is explained** (section 18 Education Welfare Act). There is an expectation by the school that this **explanation be uploaded on the schools' Tyro platform.**

. Attendance reports are available on Tyro. Upon reaching 10 days' absence the parents or students will be contacted by the SLT. Upon reaching twenty days' absence the students' attendance will be brought to the attention of Tusla (Section 21 Education Welfare Act). This may happen earlier at the discretion of the principal. The age of the student must be held in mind when dealing with the Tusla and the reporting of prolonged absences.

## Introduction

As a school community, the staff at St. Joseph's Secondary School, believe

- that there is a direct relationship between a student's success in school and regular attendance
- that students who have good attendance records enjoy their school experience more than students who do not attend regularly.

## The Policy in Context

The school Attendance Policy is directed by

1. The School Mission Statement
2. The Pastoral Care Policy
3. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

## Aim

It is hoped that by constantly monitoring and tracking students' attendance records, absenteeism will improve and students will have a positive school experience. To reflect our obligations relating to school attendance as outlined in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and attending to problems of absenteeism. It was signed into law on July 5th 2000. The National Educational Welfare Board (now part of Tusla) was set up under this Act to support regular attendance and the education of children and young people. The Board has appointed Educational Welfare Officers (E.W.O.) to provide advice and support to parents and schools and to follow up absences from school. Under the Act parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it is recommended that the explanation be in writing. It is incumbent on schools to notify the Tusla if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 safeguards every child's entitlement to an appropriate minimum education by:

- Developing a national framework to promote regular attendance at school,
- Promoting a positive appreciation among students of the benefits to be derived from education and attendance at school
- Identifying the causes of absenteeism and early school leaving and developing measures for its prevention,
- Providing support to children at risk and those who experience difficulties in school in order to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.

Tusla

The National Educational Welfare Board (now part of Tusla) is given the lead role in implementing the provisions of the Act:

- The principal function of Tusla is to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.
- Tusla also has an advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance and education provision.
- Tusla will deploy educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country. These officers will work in close co-operation with parents, teachers, school managers, community bodies and other relevant agencies to promote regular school attendance and prevent absenteeism and early school leaving.

**Educational Welfare Officer**

The Educational Welfare Officers appointed by Tusla will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. Alternative schooling will be sought for students who have been expelled, suspended or refused admittance to a school.

**Our School Day**

All students must attend at the scheduled times every day:
Mon., Tues., Wed., and Thurs: 9.00 – 3.45
Friday. 9.00 – 1.15

- Students are expected to be present each day.
- Students are expected to maintain high standards of punctuality throughout the day.

**Procedures for monitoring attendance**

Subject teachers take attendance using Tyro at the start of each lesson.
Parents can monitor attendance on the Tyro School App

- After 10 days unexplained absence, the parents/guardians are contacted by the Year Head to alert them of the concern over the large number of absences.
- The teacher communicates the names of students of concern to the Student Support Team at their Student Support Team meeting and may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support team or outside agency as appropriate.
- After 20 days' absence, the Principal contacts the parents/guardians of students under 16 to inform them of the school's obligation to inform the EWB.
- *Submission of annual returns*- we as a school have a legal requirement to submit our annual school student attendance report to Tusla (Annual attendance report & School absence report). This is to provide evidence that enables TESS (Tusla Educational Support Services) and the Department to plan supports and engagement with schools, parents and students.
- Tyro has a tiered system (Threshold Attendance) to highlight students who may have;
  - Attendance that should addressed 0-5% days absent (lower tier)
  - Attendance concerns 5-10% days absent (middle tier)
  - Attendance requiring immediate attention 10% or more days absent (upper tier)

This tiered system allows the school to accurately track student attendance and to offer support when necessary.

**Procedure for recording Explanations for Absence**

- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed on the school Tyro platform.
- The Year Head and SLT track the attendance records of the students on a regular basis and if they notice that a student has a number of unexplained absences, contact will be made with the parents informing them of the unexplained absences and requesting further information re same.

**School Activity/Work Experience**

- Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded as school activity (Sch).
- Teachers organising the school activity provide information of the event and students attending on the school Tyro platform and this records the students' absence from class as a school activity. The staff member accompanying or organising the event takes attendance before leaving for the activity and Tyro is updated automatically.
- The onus is on each individual student to catch up on homework missed while out on a school activity.

**Late Policy**

- Students are requested to get into the routine of being at school on time.
- Students who arrive late disrupt the class and miss important instruction time.
- When a student is late, the reason for his/her lateness must be clearly stated and presented to the subject teacher on entry to class.
- The student must sign in at the sign in/sign out kiosk upon late entry to the school.
- If a student accrues eight late entries they will be issued with a detention.

**Truancy**

- Truancy is considered an extreme violation of the School Code of Conduct and incurs immediate detention
- In school Truancy (where a student remains in the school building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs an incident sheet and potential detention.

**Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents/guardians and students are requested not to make medical or dental appointments during school hours.

- Where this is not possible, a permission to leave the school note must be completed on the Tyro School App, ready for approval by the SLT, on the day in question before 9am.
- The parent must notify the school on Tyro about the request for absence.
- The student will record their departure from school at the sign/sign kiosk and *must be collected in person by a parent/guardian.*
- The student is required to sign back in on their return at the sign/sign out kiosk.

**Communication with Parents**

- Students absence from class is highlighted on Tyro and is available for the parents viewing on the Tyro App.
- Parents are informed of their son/daughter's attendance and punctuality record through the Tyro system.
- Parents/guardians are contacted once a student has been absent in excess of 10 days and again when a student is absent in excess of 20 days. Under the current Tyro tiered system students with concerning attendance may have their parents contacted before they reach the 5% threshold.

- Individual subject teachers can track a student's attendance for their given subject using Tyro and are encouraged to contact a parent/guardian if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.
- When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies re same.
- When a Year Head notes that a student/parent has not presented reasons explaining his/her absences, the SLT will contact the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.

**Communication with Teachers**

- Teachers have access to the attendance records of all students through the use of Tyro.
- Teachers can access the specific attendance record for each of their teaching groups using Tyro.
- If information is received from parents in relation to a student's absence, teachers are notified of this through the Tyro/School Secretary/Year Head.

**School Action:**
In order to encourage student attendance, St. Joseph's Secondary School will develop and implement grade appropriate strategies and programmes including, but not limited to:

- Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, sport days, school tours, trips to cinema) will be scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before school holidays).
- Students/Classes with full attendance will be acknowledged by their subject/class/ teachers, or Year Heads by writing a note in the student journal, by making announcements over the intercom and use of the school merit card system.
- In line with Tyro Threshold Attendance the Year Head/SLT/ASD Coordinator/ Guidance Counsellor may invite parents in with the student to devise strategies to improve attendance and or investigate any issues the student may be experiencing to cause a negative pattern in attendance.

**Community Awareness**
The Board of Management shall promote necessary community awareness of the Policy on School Attendance by:

1. Promoting the understanding of the policy to students and their parents/guardians.
2. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the Policy on School Attendance.
3. Make the policy available on the school website.

**Annual Review by the Board of Management:**
The Board of Management shall annually review the level of student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall direct the Principal to develop and implement revisions and plans deemed necessary to improve student attendance.