Presentation College
Carlow

Attendance and Participation Policy

Section A: Introduction

In Presentation College regular school attendance is understood as essential if students are to achieve their full educational potential. Presentation College recognises that poor attendance correlates with a higher dropout rate and with lower academic outcomes. The level of education attained by students has a significant impact on their life chances and their overall wellbeing. Regular attendance and participation in school life enhances the quality of education, student wellbeing and helps students to reach their academic potential. Participation helps to develop friendships, a sense of belonging, cultural and religious sensitivity, independent thinking, enhances the experience of school and improves chances of access to third-level college, apprenticeships and jobs. Presentation College encourages, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within and beyond the school. For the following school Attendance and Participation Policy to be fully effective, co-operation and a spirit of partnership is needed between parents, students, teachers and School Management.

The legislation governing school attendance in Ireland is the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Under the Act, the minimum school leaving age is sixteen years, or the completion of three years of post-primary education, whichever comes later.

The Education Welfare Act (2000) places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents to provide for the optimum attendance of every student. Tusla – Child and Family Agency is responsible for overseeing school attendance in Ireland. Each school is assigned an Education Welfare Officer whose duty it is to liaise with the school in relation to significant attendance problems which may emerge. The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:

- A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days,
- The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty,
- A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal,
- A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly.

Schools are obliged to keep a register of the students attending the school. They must also maintain attendance records for all students and inform Tusla if a student is absent for twenty days or more in a school year. Schools are also required to submit annual student attendance reports to Tusla.

To highlight the fact that regular attendance from the beginning of a child's education in Presentation College is seen as important the Guidance Counsellor, before the beginning of the school year, will contact all Principals of feeder primary schools regarding the attendance record of each incoming First Year student. This helps to anticipate any likely students who are at risk of poor attendance. This information is communicated to the Principal who will disseminate it and other relevant information concerning incoming First Year students to all teachers and the relevant Year Head, in compliance with our Data Protection Policy. In this policy the term 'Parent' is taken to include the term 'Guardian'.

Section B: Policy Relationship to our Mission Statement

At Presentation College we aim to prepare all of our students, girls and boys alike, for the challenges, responsibilities and experience of adult life in a truly Christian, co-educational environment.
All members of the school community - students, parents and staff, are held in very high regard and their dignity, worth and individuality is respected.
Presentation College is an inclusive and welcoming school where we value a sense of belonging, wellbeing and respect for each member of the school community. This policy is written in that spirit, where the uniqueness of the individual is recognised and a partnership of learning is created. We strive to build a sense of community based on Christian values. The school's Code of Behaviour acknowledges this and aims to promote a culture of respect throughout the school. We promote and support regular and optimum attendance by students where possible, and believe that in order for students to reach their potential and prepare for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life, it is essential that they attend regularly and participate in school life to the best of their ability.

Section C: Policy Context: Principles, Legislation and Guidance that Underpins our Attendance and Participation Policy

This Attendance and Participation policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Presentation College
- The CEIST Charter – Principles and Values
- The Principle of the holistic development of the students and the link between their attendance, participation and wellbeing,
- The Principle of Inclusion and Respect for Diversity.
- The Admissions Policy
- The Whole School Guidance Plan
- The Pastoral and Disciplinary System and Code of Behaviour
- The General Data Protection Regulations (2018)
- *'Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance – Guidelines for Schools', Tusla – Child and Family Agency (2015)*
- The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (2004) and

- The Education Welfare Act (2000).

Presentation College promotes an appreciation of learning and the value of students' ownership of their learning. Regular and optimum attendance helps to embed students' learning.

Guiding Principles:

- Attendance and participation in school life matter – We affirm our school's commitment to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and school policy.
- We set high expectations of attendance and participation for all students – for their attendance, their learning and participation in school life.
- We adopt a whole-school approach to attendance and participation, recognising how all areas of the students' experience at school impact on their engagement and attendance.
- We value a whole-student approach which recognises the complexity of some students' lives and the various supports for students' wellbeing and welfare.
- Working in partnership with parents and families to promote positive attendance and participation and prevent and deal with difficulties.
- We value and respond to diversity – we value the culture of every student and support all students in maximising the learning opportunities provided by the school.
- Recognising resilience and avoiding stereotypes – We recognise every child's capacity to attend school, learn well and achieve good outcomes. We will challenge stereotypes that might assume that students from particular background or with particular experiences will have a problem with attendance and learning.
- Focusing on personal responsibility – We aim to build each student's sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and their responsibility to their peers, parents and teachers to be at school every day.

