



**St Kieran's College  
Secondary School  
Kilkenny**

**Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

## **School Philosophy and Mission Statement**

St Kieran's College, as Ireland's oldest all-boys Catholic Secondary School, continues its founding aim of the pursuit of real excellence in education and formation, in the light of the Gospel, so as to allow all our students to realise the fullness of their potential.

Academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally our students are encouraged to strive for all that is possible in the relentless pursuit of perfecting their individual gifts and talents.

In so doing they bring to life the joy intended by our motto, "Hiems Transiit", for themselves, those they love and the community where they will live, serve and lead.

Our mission is to provide an atmosphere of Christian care and concern in which the student can grow to maturity. Academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally our students are encouraged to strive for all that is possible in the relentless pursuit of perfecting their individual gifts and talents. In so doing they bring to life the joy intended by our motto, "Hiems Transiit", for themselves, those they love and the community where they will live, serve and lead.

The Board of Management of St Kieran's College recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular student attendance and pupil progress. This strategy applies to the students, staff and parents of St Kieran's College and relates to all aspects of school punctuality and attendance. This strategy was drawn up in consultation with all the school partners, including the Board of Management, staff, parents and students. (See Code of Behaviour, Section 19).

To further this vision, the school envisages the development of a community wherein-

- Students and staff are valued and their talents and abilities recognised and developed to prepare for changes in society.
- Each person recognises his/her own responsibility in implementing agreed standards of conduct.
- Good communication is maintained between all members of the school community and where liaison with parents and the local community involvement is encouraged.

- A positive emphasis is placed on the importance of attendance and engagement in school at the beginning of year assemblies and as part of the regular discourse of Year Heads, Form Tutors and Subject Teacher's throughout the school year.

### **Relevant Policies**

This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour, and in particular sections 18 and 19 which outline the Punctuality and Attendance Codes.

### **Objectives**

Through implementation of this strategy St Kieran's College expects:

- To foster an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encourage regular attendance at school on the part of our students.
- To encourage full attendance at school.
- To highlight the importance of punctuality and attendance amongst students and parents.
- To positively enforce punctual attendance morning and evening and at each class throughout the day.
- To maintain an effective attendance record-keeping system through our VSWare system.
- To develop suitable intervention strategies to improve school attendance and punctuality.

### **Legal Framework**

#### **National Educational Welfare Board/TUSLA**

- Under legislation every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school; whichever comes later. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.
- As a parent you must notify the school if your child is absent and the reason why. It is school policy that explanations must be given in writing, via email or via the VSWare App. The school will notify the Educational Welfare Board if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise for concern. This is outlined below:

#### **The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 18**

- Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she is registered during part of the school day, or for a school day or more than a school day, the parent of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the Code of Behaviour, prepared by the school under section 23, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

#### **The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Section 21 (4)**

- The Principal of the school concerned shall inform, by notice of writing to the Educational Welfare Officer, where:

1) A student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days.

2) The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20 days.

Good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning (McCoy et al, 2007). The Board of Management recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011). The aim of the Attendance Strategy is to promote good attendance in the school. All students should adhere to the guidelines below.

1. The school day begins at 8.50am. Students are expected to be in their classrooms by 8.45 am each morning.
2. Small break is from 10.50 to 11.00am.
3. Lunch is from 1.00pm to 2.00pm. Class finishes at 1.00 on Friday's. Students are expected to be in their classrooms by 1.55pm Monday to Thursday.
4. Junior Cycle, Transition Year and 5<sup>th</sup> Year students are not permitted to leave the school during lunchtime. Leaving Certificate (6<sup>th</sup> Years) students are permitted to leave the school grounds during lunchtime unless advised otherwise by school management.
5. When a student is absent, the student must email an absence note to [absence@stkieranscollege.ie](mailto:absence@stkieranscollege.ie) or alternatively, use Attendance on the VSWare App to explain absence.
6. Class Teachers, Roll Takers, the school secretary and the Deputy Principal will record the reason for absence on the school VSWare system.

7. A student may not leave the school during the school day without permission, however:
- If a student needs to attend an appointment, he must present an appointment slip or note to the Year Head and/or Deputy Principal and sign out at the School Office
  - On return the same day, the student must sign back in at the School Office
  - If a student leaves school and does not return on the same day, an absence email is required on return to school.
  - If a student has no email he may not leave school without the permission of the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principals.
  - Any contact with parents/guardians in relation to leaving school must be made through the school office.
  - It is the Parents/Guardians responsibility to provide the school with an up-to-date contact phone number.
  - Under no circumstance should a student leave the school grounds without permission.
  - Students will receive sanctions for unexcused absences and lateness in accordance with the St Kieran's College Code of Behaviour.

