

# Attendance & Punctuality Policy

## Castleknock Community College



### Review Dates

Staff	February 2018	Reviewed
Parents	February 2018	Reviewed
Student Council	February 2018	Reviewed
BOM	May 2010	Ratified
BOM	January 2014	Reviewed without amendments.
BOM	October 2015	Reviewed with amendments.
BOM	March 2018	Reviewed with amendments.
BOM	March 2022	Reviewed with amendments.
BOM	March 2025	Reviewed with amendments.

Due for next review January 2028

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## 1. Mission Statement

In serving the needs of our community we, the pupils, parents and staff, in all our endeavours aspire towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment. By growing and developing through co-operation this will enable all to realise their full potential.

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## 2. Introduction

A meaningful education provides every student with the best possible start in life and it helps them to mature and develop into responsible young adults. The purpose of our *College Policy on Attendance and Punctuality* is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in the education system. Moreover, it endeavours to promote self-discipline, commitment and responsibility.

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## 3. The Education Welfare Act 2000

The main provisions of the Education Welfare Act are as follows:

- 1) Schools are required to establish and maintain a school register, showing attendance or non-attendance for each student.
- 2) Every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years of education in post primary, whichever comes later.
- 3) The act established the TUSLA Education Support Service (TESS). TESS has appointed Education Welfare Officers to work with schools to encourage good school attendance.
- 4) The act stipulates that the school is obliged to report to the TUSLA Education Support Services (TESS) every time:
  - It decides to expel students
  - A student's name is removed from the school register
  - A student has reached 20 days of absence cumulatively
  - A student has been suspended for six consecutive days or more
  - A student is placed on a Reduced School Day
  - A Principal has cause for concern over a student's attendance, for whatever reason, and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level in collaboration with the home, a referral to TUSLA Educational Welfare Services should be made via the TUSLA Portal.
- 5) Schools must prepare and submit to TESS twice yearly School Absence Reports (SAR) and an Annual Attendance Record (AAR).
  - The Period 1 SAR (beginning of term to Christmas break) is submitted on the last day of term in December. The Period 2 SAR (from Christmas to the end of the school year) is submitted at the end of the school year in June.
  - The SAR documents students who have been absent for a cumulative total of twenty days or more. Only children who have not reached the age of 16 or have not completed 3 years of post-primary education, whichever occurs later, are included in the SAR.The AAR is submitted to TESS at the end of each academic year. The AAR records the following:
  - Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire year.

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- Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.
- Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeals processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.
- Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.

6) Absences must be categorised under eight headings:

- A. Illness
  - B. Family Business
  - C. Expelled
  - D. Suspended
  - E. Other
  - F. Unexplained
  - G. Transfer to another school
  - H. Holiday
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## 4. Students on a Reduced School Day

- All students who are enrolled in school should attend for the full day, except in exceptional circumstances.
  - Reduced School Days are defined as a reduced day in school where, by arrangement with the school authorities, a student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day and/or a reduced week where, by arrangement of the school authorities, a student may not attend the full five days a week.
  - The school must have clear evidence-based reasons for placing a student on a Reduced School Day, which is a relevant and appropriate intervention in the best interests of the student.
  - The school must have the written consent of the parents/guardians of the student (or the student if they have reached the age of 18) to the agreed Reduced School Day arrangement. This consent can be withdrawn at any time.
  - The school should formulate and agree a Reduced School Day Intervention Plan, which will specify start, review and end dates as well as any educational supports or interventions to be provided for the student during the period of the Reduced School Day. The Intervention Plan must be discussed and agreed in collaboration with the parent/guardian (or the student if they have reached the age of 18).
  - Ideally, the period for which a student is on a Reduced School Day, should not exceed six school weeks. Extensions to a Reduced School Day should only be considered in exceptional circumstances and only with the further written consent of parents/guardians (of the student if they have reached the age of 18). A Reduced School Day cannot be carried over from one academic year to the next.
  - The school must notify TESS of the decision to place a student on a Reduced School Day no later than the first day of the commencement of each episode of a Reduced School Day.
  - The school must also notify the NCSE (National Council for Special Education) via the local SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser) of the decision to place a student on a reduced school day where the student has special educational needs (SEN).
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## 5. School Policy on Attendance