The Principles of the CEIST Charter are as follows:

- Promoting spiritual and human development
- Achieving quality in teaching and learning
- Showing respect for every person
- Creating community
- Being just and responsible

Our policy on Attendance and Participation reflects these core values, and our objective is to optimise student attendance and participation in their learning in order to reach their potential and develop as well-rounded adults who can live independently, responsibly and ethically. Our students report a sense of

welcome, community and belonging in Presentation College and we believe that this is the starting point in promoting positive attendance and participation. Attendance and participation are prerequisites for quality teaching and learning. Teacher-student relationships are positive in the school, and respect for all members of the school community is central to our Mission Statement. In order to implement these principles, we adopt the Response to Intervention Model (RTI) espoused by Tusla – Child and Family Agency:

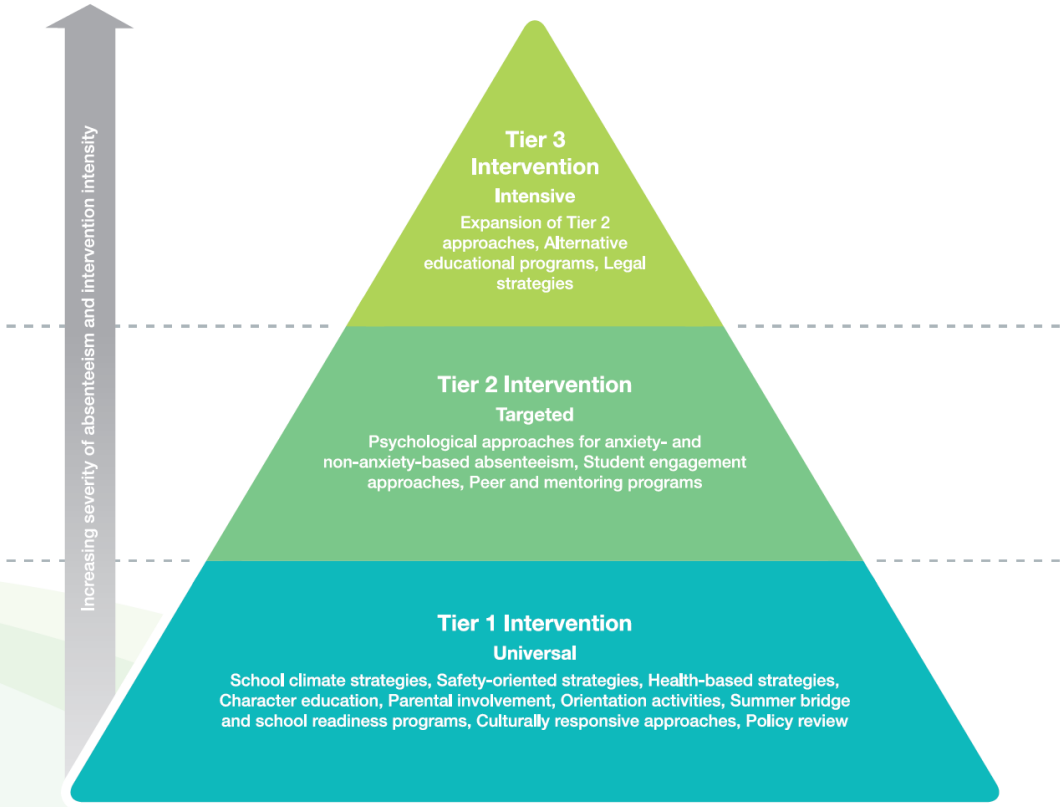
Response to Intervention Model (RTI) espoused by Tusla – Child and Family Agency:

We implement a tiered system of support for students, in line with the Tusla model (see below). The system is designed to support all, some and few students with a variety of strategies and interventions in order to help maximise their attendance and participation in their learning and in school life. Management and Staff of Presentation College work in partnership with students and parents to achieve these outcomes. We operate effective communication systems by phone, text message, letters, email and meetings and provide effective support structures so that students' wellbeing is central to our school culture. If a parent is experiencing difficulty in ensuring that their child attends school, we suggest that they consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) and Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/) where they will find useful suggestions for supporting their children's attendance at school.

Table 2: Response to Intervention (RTI) model

Support for all	All schools should engage in universal and preventative work in supporting all students to attend, participate and achieve in school. The needs of the majority of students are met as a result of whole-school policies and practices, which include the full range of curricular and pastoral supports, incentives and awareness raising.
Support for some	Schools need to provide additional support for the students whose needs are not fully met under whole-school supports. These students require additional support, which might include such interventions as a curricular response, a targeted attendance chart, behaviour plan or mentoring. The support schools provide should be proportionate to the level of identified need. Schools should have clear protocols for identifying the students or groups of students needing more support.
Support for few	A small number of students in every school will present with more complex needs. They are likely to be in receipt of targeted support, but their needs are not being met. Where the situation has escalated, the school's response should be escalated to provide proportionate support to these students and their families. It is likely that a multi-disciplined, tailored, cohesive and structured response is required. It is likely that these students will meet the threshold for a request for referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.

