



Edmund Rice College

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

School name, address and roll number

Edmund Rice College, Carrigaline, Co. Cork, 68264R

School context

Edmund Rice college is a co-educational, Catholic, voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school opened in temporary accommodation in September 2016 with 1st year students only (52 students). The school is now located in its permanent building and for school year 2017/ 18 has 1st and 2nd year students (146 students). An additional year group will be added each year until all six are present. The capacity of the school is 600 students.

School vision and values in relation to school attendance

Research shows that there is rarely a single factor at work when students miss school persistently or for lengthy periods. A student's attendance pattern is bound up with what is happening in their lives: at school, in class, at home, with their peers, in their community and within themselves. In each of these settings there are both risk and protective factors that can hinder or help the student.

School culture, ethos, curriculum, student-teacher relationships and the quality of teaching and learning are factors which are central to ensuring that students engage, participate and attend and these critical influences are within the control of the school. In Edmund Rice College a strong emphasis is placed on school and classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, teacher expectations and school organisation so that students experience positive interaction, a climate of

mutual trust and respect and have a voice in school matters. Such structures and practices have been shown in research to have a strong influence on student engagement and attendance.

In essence, the school's vision is one where the student is at the centre of the school's mission and therefore values of being a welcoming and caring environment are emphasised so as to be encouraging of students to be present in school.

High expectations around attendance

The school has the following expectations regarding attendance:

- That all students attend school each school day, for the full day, unless there is a valid reason;
- That students are punctual in attending school;
- That if students are absent this has to be communicated to the school, preferably prior to their absence, but if not subsequent to it. The preferred method is by way of the specific part of the school journal intended to record absence, but phone calls, emails and other notes are also acceptable. This is communicated in the school's Code of Behaviour;
- That if students must miss part of the school day a reason for this is noted, along with the time that the student left, and where applicable returned to the school;
- That the school will contact the parents if no reason is given for student absence;
- That students understand why good attendance and punctuality are important and that is explained and emphasised to them regularly by key personnel;
- That the school maintains as an organisation, and teachers as individuals, accurate records of student attendance for individual lessons;
- That staff model the importance of good attendance and punctuality to the students in the school;
- That parents understand and support the school's emphasis on good attendance and are encouraged to discuss with the school any difficulties around non-attendance and/or lateness so that the school can offer support and possible solutions.

Monitoring of attendance

The school monitors attendance in the following manner:

- Each student is issued with a scan-in card and is required to scan in twice a day (start of school day and at lunch time). This records their presence in the school, along with the exact time they scanned in, using the ANSEO software package. Whilst ANSEO records and monitors student attendance, in our school it is mainly used to monitor punctuality;
- The main method of recording student attendance is by way of the school's student management information system (MIS) which is VSware. At the beginning of each class period (28 in total in the week) each teacher marks the attendance roll using the VSware package. Teachers and parents have access to this system and can view a student's attendance record. It also provides detailed information with regard to specific days, times and classes missed so that if a pattern exists that it will be noted and addressed;
- Each student is scheduled to have tutor time once a week. During this time class tutors check both the students' attendance and punctuality and, if necessary, confirms the accuracy of the records with the student. If there is an issue regarding either, then the class tutor will alert the student to it and may also communicate this to parents by way of the school journal, by phone call or some other method. If a student is late three times or more, or fails to scan in on three days, then the student has to do detention for an hour.
- Class tutors also monitor and commend those students who have an excellent attendance and punctuality record. At the end of each term those students who have no recorded absences or lateness are entered into a draw for a prize during a year assembly and are commended for this achievement. It is intended to present certificates to those students at the end of the year who have perfect attendance and punctuality.

Main elements of the school's approach to attendance

The school focuses on four main areas in relation to attendance;

- Promoting and encouraging good attendance among students;
- Responding to cases of poor attendance by trying to identify underlying causes and putting in place supports to try and address those causes;
- Setting targets in relation to the level of attendance;
- Ensuring that good attendance is viewed as a concern for the whole-school and those involved with the student (principal/deputy/year head/class tutor/subject teacher/ASD teachers/SEN teachers/parents/outside agencies where appropriate).

These four areas of the school's approach to attendance can be viewed in the following action plan. This plan, as part of the school's Strategy for Attendance will be reviewed once a year.

