St. Fanchea's College

Pupil Attendance Policy

2023-2024

Everyone in Saint Fanchea's College is committed to providing a caring environment where pupils will achieve to their full potential. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from the education provided, good attendance and punctuality are crucial. In St Fanchea's we will do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that impede punctuality and regular attendance will be identified and addressed as quickly as possible. We will convey to parents and pupils the importance of good attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to develop a close partnership between school, parents and the Education Welfare Service.

A whole school target for attendance has been set at **93%** and this will be reviewed at the start of each academic year. This target will be used to monitor individual and class attendance on a monthly basis. Each pupil has a personal target of **95%**.

Pupils who achieve 100% attendance for the full school year will receive a special reward and they also receive a certificate and a 100% attendance badge. At the end of each month Form teachers award points on the Behaviour Module in SIMs, as points accumulate pupils are rewarded.
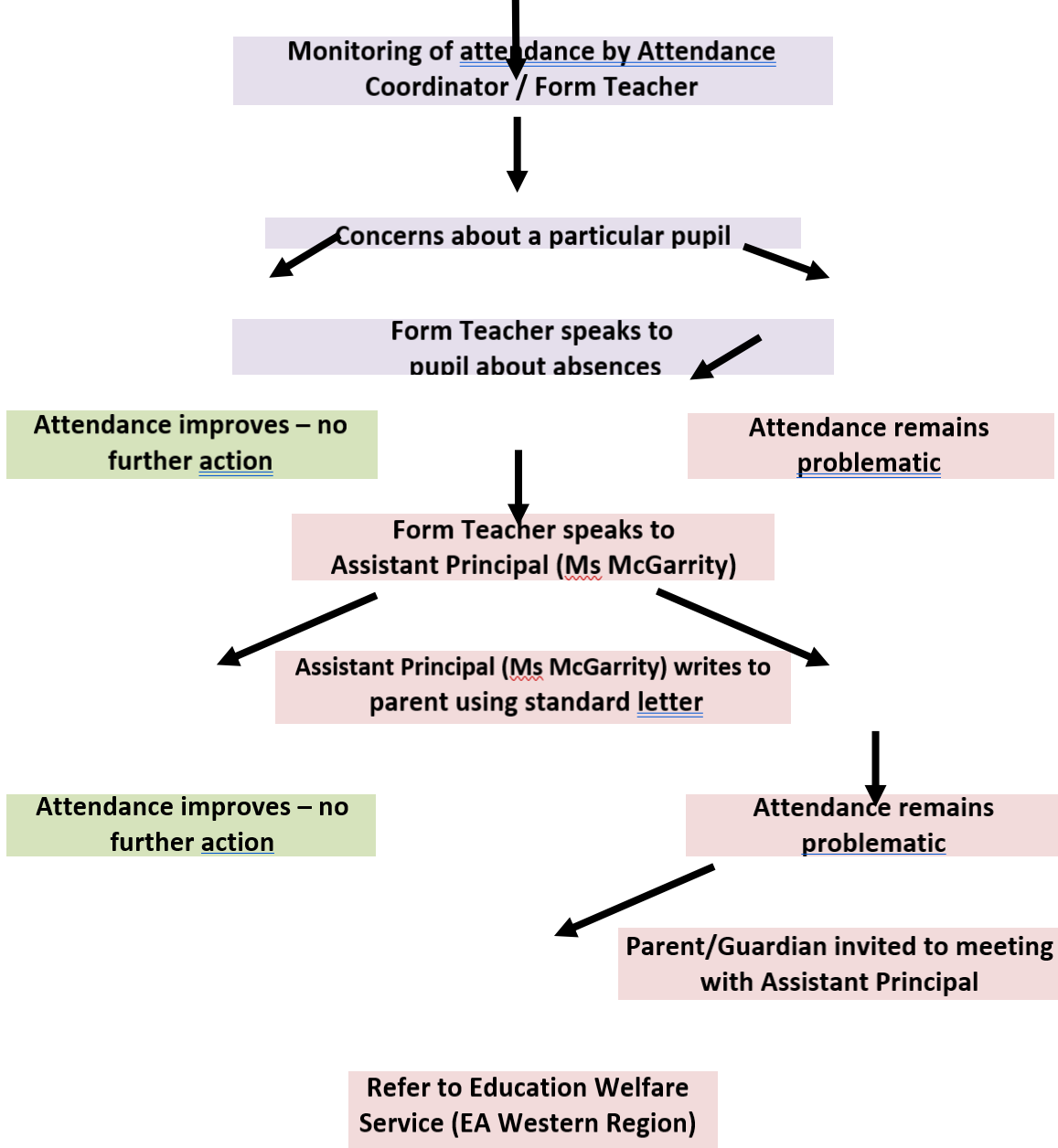
Procedures