### 5.1 Attendance: Student ID Card & VSWare System

- Students are required to tap in using their student ID Card before 8.50a.m. and 1.15p.m. each day except Wednesdays when they are required to tap in by 8.50a.m. only.
- A student who is present but fails to tap in will be deemed to be late. More than two lates in any week will result in detention. Students will sit detention on Wednesday afternoons from 12.30-1.30p.m.
- Students are expected to have their ID cards in their possession at all times. If an ID card is lost a replacement ID card must be ordered through the office (Cost €10.00).
- Tutors and teachers have a duty of care in the completion of attendance details on a daily basis. The system that is followed:
  - i. Tutors to take and update attendance roll each morning at 8.52am on VS Ware
  - ii. Each teacher will register the class attendance within the first five minutes of class.
- Lists of students who will be absent on any activities should be logged on VSWare or in exceptional circumstances posted on the noticeboard in the staffroom and communicated via the staff email system. These activities may include: practical exams, work experience, extracurricular activities etc.
- Accurate attendance records are maintained by tutors and subject teachers. Absences are followed up and absence notes are checked in the next class.

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### 5.2 Attendance & Student Responsibility

- Students are required to be in the school building by 8.50 a.m. each morning and 1.15 p.m. after lunch. Students are required to tap in using their student ID Card before 8.50a.m. and 1.10p.m. each day except Wednesdays when they are required to tap in at 8.50 a.m. only.
- Students who wish to leave the school early for an appointment (e.g. Doctor, Dentist etc.) must present a note of explanation in advance to their Tutor. This note is signed by the Year head/Assistant Year head and must be produced at the office by the student before they can sign out for their scheduled appointment. This written note can also be in the form of an absence request submitted via the VSWare App. The student absence and reason for same is then recorded on the VS Ware system by the office.
- In the event of a student becoming ill while at school, parent/guardian's permission must be received before they sign out through the office. He/She must remain at reception until contact is made with the student's parents/guardians. Once a student has been signed out their absence and reason for same is then recorded on the VSWare system by the office.
- Full attendance and participation in timetabled PE classes is required. Students who are unable to participate in PE classes due to medical circumstances may be asked to furnish their PE teacher with a parental note/medical note.
- To facilitate the above process, the School Journal must be in the possession of students at all times.
- Any student who leaves the building during the school day without complying with the procedures outlined above will be considered truant and sanctions, up to and including suspension, may be imposed by the school.

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## 5.3 Lunchtime Information

### Staying in School

Students, who request to stay in school for lunch, are expected to remain on the school grounds. There is a lot of traffic in the vicinity of the College and for their safety; we request that students who stay in College for lunch do not leave the school grounds for any reason. We regret that we cannot accept responsibility for their safety if they ignore this instruction.

Only senior students (TY, LC1, LCA1, LC2, & LCA2) may go to the shop at lunchtime.

### Going Home for Lunch

Students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) wish them to go home for lunch may do so, once their parent(s)/guardian(s) has noted this request in the school journal. We ask that students going home for lunch do so promptly and do not loiter around the shops or go to friends' houses without prior permission from parents.

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## 5.4 Attendance & Parental Responsibility (the VSWare App)

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parents (The Education Welfare Act 2000).

- All communication from parents/guardians concerning student absence is now conducted via the VSWare App and should no longer be communicated via the Student Journal.
- Using the VSWare App parents/guardians can inform their son/daughter's tutor of a partial or full day absence and the reasons for same. Ideally this pending absence request should be submitted in advance of the start of the school day.
- Absence requests that are received before tutorial at 8.52am on any given day will be processed by the tutor during tutorial. If the tutor deems the absence request to be valid and accepts it, the student's VSWare attendance record will be automatically updated with the duration of the absence and the reasons for same recorded on their attendance profile for that day or days. The VSWare App will automatically notify parents/guardians that the request has been accepted and processed by the class tutor.
- If the class tutor deems the absence request to be invalid or erroneous they have the option to reject the absence request and provide a brief written summary explaining why the request was rejected. The VSWare App will automatically notify parents/guardians of the rejection and the reasons for same. They will then have an opportunity to submit an amended/corrected absence request which the tutor can process as outlined above.
- In instances where an absence request for a student has not been submitted by their parents/guardians or has not been submitted prior to the start of tutorial at 8.52am the student will be recorded over the course of the school day as having an 'unexplained absence' (absence code F).
- The Deputy Principal responsible for school attendance alerts the parents/guardians of students who have an 'unexplained absence' of this absence via a push notification sent through the VSWare App. This notification will advise parents/guardians that their son/daughter was recorded as absent and invite them to submit an absence request to confirm that the absence is legitimate

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and provide a reason for same via the VSWare App. These absence requests will be processed in the same manner as previously outlined.

