



Holy Family Secondary School
Statement of Strategy for School Attendance
2024-2025
"To be Family and Build Family"

| Holy Family Secondary School Statement of Strategy for School Attendance 2024-25 | |
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| Name of School | Holy Family Secondary School |
| Address | Newbridge, Co. Kildare Roll Number: 61682A |
| The school's vision and values in relation to attendance | <p>HFSS values a pastoral model of support and encouragement in relation to attendance which reflects the school ethos "To be Family and Build Family" and which embraces the role of parents as primary educators.</p> <p>HFSS values providing a calm, safe, caring school environment which fosters mutual respect, a positive climate for student -teacher relationships and peer relationships and student involvement in school life.</p> <p>HFSS strives for all students to have full attendance and engage actively in school life. In pursuit of this aim School Policies, School Code of Behaviour, the 1998 Education Act, and the TUSLA guidelines are followed fairly.</p> |
| Legal requirements school attendance | <p>The statutory age for school attendance is 6 -16 years and 3 years Post Primary education completed.</p> <p>Schools are obliged by law under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to submit reports on school attendance to the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency. There are two types of reporting required and they are;</p> <p>(i) Reports on individual students and (ii) reports on overall school attendance figures.</p> <p>The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) offers advice, support and guidance to parents and schools re attendance issues. The school may contact the EWO with concerns in relation to a student's school attendance and the EWO may consult with the school principal/ designated school staff member to address these concerns. The EWO may then decide to contact and meet the family. Once underlying problems or issues are identified, the EWO can then seek to address the family's unique set of circumstances in conjunction with school staff. The EWO has the power to take legal action against the parent under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.</p> |
| The school's high expectations around attendance | <p>HFSS promotes a culture where there is high expectation from all partners (Parents, Teachers, BOM, and Students) for student attendance and participation in learning and school life. There are strict Standard Operating Procedures in place with regard to attendance, leaving school, punctuality to promote and achieve this aim.</p> |

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| | <p>Parents are also involved in setting high expectations. The connection between attendance and attainment is highlighted to the school community regularly via Parent Information Evenings in August, Staff Meetings, Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Team Meetings, Year Assemblies, Awards Night, parent newsletters as a means to raise awareness.</p> |
| <p>How attendance will be monitored</p> | <p>Students are only allowed to absent themselves from school in circumstances where they are medically unwell or with the permission of a parent/guardian. Pupils must have an Explanation of Absence Note submitted by a parent/guardian through the school app on their return to school. The absence note is logged by the school administration and can be accessed by the Year Head.</p> <p>Students who leave school during the school day (illness, appointments, other etc.) note must have a Leave Note submitted on the school app and be collected from school by a parent /guardian or nominated adult. (Note: Over 18s do not need to be collected by a parent)</p> <p>Poor punctuality, which impacts on class attendance and academics, is recorded in the student journal, and at reception for 8:45am and 1:40pm class. Punctuality at 8:45am and 1:40pm is monitored by the Deputy Principal. Punctuality is also monitored via journal and school app by Year Heads and once poor punctuality occurs 3 times, in a short timeframe, parents are notified by letter and a sanction may be imposed in accordance with the school Code of Behaviour</p> <p>Registration is taken at 8.45am and 1.40pm on VShare by class teachers. Parents are notified by text if their daughter is absent for morning and/or afternoon without explanation. As standard procedure a roll call is also taken by teachers in every class. Class tutors review the roll each week during Tutor Time. If a student is found to have absented themselves during school time the Year Head will intervene, and parents will be informed.</p> <p><u>5/10/15/20 Days Intervention</u> If a student is absent for 5 days without explanation the Year Head will have an in-school discussion with any Senior School pupil to ascertain reasons/circumstances for absence. Any Junior School student who are absent for 5 days without explanation will receive a text from the school. This will continue until the February Midterm. If a student accumulates 10 days absence of concern the Year Head contacts Parents / Guardians by phone. If a student accumulates 15 days of absence which are unexplained and of concern the parent is invited in to meet the Year Head / Senior Leadership Team. At fifteen days of absence a formal letter from the Senior Leadership Team is sent home to remind the family of its statutory obligations and to alert them to the probability of a referral to the EWO</p> <p>The school will follow the mandatory reporting requirements to TUSLA for students with 20 days unexplained absences who are under 16 and have not completed 3 years Post-Primary education. Following from this mandatory</p> |