1. The Assistant Principal, Ms McGarrity, has overall responsibility for managing the procedures for monitoring pupil attendance across the college. Ms McGarrity will be supported in this role by Mrs Gataora.
2. The Clerical Officer Mrs Gataora, and the Senior Executive Officer Mrs Cadden will have responsibility for collating monthly attendance rates for all pupils across the college and inputting this data into a central pupil database.
3. If a pupil is absent, parents/carers are requested to contact the school (either by letter or telephone) preferably by the third day of absence to explain the circumstances. If no message has been received to explain the absence contact with the home may be made.
4. Any pupil requesting absence from school for part of a day or for a whole day or days must seek permission by bringing a note written and signed by her

parent/carer giving the reason for the request. This note must be presented to the form teacher. The form teacher will complete a permission slip and return it to the pupil. This is then presented to the Assistant Principal, Ms McGarrity, and they will countersign the slip if permission is granted.

5. Medical, dental, optical or other such appointments should where possible **not** be arranged during school hours. If an appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours it is necessary to bring in a letter from a parent/carer giving details of the date and time of the appointment (ideally 24 hours in advance) – this may be accompanied by an appointment card.

6. Any pupil who is likely to be late arriving at school for a valid reason should aim to notify the office by telephone. She must make every effort to come to school for the remainder of the school day and report to the general office on arrival. A note of explanation is required for all pupils arriving after 9.30am.

7. Holidays should not be taken during term-time. Pupils who miss school examination papers due to being on holiday will not normally be permitted to sit the examination papers on their return and teachers will not provide work for pupils who are on holiday during term-time

8. Pupils absent from school due to illness or other circumstances must bring a note written and signed by a parent/carer to explain the reason for absence. This letter should include pupil's name, class and date/s of absence. This note is given to the form teacher at Assembly on the day the pupil returns to school. Absences which are not supported by a note are considered unauthorised and may be considered as truanting.

9. Teachers may phone homes on occasions to ascertain a reason for absence

10. In situations where there are significant concerns about a pupil's attendance, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service (contacts: M Donnelly & A Wright).

These procedures will be followed in the vast majority of cases but there may be occasions when individual circumstances require a different approach. At all times the action taken by the school in consultation with the Education Welfare Officer will be in the best interest of the pupil.

Procedures to Improve School Attendance

Monitoring of attendance by Attendance Coordinator / Form Teacher

Concerns about a particular pupil

Form Teacher speaks to pupil about absences

Attendance improves – no further action

Attendance remains problematic

Form Teacher speaks to Assistant Principal (Ms McGarrity)

Assistant Principal (Ms McGarrity) writes to parent using standard letter

Attendance improves – no further action

Attendance remains problematic

Parent/Guardian invited to meeting with Assistant Principal

Refer to Education Welfare Service (EA Western Region)

Improving Attendance - Roles and Responsibilities	
Parents/Pupils	**Schools**
Parents should be aware of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance. Parents should read and adhere to the Attendance Policy and procedures in St Fanchea's College and support their children to understand and follow the rules. Parents should support the efforts of St Fanchea's College to prioritise school attendance. Parents should co-operate with and support St Fanchea's College if they recommend actions to address their child's poor attendance. Parents should be aware of the link between pupil attendance levels and their subsequent academic attainment. **Legal action can be taken, where appropriate, to ensure parents fulfil their legal responsibilities to ensure their child receives an appropriate education.**	St Fanchea's College will ensure a Pupil Attendance Policy is in place, approved by the Board of Governors. St Fanchea's College will ensure that all pupils and parents are aware of and understand the Attendance Policy and what it means to them. St Fanchea's College will include school attendance targets in the school development plan and ensure pupil attendance is on the agenda at Board of Governors' meetings. St Fanchea's College will promote the importance of school attendance and its link with attainment. St Fanchea's College will engage with pupils in relation to potential barrier to attending such as the appropriateness of the curriculum. St Fanchea's College will enhance the capacity of teachers and support staff to understand and support pupils with attendance problems.
Education Authority (Western Division)	**Department of Education/ETI**
The EA will provide advice and support to St Fanchea's College in their development and delivery of approaches in their management of attendance. The Education Welfare Service will support referred pupils and their families to stay engaged with education The Education Welfare Service will work in partnership with the young people, their families, schools, other education services as well as statutory and voluntary agencies.	The Department of Education will provide strategic direction on improving attendance. The Department of Education will ensure that all the Department's policies and initiatives promote regular attendance at school, whenever possible. The ETI will formally assess and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of leadership in St Fanchea's College (including the management of attendance) as part of the ETI school inspection process.