- Notifications will be forwarded twice daily to alert parents/guardians to both morning and afternoon unexplained absences, with the exception of Wednesday when only a morning notification will be issued.
- Parents/guardians are invited to contact the College should they have any concerns regarding any 'unexplained absences' for their sons/daughters.
- When a student is absent from school for any reason, parents/guardians must notify the school by telephone or email on or before the third day of absence. If no communication is forthcoming, then the College will endeavour to contact the parents/guardians of the absent student.
- The Department of Education and Skills recommends that parents/guardians try to ensure that family holidays are scheduled during holiday times.
- Parents/guardians should always provide a written explanation for non-participation in PE classes.

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## 5.5 Attendance Strategies

The following is a list of strategies that we have put in place in Castleknock Community College in order to encourage attendance:

1. Building a caring, respectful and compassionate atmosphere in which every person feels accepted and valued
2. The provision of an excellent extra curricular activity package which has something for everyone and encourages the participation of all students
3. A modern meaningful curriculum, which is inclusive of all students
4. Well-structured pastoral care system
5. Rewarding and certification of good attendance
6. A comprehensive roll attendance system
7. Comprehensive supervised evening study (Subject to student demand)

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## 5.6 The Role of the Year Head Team

The Year Head and her/his team promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- 1) Ensuring that the attendance system is operating effectively and efficiently
- 2) Liaising with Principal, Deputy Principals and the College care structures



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- 3) Endeavouring to contact parents on the third day of absence if no contact has been made with the College
- 4) The Year Head in certain circumstances contact parents when their child has reached ten days of cumulative absences reminding them of the twenty-day rule
- 5) Notifying the Principal or Deputy Principals to contact the Education Welfare Officer once a student has reached 20 cumulative days of absence
- 6) Liaising with the Principal/Deputy Principals in the preparation and submission of the SAR and AAR Reports for the TUSLA Education Support Services (TESS).
- 7) Rewarding good attendance through certification at the end term/ end of year Awards Ceremonies.

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## 6. Summary of School Policy on Attendance

- 1) The Year Head team will co-ordinate attendance and punctuality.
- 2) Students are requested to be in school at 8.50am each morning and by 1.15 pm after lunch.
- 3) Classes begin at 8.52am with tutorial.
- 4) School finishes at 4.00pm except on Wednesday when school finishes at 12.20pm.
- 5) Lunch break is from 12.20pm to 1.20pm.
- 6) Students who arrive late with a satisfactory note of explanation from parent/guardian must tap in and it is the duty of the student to present the note to his tutor or subject teacher. This note may also be in the form of an absence request submitted via the VSWare App.
- 7) Students who arrive late to class during the day will be dealt with by the subject teacher using the following steps:
  - i. Documented in teacher's journal/ VSWare system and sanction given by the subject teacher
  - ii. May be documented in the student's journal to parents/guardians
  - iii. Re-occurrence to be communicated to the class tutor
  - iv. Students speaking with a member of staff must have a signed note of explanation in journal from that member of staff excusing their absence/delay from class
  - v. Parental/guardian's signature(s) are requested as acknowledgement of all communication in the journal



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## Information for Parents

### 7. The importance of good attendance

- It enables your child to keep up with schoolwork and makes school a more positive learning experience.
- It teaches them good habits for the future.

### 8. The Education Welfare Act (2000)

- The purpose of the act is to encourage regular attendance and participation in education and training for as long as possible, preferably until he/she completes his/her education.
- Every child must attend school regularly until the age of sixteen or complete at least three years post primary education, whichever comes later.
- It is the central responsibility of parents to ensure that they comply with the regulations stated in the Education Welfare Act 2000, with regard to the attendance and participation of their child in the school to which they have been enrolled.