Figure 2: Response to Intervention (RTI) framework



Source: Kearney and Graczyk (2014). Framework reproduced with permission of Prof. Christopher Kearney, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Source: *Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools, p.10 and p.11 (Tusla – Child and Family Agency, 2015).*

All students in our school are treated with equal respect, and high expectations of attendance, punctuality and participation are expected of all in order to help them reach their personal and educational potential. Our Student Care Teams and our Special Educational Needs Team help ensure that students' needs are identified and early, appropriate intervention strategies are designed, implemented and reviewed where necessary.

Section D: Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation in Learning

Tier 1: Universal Whole School Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for All Students

The attendance practices and strategies of Presentation College promote positive and optimum attendance, punctuality and participation among all students. These also help to prevent poor attendance patterns from developing and to identify emerging attendance issues. They include:

1) Quality teaching and learning. Our approach to teaching, learning, assessment and reporting encourages student participation during classes, including active learning methodologies, where appropriate.
2) Management and staff have fully embraced and engaged in the new Junior Cycle, where active learning, embedding key skills and student wellbeing are central to the education of students in the school. Our teaching, learning, assessment and reporting practices are under constant monitoring and review as part of our School Self-Evaluation process and School Improvement.
3) Some teachers are engaged in a TL21 Project, a Centre for School Leadership Process and the Magenta Principles Project – all designed to foster active student participation in their learning. All teachers engage in Continuing Professional Development opportunities to stay up-to-date with curriculum developments and active teaching methodologies.
4) A broad and balanced curriculum, offering a wide range of subject choice to suit the various aptitudes, skills and preferences of students to foster engagement in learning. This includes a range of practical subjects enjoyed by students e.g. Wood Technology, Graphics, Home Economics, Science and Coding / Computer Studies.
5) Positive, welcoming and supportive school climate – students experience inclusion, respect, safety, wellbeing and belonging as part of our school culture. Our physical environment is fully accessible by students with mobility difficulties and is conducive to bonding with peers in each Year Group as a result of careful layout and design of the school.
6) Positive teacher-student relationships. The school's WSE-MLL Report (November 2018) acknowledges the 'positive climate of security and well-being in the school. Students articulated the positive relationships and good atmosphere in the school'. The Management and

Staff of the school believe this to be a key reason why regular and very good attendance figures are noted for the majority of students in the school.

7) Our Wellbeing Programme, Anti-Bullying Policy, Code of Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, and Acceptable Use Policies help to maintain a safe learning environment for our students.
8) The role of the Year Head has been clarified and strengthened in relation to student attendance and punctuality.
9) Year Heads support and encourage students in their attendance, learning and school-work.
10) Attendance and participation awareness raising and setting fair and high expectations of students.
11) Students are expected to attend all classes and to participate to the best of their ability. We expect each student to take responsibility for his/her own learning and achieve his/her educational potential through regular and optimum attendance, high standards of punctuality and positive participation in learning and school life. This includes curricular subjects, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and student involvement in other areas of school life.
12) Student attendance reminders are provided on the school intercom by the Principal, and Year Heads explain the importance of regular attendance and participation at assemblies.
13) Participation is recognised, praised, publicised and rewarded.
14) Full and high levels of attendance are rewarded regularly through acknowledgement of the relevant students at assembly.
15) A comprehensive programme of activities designed to encourage the full participation of students in the life of the school (co-curricular and extra-curricular). Many teachers give generously of their personal time in supporting extra-curricular and co-curricular activities in the school. Activities take place during lunch time as well as after school.
16) The Principal regularly informs students and parents of the importance of regular attendance and the incremental nature of the learning process, and the negative impact on student learning and student wellbeing when attendance is considered to be poor.
17) Efficient monitoring and follow-up by Year Heads of student attendance. Year Heads also hold regular assemblies at which they emphasise the importance of regular attendance and remind students of procedural matters in this regard.
18) Attendance is monitored on a daily basis by the Year Heads who are in an immediate position to notice patterns of non-attendance and to speak to the students. Students who become ill during the school day must speak to their Year Head to contact home to make arrangements to be collected.
19) Good school organisation (e.g. mixed-ability classes, consultative process for Policy Development).
20) Our Pastoral and Disciplinary systems are supportive, balanced and fair to students.