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| | report to TUSLA the Educational Welfare Officer may open a case on the student once a referral is received. |
| Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance: | Ours is a positive, holistic and systematic approach to improving attendance. Standard Operating procedures regarding recording attendance, supporting students with all aspects of school attendance and alerting relevant staff re attendance concerns are applied consistently by teachers and administration staff. HFSS approach encompasses a strong commitment to promoting a calm caring school environment which positively influences the students' experience of school life and impact positively on both attendance and learning. |
| • Target setting and targets | <p>Reduce absenteeism in Senior Cycle (Feedback from staff) on Thursday/ Friday afternoons... DPs and AP will do random phone calls home at this time to monitor and alert parents.</p> <p>Students presenting with patterns of poor attendance will have discussions with Year Head/Senior Leadership Team re strategies to improve their attendance. Students with poor attendance in 3rd and 6th year may be flagged for Academic Mentoring</p> <p>The Year Heads will visit classes on a rota during Tutor time every week and hold monthly assemblies, reiterating the importance of regular attendance and reminding students to send in absence notes.</p> <p>A positive note will be written into a student's diary to be signed by a Parent/Guardian when a student shows a marked improvement in attendance.</p> <p>Reduced timetables encompassing flexible length of day, starting times etc. have been used to support students towards achieving and improving their attendance targets.</p> |
| • The whole-school approach | <p>In keeping with our ethos "To be family and build family" we seek to motivate student attendance by creating a caring school community that engages students and families in the life of the school.</p> <p>We facilitate and encourage open communication and dialogue with all partners to ascertain what might be preventing a student from coming to school. Tutor Time has been introduced weekly for & it gives Class Tutors an opportunity to review and monitor attendance and identify more quickly any attendance issues with students and refer to the Year Head.</p> <p>Where necessary we engage the supports available from outside agencies i.e. the Educational Welfare Officer, CAMHS, NEPS and the Juvenile Liaison Officer.</p> <p>Where social or financial barriers are causing absenteeism the school endeavours to support pupils/parents in addressing the concerns with the aim to facilitate and promote attendance.</p> |
| • Promoting good attendance | <p>Exemplary Attendance and improved attendance will be promoted and rewarded at term Assemblies for each year group in 2024-25. Year heads will read out the names of those with exemplary attendance from each class group.</p> <p>Attendance Campaign Support Grant: Research was undertaken by the Middle Leadership Team to understand the difficulties in specific year groups and how best to utilise the funding. Year heads are provided with a budget to promote</p> |

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| | <p>and reward attendance in their year groups. As a school, an attendance awareness campaign will be used to target all students.</p> <p>Year heads will develop interventions, such as a reward scheme, based on the data from their own year group to improve attendance.</p> |
| <p>• Responding to poor attendance</p> | <p>The Year Head does a monthly review of attendance report for each year group. This data is shared with SLT to highlight students with high absenteeism and to help determine students who may need interventions. Year heads meet weekly with the SLT where attendance and strategies are discussed. Issues of concern and strategies re absenteeism for individual students are discussed and the Year head may refer students with high levels of absenteeism to access support from the Guidance Counsellor, Chaplaincy Team, Learning Support team where appropriate</p> <p>Check & Connect is a pastoral initiative which, in consultation with Principal and SEN dept., may be used to support students who need encouragement with school attendance. A teacher on the Check + Connect team can be assigned to the student to check in with them pastorally as a support and to help the student feel connected within the school environment with the target of improving attendance</p> |
| <p>Reporting</p> | <p>The Deputy Principal /Year Head may consult with and seek advice from the EWO re concerns over individual student’s attendance. Mandatory reporting in accordance with statutory requirements will be made for students in excess of 20 days unexplained absence.</p> <p>Student Absence Reports will be returned twice each year in accordance with guidelines on those students with serious attendance issues that have been identified during the current academic year.</p> <p>Annual Attendance Report (AAR) will be completed at the end of each academic year in accordance with guidelines.</p> |
| <p>School roles in relation to attendance Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p> | <p>Our Mission Statement emphasises and promotes of partnerships with parents/guardians, students and the wider community.</p> <p>Assistant Principal Year Head has been assigned by the BOM to the with overall responsibility to promote and foster good attendance within the school. The Year Head works closely with Guidance Counsellors/ Chaplains and Deputy Principal to identify students who may need additional support.</p> <p>Parents are informed via the app, letter, phone calls from Year Heads/ re attendance issues.</p> <p>Parents are regularly invited in to meet Year Heads / Deputy Principals to review attendance. Students who have school attendance issues are identified and strategies such as mentoring, reduced timetable are put in place to support attendance.</p> <p>The Year Head will address Parents/Guardians of exam students on Parents Evening at the beginning of the school year in order to stress the importance of good attendance and the direct link between attendance and academic attainment.</p> <p>Students with non- attendance issues may also be referred to Guidance Counsellors/ Chaplaincy Team/ Learning Support Team for additional support.</p> <p>In certain circumstances (school refusal, critical health issues) encourage pupils to apply for Home Tuition grant provided by the DES. The support of Home</p> |

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| | <p>Tuition has resulted in a number of students with School Refusal issues and critical health issues successfully completing state exams and many teachers in our school have volunteered to participate in this scheme and tutor students at home.</p> <p>As a school, we have developed links with our local VTOS service for students who may benefit from a different learning environment.</p> <p>We also work with the HSE, through social workers and family support services to promote and support students with issues that may impact school attendance.</p> |
| Review process and date for review | September 2025 |
| Approval by Board of Management | 17 th October 2024 |

ORIGINAL COPY SIGNED AND KEPT IN HFSS

Signed by the Chair of the BOM: _____

Mr. Mike Carew, Chairperson

Signed by the school Principal: _____

Ms. Sarah Allen, Principal