Indicators of School Leadership committed to prioritising attendance
St Fanchea's College has an attendance policy that is documented and accessible for all parents and pupils. This policy reflects each school's duty to keep details of their pupil's attendance and have arrangements in place to address attendance issues.
The attendance policy contains challenging targets which are also part of the School Development Plan. These targets should be monitored regularly at Board of Governors' meetings.
The Senior Leadership Team are proactive in implementing a range of strategies to improve attendance at a whole school level or in their targeting of additional support measures for those struggling with regular attendance including curriculum adjustments or personal education plans.
A clear commitment exists within the Senior Leadership Team to the promotion of regular attendance and to communicate the impact of non-attendance at all appropriate opportunities to staff, pupils and parents.
The Senior Leadership Team are able to identify if areas of its school policies and practices may be impacting adversely on pupil attendance and take action to reduce the impact.
Attendance is a consideration when determining school improvement plans and resource allocations from within delegated school budgets.
All staff understand their role in managing and improving attendance.
The Senior Leadership Team will monitor, evaluate and improve the management of attendance in St Fanchea's College on an ongoing basis. They will understand that circumstances within a school evolve over time and approaches to attendance management need to change to take this into account.
The importance of the link between a pupil's attendance and their potential future attainment is promoted with parents.
The Senior Leadership Team is flexible in how they manage cases of poor attendance taking account of all relevant factors both in the pupil's school life and home life.

Early Intervention - Roles and Responsibilities	
Parents/Pupils	**Schools**
Parents should be aware of the aim of schools in preventing the establishment of long-term patterns of poor attendance through early intervention. Parents should let the school know of any issues that may impact upon attendance as early as possible. Parents should recognise the role that can be played by parents of young children in helping their children to shape a constructive attitude towards school attendance. Parents should be supportive of the school's efforts to develop positive patterns of attendance amongst pupils from an early age. Parents should understand the need for a positive mind-set on attendance to be developed in pupils from an early age.	St Fanchea's College will robustly follow up on all pupil absences and lateness. Monitor post-registration pupil absence and advise parents of issues by, for example, a phone call or text message. St Fanchea's College ensure there are systems in place to monitor and analyse attendance patterns at an individual pupil, pupil group and whole school level prior to their entrenchment. St Fanchea's College has an attendance policy that documents how the school will apply the principles of early intervention into their work to promote and support the maximisation of pupil attendance. St Fanchea's College has flexible processes in place to enable support to be provided to pupils with poor levels of attendance at an early enough stage to "nip it in the bud". St Fanchea's College will proactively promote the value of school attendance to pupils in their earliest years, particularly in order to establish good attendance practices. St Fanchea's College will take action to react, where appropriate, to changes in a pupil's circumstances that may impact upon their attendance such as a domestic crisis.
Education Authority (Western Division)	**Department of Education/ETI**
The EA will provide advice to schools on how to identify and address cases of poor attendance at an early stage, prior to the entrenchment of poor attendance practices. The EA will provide effective support as soon as possible in cases referred to the Education Welfare Service. The EA will promote the benefits of early intervention through their engagement with schools.	The Department should work in partnership with the Education Authority to provide clear up to date guidance to schools in respect of early intervention. The ETI should ensure that attendance continues to be examined as part of all ETI inspections and that any concerns are clearly identified in order that appropriate action may be taken. The Department should work with the Education Authority to ensure the importance and value of attendance is communicated at an early stage and that there is active and regular engagement between schools, parents and pupils. The Department should work with the Education Authority to consider awareness raising activities particularly aimed at primary pupils and their parents.