21) Academic Tracking of students in First Year is conducted through a second SPHE/Wellbeing class, and students are supported in target-setting for improvement and have an opportunity to discuss their academic progress with the SPHE teacher. Academic tracking of students continues in Second Year when each student is met twice by a teacher who discusses his/her academic progress with them, and helps them to set appropriate targets.
22) All students are provided with expert advice and tips on Study Skills.
23) Students are encouraged in learning through regular formative feedback given through the marking of students' assessments and other work by the teachers and the term reports.
24) Attendance is discussed, as appropriate, with the Parents' Council, Staff Meetings, Parent-Teacher Meetings and Student Council.
25) Student Reports record students' attendance, with feedback from the Year Head.
26) Visual reminders of the importance of attendance are displayed in the students' areas of the school.
27) Career Guidance classes and individual appointments of students with a Guidance Counsellor.
28) The Student Council and focus groups of students are consulted on matters affecting students e.g. reasons for poor student attendance / lateness etc.
29) Initiatives to support students in their social, emotional and personal development e.g. Guidance Counsellors' support, Wellbeing – including PE, SPHE, CSPE, Computer Studies and Guidance-Related areas such as Study Skills, Cyber-Bullying, LGBT+ Inclusion, Mental Health Week, Active Schools Week etc.
30) The Continuum of Support (NEPS) is applied fairly to help ensure that appropriate supports are implemented for few, some and all students, in line with the continuum. Students who have a diagnosed, identified or emerging special educational need are given priority for access to a range of supports.
31) Each Year Group has a Parent-Teacher meeting, where positive attendance, punctuality and participation are affirmed and any issues or concerns addressed.
32) Presentation College enjoys an active Parents' Council which promotes the engagement of parents in the school. This partnership between parents and the school is underpinned by Sections 26 and 27 of the Education Act, 1998.
33) Parents have access to their children's attendance and academic results on VSware, using an individual log-in code.
34) Parents are informed of school activities, policies and other matters via the school website, publication of photos and school news in local print media, letters sent home as correspondence and brief notifications by text message.
35) Parents are consulted on Policy Review and Development as well as School Self-Evaluation matters via the Parents' Council and/or email sent directly to parents.

36) Providing support programmes to maintain good Attendance e.g. participation in the annual 'Every School Day Counts' initiative by Tusla – building community support for attendance through links with parents, other schools and community groups. Section 22(2)(d)(ii) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 explicitly requires schools to build links with their local youth services as a means of supporting good school attendance.

Tier 2: Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for Some Students

These include:

1) Class teachers record each student's attendance and academic progress and will bring to a student's attention where there is an attendance-related issue affecting learning outcomes.
2) Class teachers may send letters home (see Appendix 1) where there is a concern about students' repeated absence from class and the subsequent impact on learning and educational outcomes.
3) Non-attendance for class roll call at 8.50am and 2pm is notified to parents by text message.
4) The introduction of a class rewards system for the best attendance record over a specified time period or against the previous year's attendance record (First Year, 2019-20).
5) Year Heads and School Management liaise with students and parents and systematically follow up where attendance / punctuality become identified as problematic. Early intervention is valued, as is student support and partnership with parents for improved student outcomes. Early intervention by the Year Head helps to ascertain the attendance difficulties and to engage in encouraging improved attendance, sometimes with the help of learning targets and an Attendance Plan.
6) Pattern of non-attendance is notified to the student and their parents by the Year Head. Year Heads contact the student's parent by phone to discuss emerging concerns about absenteeism. Where a student has been absent for ten days the Year Head will contact home by letter, encouraging improved attendance (see Appendix II).
7) Weekly meetings of both the Student Care Teams and the SEN Team mean that students' needs are identified as quickly as possible, and early intervention and a combination of strategies are applied where needed.
8) Introduction of the Praise Project with Second Year students in 2019-2020. Three teachers, including the relevant Year Head and Dean of Discipline, have attended the 'Praise Project' information seminar in Kilkenny Education Centre (November 2019) with a view to implementing the project in the school, targeting students in Second Year. The aim is to foster positive attendance and participation by students and prevent student dis-engagement from learning.

9) Digital Technology and Science Projects and Clubs, Green Schools, Games Club, enrichment and sporting activities, Business and Enterprise Skills development (e.g. Build a Bank).
10) Student Support Plans, Learning Support, Academic or Organisational Support
11) Two Parent Information Evenings are held for parents of First Year in Term One. Good attendance is emphasised at these meetings.
12) Partnership with parents is understood by Staff and Management to be essential in addressing and resolving attendance issues.
13) Early intervention – Mentoring by Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Dean or other significant adult.
14) Breakfast Club and After-School Activities (e.g. Learning Hub / After-School Study / Extra-Curricular Activities).
15) School Musical, Sporting and Art activities, Careers Seminars and visits to Third Level Colleges.
16) Recognition, affirmation and rewarding of students who have good attendance, e.g. Certificates for Excellent Attendance at the School Awards Ceremony each May. Students who have fewer than five days' absence in a school year also receive a Certificate of Excellence for Attendance over the summer holidays.
17) Student Leadership Opportunities e.g. Meitheal, Prefect, Student Council, John Paul II Awards, Gaisce Awards, Learning Hub.
18) Building practical business and enterprise skills – Work Experience, LCVP, Build a Bank project.
19) Individual and small group support for students in organisational skills, social skills, study skills.
20) Co-operation and coordination with NEPS and Tusla aimed at promoting and encouraging attendance. The Deputy Principal has participated in a 'School Refusal' group consultation in Kilkenny Education Centre (November 2019).