### **Attending Class in St Kieran's College**

Pupils should go to and return from class in an orderly and prompt manner. Students must respect the authority of the Principal and teachers. Attendance at classes will be recorded and monitored on a daily basis by teachers, class tutors and/or Year Head.

### **Attendance Rewards**

St Kieran's College will recognise students who achieve full attendance in the school year. In conjunction with the Student Council, awards will be presented for full attendance, which will include the presentation of certificates, meal vouchers for the school canteen and any other reward initiatives deemed appropriate.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

St Kieran's College acknowledges the contribution of all members of the school community in the implementation of this Attendance and Punctuality Strategy.

### **Principal and Deputy Principal**

- The Principal and Deputy Principals will carry out spot checks on absences.
- Apply disciplinary procedures to students for unexcused absences and lateness, consistent with St Kieran's College Code of Behaviour and the National Education Welfare Board legislation on attendance.
- If a student has no note/email he may not leave school without the permission of the Principal, Deputy Principals or Year Head.

#### **Year Head**

- Monitor student absences and liaise with the Deputy principal and/or Roll Taker regarding unexplained absences.
- Record all verbal and written communication from parents/guardians.
- Contact parents where appropriate, regarding number of absences during the year.

#### **Roll Taker**

- A Roll Taker is assigned to three year groups who follows up on absences.
- Monitor all student absence in their year groups.
- Liaise with Year Head regarding student absence.
- Inform Year Head, parent/guardian, Principal and Deputy Principals of a student who has prolonged absence or who has missed twenty days or more in the school academic year.
- Record all verbal and written communication with parents.

#### **Class Teacher**

- All teachers will keep individual class attendance records for every class taught on VSWare.
- Class teachers will follow up on student absences and report to the Year Head where necessary.
- Students who are out of school for school related activities must be marked as "School Activity" on VSWare.
- Promote and encourage good attendance in class.
- Teachers may communicate with parents/guardians at parent teacher meetings on the importance and value of good attendance.

#### **Student**

- It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation (e.g. appointment slips, notes etc.) and present them to the Deputy Principals/Year Head/roll takers for all appointments that will prevent him from attending a class. Such documentation should be presented prior to his departure from school.

- Students must report to the Deputy Principal's office if late arriving to school in the morning and in the afternoon.
- If a student has no note/email he may not leave school without permission from the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal and must sign out in the leaving school register in the School office.
- If a student returns to school during class time he must sign back in at the School office.
- Students will receive sanctions for unexcused absences and lateness in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.

### **Parents**

- It is the Parents responsibility to have their son and/or sons attending school, on time every day in full uniform.
- It is important that parents develop positive and effective participation in education in St Kieran's College.
- Parents should report a child's absence or late arrival via email or on the VSWare App.
- Parents should become familiar with the school Code Of Behaviour Policy.

### **TUSLA Child and Family Agency is informed if:**

- A student is expelled.
- A student has been suspended for a cumulative total of 6 days or more.
- A student has missed more than 20 days.
- A student's name has been removed from the school register for any reason.
- A principal is concerned about a student's attendance.

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is furnished with the total attendances (twice annually) in the school year through the Annual Report Form that is completed on-line.

### **Communication with Parents and Supports**

Individual subject teachers can track a student's attendance for their given subject using VSWare 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 regarding this concern.

When a Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes/emails explaining her absences to the office, the Roll Taker/Year Head will call and/or write/text to the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.

The school Pastoral Care/Guidance team will follow up on attendance issues where necessary.

**Sanctions for Breaches of School Attendance Policy: (See Code of Behaviour)**

- The student may be refused admission to a particular class if arriving late.
- The student may be placed on lunchtime detention.
- Persistent late-comers may face further sanctions including Friday detention.
- Un-authorized absence during the school day may result in Friday Detention and/or Suspension.
- Absences will be notified to the E.W.B. as per the Education Welfare Act 2002.

This Policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.



