



Mount Carmel Secondary School

Attendance Policy

1. **Aim:**

Mount Carmel Secondary School sets out to promote and foster an environment that encourages its students to attend and participate in the life of the school. An excellent attendance record is considered necessary if students are to benefit fully from the education provided in the school. The aim of this policy is to provide an environment that encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually.

It aims to:

- Maximise and maintain student attendance throughout second level
- Discourage early school leavers
- Ensure that adequate records of attendances and absences are maintained by the school as per the Education Act 2000 in respect of each individual student
- Use available VSWARE resources to support effective and efficient monitoring of attendance
- Report on student attendance to TUSLA based on their guidelines (https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/FINAL_SAS_strategy_eng_2jun.pdf).

We recommend that this document is read in conjunction with this policy.

- Work in partnership with parents and students to achieve maximum attendance of all students throughout the academic year.

Policy Content:

Progress at school requires the best level of attendance and punctuality as both are essential for efficient class work and to optimise educational outcomes. Mount Carmel Secondary School's Board of Management (BOM) has extremely high expectations around school attendance. The BOM communicates to parents/guardians that student attendance in school is paramount, as there is a close correlation between student attendance and student academic achievement.

Students must attend school daily for the full school term and must be on time for school. At present, the school day is from 8.40am to 3.30pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8.40 am to 1pm on Wednesdays and 8.40 am to 2.50 pm on Fridays. If students are absent for any reason, e.g. illness, they must notify the school as soon as possible.

Phone calls/App notifications from parents/guardians reporting student absences are entered appropriately on the VSWARE absenteeism monitoring system.

Only students whose parents/guardians have satisfactorily communicated with the school are allowed to leave the school premises during the school day with the exception of lunch time (6th year students only). Students who leave the school premises, with or without permission, are no longer the responsibility of the school. Students who leave the school with permission are required to sign out.

General Data Protection Regulation came in to force in May 2018 and this policy has been reviewed in light of this regulation.

The Role of the Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians are obliged to fulfil their legal responsibilities and to ensure that their daughter attends school.

They must contact the school as soon as possible whenever their daughter is unable to attend school - in accordance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 18, which states:

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

Family holidays should be taken during school holidays.

Children who have not reached the age of 16 years, or have not completed 3 years of post-primary education, whichever occurs later, and who have accumulated more than 20 days of absence in a school year must be reported to TUSLA.

Attendance Procedures

Monitoring daily attendance:

- a) During contact and meetings with parents/guardians the school encourages full attendance.
- b) The school does not condone absences for family holidays etc., during term time and seeks to maintain the integrity of the school year. This is communicated to parents/guardians on an annual basis along with the school calendar for that year.
- c) Rolls are registered on the VSWARE attendance management system - per student, per class, per day.
- d) Student attendance is monitored by: A) Subject Teacher, B) Class Tutor, C) Year Head, and D) Deputy Principal E) Principal and F) School Office.
- e) Absences can be explained by using the Mount Carmel App, notes from the journal or by phone with the school office where this will be entered appropriately on the VSWARE absenteeism monitoring system.
- f) Where the Year Head notices recurrent absenteeism, they will liaise with the students and seek verification from the parents/guardians.
- g) Attendance patterns are routinely discussed at weekly Student Support Meetings.
- h) The Year Head will monitor accumulations of absenteeism and consult with the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) and Deputy Principal/Principal as necessary. In cases where specific students have attendance difficulties, the HSCL will engage with parents/guardians to agree acceptable targets with a view to motivating students to improve attendance.
- i) TUSLA will be contacted by the Principal when a student has been absent for an accumulated total of 20 days.
- j) The school will maintain a strong liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer.
- k) If parents/guardians are aware in advance that a student will be absent for a considerable period of time, they should contact the school by phone.
- p) Good attendance is praised, recognised and rewarded at rewards days at the end of the year.

Monitoring absence during the school day:

A student who arrives late to school must sign in at the front office before joining her class. These students will be recorded as LATE using the VSWARE attendance management system.

Concerns arising from persistent lateness will be brought to the attention of the Year Head by the subject teacher, the Class Tutor, the HSCL and dealt with appropriately.

Leaving Certificate Applied:

Leaving Certificate Applied students and parents should note that 90% attendance is mandatory to pass all course work. This 90% attendance rule also applies to the out-of-school work experience module.