Tier 3: Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for a Few Students

These include:

1) Friends for Life Programme / My Friends Youth Resilience Programme.
2) The prompt identification of students who are at risk of early school-leaving.
3) The establishment of closer contacts between the school and the families concerned.
4) Support visit to the home of the student and parent(s) by the Principal or Guidance Counsellor.
5) Reporting to Tusla (Educational Welfare Services) and Involvement of Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).
6) Family conference.
7) Attendance concerns or regarding those who have reached twenty day's absence: Communication with and advice from the Educational Welfare Officer and NEPS Psychologist.
8) School Refusal: Communication with and advice from NEPS. Referral to Tusla and follow-up communication and advice from EWO.

9) An Attendance Plan which focuses on Improved Attendance Targets. (An Attendance Plan will be implemented and reviewed where there are ongoing concerns about a student's level of attendance, or where a student who is repeating a Year has developed poor attendance and in advance of him/her being removed from the school register).
10) A reduction in timetable if absenteeism is related to school refusal or stress. Such a decision is only taken in conjunction with the intervention of the NEPS psychologist.
11) Curriculum. Possibilities for tailoring and differentiating curriculum offerings to the needs of individuals (e.g. the Level 2 Learning Programme).
12) Use of extra-curricular activities. Identifying specific activities that may motivate and encourage engagement and attendance.
13) Liaising with CAMHS and seeking professional advice of CAMHS psychologists for supporting a small number of students.
14) Links with youth and community groups. Community resources such as Carlow Regional Youth Services (https://www.facebook.com/carlowrys/), The Carlow/Kilkenny Child and Adolescent Psychology Service (HSE) (https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/), Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/ , migrant rights groups, Traveller support groups, church groups, community groups, disability organisations, support and welfare organisations – all may be able to offer supports for attendance.

Where individualised supports are necessary, involving an Attendance Plan, we adopt a **problem-solving framework** with the support of the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/). Steps in the framework include:

Understand: Gather information. Understand the context and the factors that may be affecting attendance through discussion with the student (depending on age and maturity), parents and members of staff.

Plan: Generate ideas about possible solutions that take account of the reasons for the poor attendance. Prepare an agreed plan, tailored to the student's needs, with the student and parents.

Do: Set individual attendance targets, agree a timeframe and agree responsibilities for the actions in the plan, including who will monitor and keep records to check the progress of the plan. Finally, implement the agreed strategy consistently.

Review: Review progress and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the intervention. Change the plan if necessary in the light of progress or further continued poor attendance.

Section E: Procedures for the Notification of Absence

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 18, imposes a duty on parents to inform the school of the reasons where a child is absent from the school during part of a school day or for a school day or for more than a school day. Under section 21(1) of the Act, the school is obliged to keep a record of attendance for each student for each school day, which must specify the reasons for any absence. Pursuant to section 21 (4) of said Act, where the aggregate number of

school days on which a student is absent is not less than twenty or where a student, in the opinion of the Principal, is not attending school regularly, the Principal is obliged to so inform, by notice in writing, an Educational Welfare Officer. Section 23 of the Act requires that the procedures to be followed by a parent for notifying the school about absence must be formalised by the school and form part of the school's Code of Behaviour.

General Procedures for Notification of Absence:

- **School opening times:** The first class of the day begins at 8.50am and school finishes at 4pm, except on Fridays when school finishes at 1.05pm. Students should allow sufficient time to arrive before class (e.g. no later than 8.40am) to get their books and materials organised for class until the next break. Morning break is from 11.30am until 11.45am. Lunchbreak is from 1.05pm until 2pm. Very occasional changes may be made to normal opening / closing / break times, and notified to students and parents, for reasons such as Parent-Teacher meetings (school finishes at 3.45pm on these days) and occasional short extended morning break for staff information purposes. After-School Study takes place, for those whose parents have registered and paid the relevant fee, from 4.15pm until 6.15pm. Friday Study, which is free to all students, takes place from 2pm to 4pm. Detention takes place from 4.15pm until 6pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- **When parents should advise the school about absence:** Parents must advise the school about their child's absence as soon as the child returns to school. The template note is in the student's journal for this purpose, and must include the student's name, his/her class, the date(s) of absence, the reason for the absence and the parent's signature. If an absence of three days or more is anticipated, the parent may notify the Year Head of same by leaving a message via the school office (phone, email or written message). A note is always required following a student's absence.
- **The person to be informed of a student's absence** is the relevant Year Head. If the Year Head is absent or otherwise unavailable, the notification should be provided to one of the Deputy Principals. If neither Deputy Principal is available, the notification should be provided to the Principal.
- **The method to be used:** A written explanatory absence note should be provided when a student returns from absence. Template notes for this purpose are found in the student's journal. A separate template note is located in the journal where a parent wishes to seek permission from the Year Head for the child to leave school during the school day e.g. to attend an appointment. The name of the student, the date and the reason for leaving the school must be supplied on the note in addition to the parent's signature. A phone call to the school office will not suffice, nor may a parent or other person collect a student without notice in person, unless in the case of extreme emergency. Where this happens, the parent must report to the reception office and explain the situation in person. Individual students will not be called for using the school intercom during class time, since this causes disruption to teaching and learning for a very large number of individuals.
- **The time students are expected to be in school/class:** Students should be in school by 8.40am to allow time to organise books and materials for class. Students must move promptly to class by the time the bell rings. Students may not be dismissed from class until the bell rings. Students may

not loiter in the area, toilets, rooms, corridors or outside for any reason. All members of the school community must adhere to the one-way system on the corridors to allow the flow of foot traffic to move easily and to get to class on time.

- **The time at which a student will be marked absent:** Teachers take the roll call at the start of class. If a student is not present he/she will be marked as 'Absent' immediately after 8.50am and within the first few minutes of the commencement of each class during the school day. Each class is of forty minutes duration (with the exception of double class periods of eighty minutes). Text messages are sent to parents alerting them to students' absences from the 8.50am and 2pm classes.
- **Procedures if a student arrives late for school:** An explanatory note (template supplied in the student's journal) should be presented to the class teacher by the student if he/she is late to school/class. The note must be dated, signed by the parent and contain the student's name and a reason for the lateness. The teacher may initial the note and instruct the student to place the note in the relevant Year Head post box. If a student arrives late to class, the teacher will update his/her attendance to 'Late'. A late slip will be issued where a signed note from a parent is not provided.
- **Procedures if a student needs to leave school before the end of the school day:** An explanatory note (template in student's journal) must be provided to the Year Head at the start of the school day by the student. The note must contain the student's name, the date, time of departure (and return, if relevant), the reason for leaving early and the parent's signature. **No student may leave school without the permission of his/her Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal, for reasons of safety and accountability**. In the event of illness, the student must go to the Year Head who will contact the student's parent to arrange collection, where appropriate. We encourage students to remain in school and in class if possible and safe to do so.

A) Absence from School for a Half Day, Day or Longer

1) On return to school following an absence all students are required to present an explanatory absence note to their Year Head following non-attendance at school, for whatever reason, even when an absence has been notified by a parent to the Year Head in advance by phone. The note is to be signed and dated by the student's parent and provide a reason for the student's absence, in addition to the student's name. The note must be left in the Year Head's post box in the relevant area of the school immediately upon return to school. In the event of a repeated failure to present such a note, the Year Head may refer the matter to the Dean of Discipline.
2) In some instances a student may be absent from school due to suspension. Parents will be notified in advance of suspensions and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies. Where a student is suspended from school (except in the case of in-house suspension) he/she should not be on the school premises. Any student on suspension is not permitted to participate in any school activity for the duration of the suspension.

Absence Without Permission

So-called 'mitching' / truancy / absence without school permission (or occasional unauthorised absence from school without the knowledge of both the school and parents) is seen as a serious discipline issue and is considered a real danger to the safety and wellbeing of a student. Legally, school authorities must take into account the fact that they are acting in 'loco parentis' as far as the student is concerned, during school hours.

In the case of a verified offence of absence without school permission, the Year Head, Dean, Principal or a Deputy Principal will notify the parents of the offence and the sanction will take the form of Detention, as a minimum. Such cases may also be referred to the relevant Student Care Team by the Year Head, Dean, Principal or Deputy Principal.

As a matter of routine the Year Head, with the assistance of teachers, keeps a regular roll check on any student who has left or been absent from school without school permission, as a way of monitoring any possible future offences. In the case of any future absence by such a student, the Year Head will contact the parents regarding the legitimacy of any such absence. However, all such absences must be followed up with a dated hand-written note from the parents to the Year Head.

B) Absence from Class or for a Time During the School Day

In limited circumstances (e.g. to attend a medical appointment), parents may, having notified the Year Head in writing, collect a student from the school and return him/her to the school afterwards. We strongly advise arranging appointments and other activities for holiday periods or out-of-school time (e.g. weekends, mid-term breaks, school holidays), where possible, to minimise any disruption to students' learning and educational outcomes.