Appendix 1

2024 Pilot Procedures to Improve School Attendance – Use of Absence Tiers including Benchmarking

The new DE Absence Tiers looks at the number and percentage of pupils falling into specific absence tiers:

a. Tier 1a – Regular (0%-4.9% absence)

b. Tier 1b – At Risk (5%-9.9% absence)

c. Tier 2 – Chronic (10%-19.9% absence); and

d. Tier 3 – Severe Chronic (20%+ absence)

Tier 1a - pupils with "Regular Attendance" would equate to 0-1 days absence per month. Universal strategies are used by schools to encourage good attendance for all pupils. This is where proactive methods would be utilised at very little cost.

Tier 1b - pupils "At Risk Attendance" would equate to 1-2 days per month. Schools should be implementing more focused strategies to ensure attendance improves and pupils who need more support receive it in a timely manner to avoid chronic absence.

Tier 2 – pupils classed with "Chronic Attendance", miss the equivalent of 2-3 days per month. This would require schools to introduce interventions such as action planning for each pupil, mentoring and / or personalised early outreach to pupils.

Tier 3 would be for pupils classed with **"Severe Chronic Attendance"**, miss the equivalent of 4 days or more per month. This requires schools to have specific interventions in place which could include interagency work, Education Welfare Service involvement leading potentially (in a minority of cases) to court action. Given the on-going impact of the pandemic, this is highly unlikely to be used in the vast majority of cases.

The Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team provides monthly attendance and absence statistics to the DE, EA and ETI showing reports for all settings both on an individual and collective basis.

Applying the Absence Tiers approach across all settings for the latest available monthly statistics **may indicate that there may** be positive signs of improvement compared with last year. Comparing these **DE** averages against **the St Fanchea's College** setting should be useful to aide discussion.

We will use this information (new SIMs report) alongside the other reports and data to assist in our discussions regarding how to improve pupil attendance.

Appendix 2

ATTENDACE CODES 2023-2024

CODE	DESCRIPTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION
/ \	Present: / = (AM): \ =(PM)	X	Only staff should attend
A*	Artistic Endeavour	Y*	Exceptional Closure
B*	Bereavement	#	Holiday for all
C	Suspended	!	No attendance required
D	No reason provided for absence	1	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)
F*	Family Holiday (agreed)	2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement / hospital
G*	Family Holiday (not agreed)	3	Elective Home Education
H*	Other Absence	4	Pupil Referral Unit
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)
J*	Extended Leave	6	Training Organisation (under EF)
L*	Late (before registration closed)	7	FE College (under EF)
M*	Medical / Dental Appointments	8	Intensive Support Learning Unit
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	9	CAMHS / Mental Health Support
O*	Other Exceptional Circumstances		**COVID-19 SPECIFIC CODES - Please refer to DE circular 2023/11**
P*	Approved Activity	(	**COVID-19 Illness Confirmed** – must be used in situations where a pupil has tested positive for Covid-19.
R*	Religious Observance	)	**COVID-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed** – to be used in situations where a pupil may be Covid-19 positive but this is unconfirmed.
S*	Study Leave	{	**COVID-19 Self-Isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household member** Pupil chooses not to attend school due to own underlying health conditions or due to health conditions of other family members". If a pupil is sick, they should be recorded as such.
U*	Late (after registration closed)	}	**COVID-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learning from home** Pupil required to self-isolate but not learning from home / evidence not provided.
V*	Educational Visit / Examination	[	**COVID-19 Self-Isolating & Learning from Home** Pupil required to self-isolate and learning from home" – does not discount from attendance record.
W*	Work Experience	]	**COVID-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing** Pupils are not required to attend physically at school due to social distancing rules, imposed by DE or school. E.g. pupils required to attend on certain days or for a certain number of hours per day. This decision must be informed by health professional advice.

COLOUR CODE	
	Present / Approved Educational Activity /
	Authorised Absence
	Unauthorised Absence
	Attendance not required

This policy will be reviewed every year

Date of next review – September 2024

Principal …………………………

Date ……………….

Chair of the Board of Governors:

…………………………..

Date …………………..