School roles in relation to attendance:

Teachers: Take class attendance every day. Discuss the importance of attendance with class group. Go to Tutor/Year Head with any concerns re attendance.

Tutors: Check-in with students every day. Ask about students who are absent. Follow-up with students who are returning from absences. Constantly stress the importance of attendance with Tutor Group.

Year Heads: Follow up on notes for absences and keep records. Discuss attendance with parents/guardians at Parent Teacher Meetings. One-to-one meeting with relevant students. Stress the importance of attendance for school/life at year group assemblies.

HSCL: The HSCL helps to improve educational outcomes for children at risk of not fully attending, participating or being retained within the school, by supporting the parent/guardians the child's life.

Care Team: Students with poor attendance are monitored by the Care Team. Actions such as referral to the school counsellor, home visit by HSCL, SCP intervention, or meeting with Principal/Deputy Principal

Management: Support the work of the Year Head and Care Team. Liaise with Year Head with serious cases. Liaise with the EWO. Report to Tusla. Setting Targets through the school's DEIS plan.

BOM: Responsible for approving the attendance targets outlined in the DEIS plan.

Please see Appendix 1 for whole school strategies on Attendance.

2. Ratification and Communication

When the Attendance Policy has been ratified by the Board of Management, it becomes the school's agreed Attendance Policy. It should then be dated and circulated within the school community. All teaching staff must be familiar with the Attendance Policy.

Parents/guardians and students should be informed of the Attendance Policy from the time of enrolment of the student.

Monitoring the Implementation of the Policy

The implementation of the policy shall be monitored by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads.

- Principal and Deputy Principal will discuss this policy with staff at Staff Meetings.
- The principal will report to the Board of Management.

Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

The policy should be reviewed and evaluated at certain pre-determined times and as necessary. On-going review and evaluation should take cognisance of changing information or guidelines and feedback from parents/guardians, students, school staff and others. The policy should be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

Ratified by Board of Management: 3rd May 2022

Appendix 1:

Whole-School Approach:

- Our whole school approach to attendance is evident by every teacher, tutor, year head as well as management highlighting the importance of attendance at every opportunity (e.g. parent meetings, student assemblies, attendance drives, intercom announcements and tutor sessions).
- Daily attendance is taken every morning and all subject teachers take attendance throughout the day in their classes making it possible to highlight students with partial attendance on any given day.

- Parents are expected to call the school to inform us if their daughter will be absent that day. Since 2021 they can also send in a notification through our school App which goes directly to the year head. They are also expected to provide a written explanation the following day. Parents are frequently given this information throughout the school year.
- The Student journal has pre-printed notes for parents so we can keep a paper trail of reasons for absences. Parents/Guardian also have the option to send a digital note through our School App system. All students who are absent, and whose parents have not phoned the school, receive a text message notifying them of their daughters' absence.
- Phone calls are often made by Year Heads if there is a concern over a students' attendance record. The number of days missed is also included on Christmas / Summer reports. We also acknowledge improved attendance for those students who are making an effort to improve.
- Through our school self-evaluation DEIS Plan we have attendance as one of our priorities. In October 2021 the Attendance Group will set out our new targets. These targets aim to improve and maintain high attendance, as a result of the measures put in place.

Promoting good attendance:

- Perfect attendance and Excellent Attendance are recognised in December and May of each year through a Prize-giving ceremony in front of the whole school community.
- Attendance drives happen throughout the year to promote high attendance. Prizes are given to students and parents as an incentive to keep the attendance high.

Responding to poor attendance:

- Care Team meetings highlight students with poor attendance. Actions to respond to the poor performance are delegated among the staff at the care team meeting.
- The majority of our students with poor attendance are part of our target list where they receive help from in school and out of school initiatives such as Life Skills Programme and School Completion Programme.
- The HSCL will often make a home visit or invite parents to the school to chat. These chats assist the school in getting a broader vision of the student's home life and helps to find a solution for improving attendance.
- The Principal is in regular contact with the Educational Welfare Officer.

Punctuality:

- Punctuality is taken seriously in Mount Carmel.
- A daily detention is given to students who arrive late.
- Students who are late or leave school early are recorded on VSware.
- Only students with written permission are allowed home early.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 3/5/2022