1) Students must not absent themselves from class, or part of a class, without the written permission of their teacher, Year Head or organiser of School Activity.
2) Permission for absence from class during the school day must be sought from the relevant Year Head by presenting a written request from parents. The note must be given by the student to the Year Head by 8.50am. The Year Head will enter the absence details on VSware to inform the staff of such absences.
3) In the case of any unforeseen absence during the day, such as student illness or family emergency, the student will request permission to leave school from his/her Year Head who will contact the student's parents to verify the reasons for absence and confirm arrangements for the collection of the student. The Year Head will enter the absence details on VSware to inform the staff of such absences. If the Year Head is unavailable, either one of the Deputy Principals will undertake the procedure outlined here. If the Deputy Principals are unavailable, the Principal will undertake the procedure.

4) Unaccompanied groups of students are not allowed to leave the school.
5) Presentation College uses a same-day texting response to absences to ensure that parents are kept informed of their child's absences. This texts are sent in the morning and in the afternoon. Parents may also view their child's attendance record on VSware using the personal log-in code supplied by the school.
6) Students involved in school activities are marked 'SAct' (which counts as present on their records) for the duration of the activity and there is a procedure for staff who organise events and teams to register their attendance in advance under School Activity.
7) In compliance with our Acceptable Use Policy for digital technologies, students' mobile phones must remain powered 'off' during the school day and may therefore not be contacted personally by parents or others. In an urgent/emergency situation, parents should contact the school office where their message will be noted and relayed to the relevant student as soon as is practicable.

C) <u>Punctuality to Class – Lateness</u>

1) Students are expected to be punctual for all of their classes and not delay in any are of the school or outside the school building. Students should get organised with their books and materials for class as efficiently as possible, and move to class on time. If a student arrives late to school he/she should present an explanatory note, signed by a parent, to the class teacher. The note should be initialled by the teacher and returned to the Year Head' post box swiftly.
2) Late arrivals will be documented on VSware by the teacher concerned by means of Late Slips, unless a signed parental note (as outlined in C1 above) is presented. Six Slips (any combination of Late Slips, Uniform Slips, Homework Slips, Class Materials Slips) will result in automatic Detention for the student with his/her parents being notified. Late arrivals with accompanying note, (as outlined in C1 above) will be noted on VSware as 'Late' on the student's attendance record, but no Late Slip will be issued.

D) <u>Absence due to Term-Time Holidays</u>

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the Principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, Presentation College cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time.

The Board of Management of Presentation College discourages parents from taking students on holidays during term time. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the school requests that the parent provide a letter to say they are doing so and are aware of the implications. Where there are regular holiday absences, the school will remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time.

Section F: Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Attendance

Under no circumstances may any student leave the school without obtaining permission from the Year Head, or if the Year Head is unavailable a Deputy Principal, or the Principal. Parental permission for a student to leave school during the school day must first be approved by the Year Head at the start of the school day, preferably before 8.50am. The note, signed by the student's parent, must be presented to the Year Head at this time, and the reason for leaving during the day specified. This note must not be left in the post box in the area**.**

Students

1) Students are expected to attend all classes every day and to participate to the best of their ability. Students should inform themselves of the extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities available to them. We encourage all students to engage in at least one extra-curricular activity for their social development and overall wellbeing. Most students who attain high academic scores have a history of extra-curricular involvement in the school.
2) Students are required to adhere to the requirements of the Code of Behaviour and the Attendance and Participation Policy.
3) Students must present an explanatory absence note, signed by a parent and correctly dated, in the relevant Year Head's box immediately upon their return following a school absence. Template notes for this purpose are included in students' journals.
4) Students who wish to leave school (with written parental permission) during the school day must present an explanatory note, signed and dated by their parent, to the relevant Year Head by 8.50am. Template notes for this purpose are included in students' journals.
5) Students who arrive late to school must present a note, signed and dated by their parent, to the teacher whose class they are entering. Students may not delay upon arriving at school and must go to class immediately upon their return.
6) Students who become ill during the school day should try, if possible, to stay in school and in class if safe to do so. If however there is a need for the student to go home, he/she must inform the Year Head who will contact home and arrange collection. A Deputy Principal (or the Principal, if a Deputy Principal is not available) will perform this function if a Year Head is not available.
7) Students must never leave the school building without the permission of their Year Head, (Deputy Principal or Principal).

8) Only Senior Students are allowed to leave the school premises during lunchbreak. Junior Students must remain on the school premises throughout the school day.