### 9. TUSLA Education Support Service (TESS):

- The TUSLA Education Support Service (TESS) was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.
- The TESS has appointed Education Welfare Officers to work with schools to encourage school attendance.

### 10. What TESS expects from the school

Under the Act, a school is obligated to report the following to the TESS every time:

- It decides to expel students
- A student's name is removed from the school register
- A student has reached 20 cumulative days of absence
- A student has been suspended for six consecutive days or more
- A student is placed on a Reduced School Day
- A Principal has cause for concern regarding a student's attendance, for whatever reason, and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level in collaboration with the home, a referral to TUSLA Educational Welfare Services should be made via the TUSLA Portal.

Schools are legally required to submit information about individual student absences three times a year, via a twice yearly Student Attendance Report (SAR) and an Annual Attendance Report (AAR).

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- Where there is concern about your child's attendance or about the reasons given for same, you may be contacted by the schools Year Head/Assistant Year Head/Tutor or a member of the Care Team.
- Contacted by an Education Welfare Officer on foot of a referral to TUSLA.

## 11. Attendance & Parental Responsibility

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parent's (Education Welfare Act 2000).

- Parents/guardians are expected to use the VSWare App to provide explanations for all absences from school, including occasions where their son/daughter has to leave during the school day for an appointment.
- When a child is absent from College for any reason parents/guardians must notify the school by telephone or by email on or before the third day of absence.
- Parents are requested to forward a note to their son/daughter's PE Teacher if they are unable to participate.
- Where possible all medical appointments should be made outside school time.
- **Should your son/daughter have occasion to leave school early for an appointment or otherwise the school requires a signed note of explanation in the journal.** This written note can also be in the form of an absence request submitted via the VSWare App or an email to the Class Tutor from a parent/guardian.

## 12. Attendance & Student Responsibility

- Students are requested to be in school by 8.50am each morning and 1.15pm after lunch.
- **Students who wish to leave school early for an appointment or otherwise must present a signed note of explanation in their journal in advance to the Tutor.** This note can also be in the form of an absence request submitted via the VSWare App.
- The note in the journal must be signed by a Year head, Assistant Year Head or Tutor and must be produced at the office by the student before they can officially sign out and leave the building.
- In the event of a student becoming ill while at school, parental/guardian permission must be received before they sign out through office. He/She must remain at reception until collected.
- Students are expected to always have their journals in their possession.
- Students are expected to be on time for class throughout the school day.
- Students are expected to have full attendance and participation in timetabled PE classes.

## 13. Lunchtime Information

### Staying in School

Students, who request to stay in school for lunch, are expected to remain on the school grounds. There is a lot of traffic in the vicinity of the College and for their safety; we request that students who stay in College for lunch do not leave the school grounds for any reason. We regret that we cannot accept responsibility for their safety if they ignore this instruction. Only senior students (TY, LC1 & LC2 students) may go to the shop at lunchtime.

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## Going Home for Lunch

Students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) wish them to go home for lunch may do so, once their parent(s)/guardian(s) has noted this request below. We ask that students going home for lunch do so promptly and do not loiter around the shops or go to friends' houses without prior permission from parents. If a student is unable to return to College for afternoon classes due to illness/family circumstances it is very important that the parents notify the College immediately.

## 14. Parents Role in Punctuality & Attendance

The primary responsibility for a student's attendance in school lies with the parents. (*Education Welfare Act 2000.*)

- Promote regular attendance
- Ensure that your child is in school on time
- Are expected to use the VSWare App to provide explanations for all absences from school, including occasions where their son/daughter has to leave during the school day for an appointment.
- Contact the school on or before the third day of absence.
- Highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Attend annual parent teacher meetings to find out how your child is progressing.
- Organise family holidays outside school term.
- Ensure that part-time work doesn't affect your child's progress.
- Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who leave school to work must register with the National Education Welfare Board, so as to ensure that they can be helped with further education and training.

## 15. Appendix

Glossary of abbreviations used:

- TUSLA: The Child and Family Agency.
  - TESS: TUSLA Education Support Service.
  - SAR: Student Absence Report.
  - AAR: Annual Attendance Report.
  - NCSE: National Council for Special Education.
  - SENO: Special Educational Needs Organiser.
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