**Statement of Strategy  
for School Attendance: St Kieran's College**

Name of school	St Kieran's College, Kilkenny.
Address	College Road, Kilkenny
Roll Number	61560J
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	Academically, spiritually, physically and emotionally our students are encouraged to strive for all that is possible in the relentless pursuit of perfecting their individual gifts and talents. St Kieran's College recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular student attendance and student progress. The school envisages a community where students and staff are valued and their talents and abilities recognised and encouraged. Good attendance is encouraged in the school by a culture of high



	<p>expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.</p>
<p>The school's high expectations around attendance</p>	<p>St Kieran's College aims to foster an appreciation of learning among students attending the school and encourage regular attendance at school on the part of our students. The school is a supportive, positive and welcoming environment for all students.</p> <p>The School highlights the importance of punctuality and attendance amongst students and parents.</p> <p>The school works positively to enforce punctual attendance. The school will maintain an effective attendance record-keeping system through our VSWare system. The school's reward system recognises excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises significant improvement in attendance and punctuality.</p>
<p>How attendance will be monitored</p>	<p>Teachers will record attendance for every class every day (including S&amp;S).</p> <p>Student attendance is inputted on VSWare by class teachers for every lesson.</p> <p>Students who arrive after 9.30am and 2.40pm will be recorded as absent and are required to sign in at the School Office.</p> <p>Year Heads, Roll Takers and the Deputy Principal will monitor student absences.</p> <p>When a student is absent, the parent/s can record this on the VSWare App. Alternatively, the parent/s can email <a href="mailto:absence@stkieranscollege.ie">absence@stkieranscollege.ie</a>. The Deputy Principal will amend the roll from unexplained absence to explained absence. A student may not leave the school during the school day without permission, however:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> If a student needs to attend an appointment, he must present an appointment slip/email or note at the Year Head and/or Deputy Principal and sign out at the School office.</li> <li><b>b.</b> On return the same day, the student must sign back in at the School office.</li> <li><b>c.</b> If a student leaves school and does not return on the same day, an absence note is required on return to school.</li> <li><b>d.</b> If a student has no note he may not leave school without the permission of the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principals.</li> </ol>

<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Target setting and targets</li> <li>● The whole-school approach</li> <li>● Promoting good attendance</li> <li>● Responding to poor attendance</li> </ul>	<p>Good attendance is encouraged in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his own learning and achieve full potential through regular presence in class.</p> <p>The school aims to identify students who are at risk of developing school attendance issues in order to promote good attendance habits.</p> <p>St Kieran's College acknowledges the contribution of a whole school, consistent approach to attendance and punctuality. Each teacher records accurate information for each student for each lesson. A sense of belonging and connectedness in St Kieran's College is developed through participation in school life and extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>The Year Head, Tutor, Deputy Principals and the Pastoral Care Team meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue. As a community, we aim to work with the students and their families in order to improve attendance and punctuality.</p>
<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p>St Kieran's College aims to 'foster an appreciation of learning among students attending school and encourage regular attendance at school on the part of the students' (Section 22(1), Education Welfare Act).</p> <p>The school ensures that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.</p> <p>The school monitors attendance records regularly.</p> <p>The school informs new teachers of their obligation with regard to recording attendance.</p> <p>The school contacts parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur.</p> <p>The school uses a reward system to promote attendance.</p> <p>The school encourages students to take personal responsibility for their own learning.</p> <p>The school makes reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.</p>

	<p>The school reminds students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.</p> <p>Section 22(2)(c) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires that schools make every effort to engage with parents when attendance problems emerge and work collaboratively with them to try to understand the in-school and/or out-of-school factors influencing attendance.</p>
<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p>Student</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students must present for class on time.</li> <li>● Students must provide absence notes/emails to Year Heads or the Deputy Principal on the day they return to school.</li> <li>● It is the responsibility of the student to provide documentation (e.g. appointment slips, notes/emails etc.) and present them to the Year Head and/or the Deputy Principal for all appointments that will prevent him from attending a class. Such documentation should be presented prior to his departure from school.</li> <li>● Students must report to the Deputy Principal's office if late arriving to school in the morning and the afternoon.</li> <li>● If a student returns to school during class time he must sign back in at the School office</li> </ul> <p>Parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It is the Parents responsibility to have their son and/or sons attending school, on time every day in full uniform.</li> <li>● It is important that parents develop positive and effective participation in education in St Kieran's College.</li> <li>● Parents should report a child's absence or late arrival in a prompt manner.</li> <li>● Parents should become familiar with the school Code Of Behaviour policy.</li> <li>● Year Heads can track student attendance for their given subject using VSWare and are encouraged to contact a parent/guardian if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.</li> <li>● When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may</li> </ul>

	<p>arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies regarding this concern.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When a Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes explaining her absences to the office, the Attendance officer/Year Head will call and/or write to the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.</li> <li>● The school Pastoral Care team will follow up on attendance issues where necessary.</li> </ul> <p>The school will liaise with relevant bodies and engage with services where there is a concern regarding attendance.</p>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	St Kieran's College will give opportunities for staff to review how the strategy is working. School Attendance levels will be monitored by the Deputy Principal.
Review process and date for review	The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance will be reviewed every year.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	