Action plan in relation to attendance and punctuality

Priority:	To ensure that as many students attend school so as to engage and learn. To implement a whole-school approach to attendance and punctuality so that all have a role to play in this area.
Target(s):	Within this area there are a number of specific targets; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To increase the attendance rate• To ensure good punctuality• To identify and support individuals who may have poor attendance

Specific targets	Who has responsibility?	How? (Strategies & interventions)	When will this happen? (Implementation)	Resources needed	Desired outcome (Impact & progress)
1. To increase the attendance rate for current Y1 from 93.55% in Jan 2018 to 96% in Jan 2019	Principal/ Deputy/ Year Head/ Class tutors/ Parents	Making sure that robust systems are implemented such as that all absences are recorded and noted by tutors	From Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Ensuring VSware is utilised fully	That students increase their attendance
	Class tutors	Looking for patterns for individuals - early intervention and communication.	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Time to be given in each tutor class to this task	Class tutors will be able to see a pattern of absence developing and halt it.
		Looking at the class data as a whole.	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Possible rewards for the class with best attendance (consult students)	Students will be aware of monitoring and be accountable.
	All subject teachers, principal and deputy	Making attendance and punctuality a whole-school priority by emphasizing the need for students not to miss class	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Teachers to be reminded at regular intervals by management to talk about the importance of attendance	That students know the entire school is focusing on attendance and punctuality. Accurate class records help to spot patterns
	Principal/ Deputy	Acknowledging full attendance at regular intervals to promote positive regard for attendance	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Certs to be given at the end of year for attendance/punctuality	To praise and encourage those who have been attending. For others to be motivated towards full attendance.

Success Criteria: That the percentage increase indicated as the target for current Y1 students is increased by January 2019.

Monitoring: Although the target is for next January, monitoring will take place throughout the year to observe trends and progress or otherwise.

Evaluation: Comparing the data from VSware and ANSEO year-on-year to see if targets have been achieved.

Specific targets	Who has responsibility?	How? (Strategies & interventions)	When will this happen? (Implementation)	Resources needed	Desired outcome (Impact & progress)
2. To increase the attendance rate for current Y2 from 92% to 95% in 2018/19	Principal/ Deputy/ Year Head/ Class tutors/ Parents	Making sure that robust systems are implemented such as that all absences are recorded and noted by tutors	From Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Ensuring VSware is utilised fully	That students increase their attendance
	Class tutors	Looking for patterns. Early intervention and communication	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Time to be given in each tutor class to this task. Possible reward for the class with the best attendance (consult students).	Class tutors will be able to see a pattern of absence developing and halt it. Students will be aware of monitoring and be accountable.
	All subject teachers, principal and deputy	Looking at class data as a whole.	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Teachers to be reminded at regular intervals by management to talk about the importance of attendance	That students know the entire school is focusing on attendance and punctuality. Accurate class records help to spot patterns
	Principal/ Deputy	Making attendance and punctuality a whole-school priority by emphasizing the need for students not to miss class	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Certs to be given at the end of year for attendance/punctuality (consult students)	To praise and encourage those who have been attending. For others to be motivated towards full attendance.

Success Criteria: That the percentage increase indicated as the target for current Y2 students is increased by January 2019.

Monitoring: Although the target is for next January, monitoring will take place throughout the year to observe trends and progress or otherwise.

Evaluation: Comparing the data from VSware and ANSEO year-on-year to see if targets have been achieved.

Specific targets	Who has responsibility?	How? (Strategies & interventions)	When will this happen? (Implementation)	Resources needed	Desired outcome (Impact & progress)
3. To identify and support those students who have relatively poor attendance/punctuality	Principal/ Deputy/ Year Head/ Class tutors/ Parents	Making sure that students who have developed a pattern are identified and supported. Investigating why this is happening.	From Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Using Anseo and VSware to identify students. Feedback from teachers, SNAs, parents	That the issues contributing to these students' patterns are addressed so as to bring about positive change
	Principal	Ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced/there are extra-curricular activities/ethos	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Allocations and personnel, use of CPH and perhaps CPD	That the curriculum is not a factor in non-attendance for students
	SEN/ASD Dept	Making sure that those who have attendance issues do not have SEN/ASD needs which are preventing them from attending. Flagging those who are transitioning into the school with poor attendance.	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Use of CAT/ability tests, education passports etc to identify possible SEN	That if SEN is a factor in the non-attendance of pupils, this will be identified and addressed.
	Guidance counsellor, subject teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, principal and deputy	That there is an awareness that other factors such as bullying, personal or emotional etc. may contribute to poor attendance and punctuality	Jan 2018 – Jan 2019	Referral to appropriate supports (GC/ASD) for students experiencing difficulties. Familiarity with and reference to other school policies such as anti-bullying.	That students with poor attendance owing to personal issues are supported to address and solve the issue

Success Criteria: That the attendance and/or punctuality record of those who have been identified as presenting with difficulties in this area is improved by reference to days missed or number of times late.

Monitoring: Although the target is for next January, monitoring will take place throughout the year in conjunction with those staff (e.g. P/DP/GC/SEN/ASD) who will work with such students.

Evaluation: By both quantitative means (reference to data) and by qualitative means (determining if those blocks the student presented with have been addressed).

School roles in relation to attendance

As can be seen from the above action plan, a number of people have key roles.

Principal

- Ensures that, within available resources, there is a broad and balanced curriculum for the students so as to engage them in learning;
- Seeks to foster a climate and ethos within the school which encourages high levels of attendance and engagement;
- Works with outside agencies such as Tusla to help support those with issues of poor attendance;
- Oversees the formulation, implementation and review of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- Delegates, to specific personnel such as the deputy, tasks and roles associated with attendance.

Teachers

- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance;
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance;
- Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms;
- Agree punctuality and attendance standards with students as part of classroom rules;
- Set example by their own punctuality;
- Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately on VShare and reviewed in line with school procedures;
- Alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences;
- Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

Class tutors

- Emphasise on a weekly basis the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Check the accuracy of VShare with students, making sure that if students have been absent or late that relevant notes have been provided;

- Check the accuracy of ANSEO, noting patterns and levels of lateness and bringing this to the attention of students and their parents;
- Communicating with parents if issues are emerging around attendance and punctuality;
- Commending and noting those students who have a very good attendance and punctuality record. This can be done in class and at assembly;
- Alerting the student's year head or the deputy principal if there are issues arising in relation to attendance.

SEN/ASD/GC/SNAs

- Working with those students who may have difficulty in attending school by identifying issues;
- Encouraging and practically supporting students with issues in relation to attendance;
- Alerting teachers to any issues that students are having so that teachers are aware of these;
- Advising teachers in relation to strategies or practical suggestions to support students to be in school

Parents

- Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality;
- Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem;
- Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time;
- Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason;
- Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time.

Partnership arrangements

As our school is relatively new it is envisaged that more links will be made with various groups and agencies to support the school's Attendance Strategy. However, as it currently stands the school has;

- Strong links with the feeder schools, with possible issues being highlighted before students transition into the school;

- Meeting with the parents of incoming Y1 students in April/May prior to entry so as to ensure as smooth a transition as possible and to be aware of any difficulties;
- Arranging a day for incoming Y1 students in May prior to their entry, so that students are familiar with their year group, the building, and what to expect;
- Links with the local GAA/soccer/Lions Club whereby the provision of extra-curricular activities is seen to be an incentive for students to come to school and be in school.

Monitoring of the Statement of Strategy

As outlined in the action plan, there are a number of targets which will be monitored throughout the year. The monitoring of the strategy will also occur by:

- Delegating a specific person to ensure that monitoring of the strategy is taking place and that the action plan is being implemented. For the current year of the strategy (January 2018- January 2019) this will be the deputy;
- Providing opportunities for teachers to discuss the strategy and its implementation at staff meetings;
- Reminding the relevant partners (teachers/parents/students) of the importance of attendance and punctuality at relevant and regular intervals and to check the available data (VShare) to try and ensure that the targets outlined are being worked towards;
- Giving updates to the board of management on levels of attendance in the school;
- Having a formal review of the strategy at the end of year as part of the board of management's annual report on attendance.

Review process

The review process for the Statement of Strategy will involve:

- Ensuring that the entire staff have opportunities, on a regular basis, to engage in reflection and action learning as the strategy is implemented;
- Providing ongoing discussion about strengthening whole-school approaches to attendance;
- Looking at data on a regular basis and seeking feedback from staff, especially class tutors, on progress towards reaching attendance targets;

- Having a formal review with the staff towards as the time frame for the action plan draws to an end.

Date of approval by the board of management: 10 April 2018

Date of submission to Tusla: As per instructions by DES