Teachers who Organise Events, Teams, School Activities

1) The names of students who miss classes due to their involvement in curricular or co-curricular activities, along with the details and times of such activities, will be documented on the form supplied for this purpose by the teacher(s) responsible and given to the school secretaries in advance of students missing class. The school secretaries will enter the absence details on VSware to inform the staff of such absences. The list of students should be checked against the students actually participating on the day in the activity by the teacher(s) responsible and the school secretaries must be informed of any additions or absences.
2) Take due cognisance of any class-contact teaching and learning time missed by students and teachers engaged in a School Activity, and make every effort to keep to a minimum the loss of instruction time, where possible.
3) Help to implement the Attendance and Participation Policy.

Parents

Parents are required, under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, to ensure that their children from the age of six to the age of sixteen attend a recognised school or receive a certain minimum education. Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 parents must inform the school in writing if their child will be absent from school on a school day and the reason for the absence, for example, illness. Both Presentation College and Tusla strongly advise parents against taking children out of school to go on holiday during term-time.

The Parents' Council was consulted on the review of this policy. Parents are expected to support the Attendance and Participation Policy of Presentation College. As the primary educators parents have a responsibility and are also expected to:

1) Foster high expectations of their child for optimum and regular attendance, punctuality and participation.
2) Ensure that their child attends school unless there is an unavoidable and legitimate reason for an absence. A school calendar is supplied to parents to help ensure that discretionary appointments may be made, in so far as possible, outside normal school time. We strongly discourage students being taken out of school for family holidays as absence from school has a negative impact on their learning.
3) Ensure that student appointments are made for out-of-school hours where possible, thereby ensuring that only unavoidable absences occur during school hours.

4) Provide a written, signed explanatory note in the student's journal for his/her absence on the first day of return to school.
5) Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem.
6) When contacted by the Year Head (or Senior Management), to collect (or arrange a nominated guardian) their child who presents as unwell as soon as possible and to seek medical advice as appropriate.
7) Ensure that their contact details, provided to the school, are kept up-to-date and that contact details of an emergency contact person are provided to the school office at the start of the school year.
8) Build resilience in their child and help him/her to differentiate between genuine sickness that requires absence / being collected to go home to recuperate, from normal aches, pains and discomforts that, while uncomfortable, should not prevent a student from learning or missing time in school.
9) Communicate promptly with the Year Head where any issue with their child's attendance is anticipated.
10) Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason.
11) Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time.
12) Help to implement the Attendance and Participation Policy.

Class / Subject Teachers

All teachers recognise the importance of their role in monitoring and encouraging student attendance. Teachers also realise the importance of their role in highlighting early signs of student absenteeism from their classes to both parents and Year Heads. Teachers will:

1) Promote the whole school attendance approach.
2) Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support student participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
3) Actively use the school's Attendance and Participation Policy to promote attendance.
4) Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms.
5) Agree punctuality and attendance standards with students as part of classroom rules.
6) Set example by their own punctuality.
7) Maintain and keep accurate and timely individual class attendance records for every class and student, taught or supervised, on VSware, in accordance with school procedures. Ensure attendance data is recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
8) Record each student's attendance, absence or lateness on VSware.
9) Help to implement the Attendance and Participation Policy.
10) Provide a positive learning environment.

11) Monitor student attendance for each of their own particular class groups.
12) Report their concerns re student absenteeism from their particular classes to parents and Year Heads, if and when necessary as per agreed procedures and using the standard school letter. Communicate with parents via standard letter where a student's repeated absence is a cause of concern and/or likely to impact negatively on their learning and results.
13) Promote and encourage among their students' good attendance and punctuality in class.
14) Encourage students to attend and participate in school every day.
15) Get involved in attendance competitions / initiatives.
16) Promote positive student engagement, active learning and student participation in all aspects of learning both inside and beyond the classroom.
17) Support the Attendance Plans for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis.
18) Communicate with parents at Parent-Teacher meetings on the importance and value of good attendance.
19) Work in partnership with parents and school management.
20) Welcome students on return to school after extended absence, if appropriate.
21) Use the Slip system to record students' unauthorised absences / lates.

Year Heads

Each year group is assigned a Year Head whose duties include monitoring and supporting students in the areas of pastoral care, school attendance and academic achievement. In the area of school attendance, the Year Head will:

1) Promote and encourage high levels of attendance and punctuality among the students in their year group.
2) Help to implement the Attendance and Participation Policy.
3) Accept, sign and appropriately store explanatory notes from parents.
4) Record student absences and file all absence notes in individual student files.
5) Follow up if a signed explanatory note is not presented by a student.
6) Record all verbal and written communication from parents.
7) Record and attend to student absences using VSware.
8) Apply the school's Code of Behaviour to students for unexcused absences.
9) The Year Head has responsibility for monitoring student attendance and alerting the Principal where there is an issue arising with a student's absence.

10) Tracking student attendance and identify emerging trends / patterns of absence with follow-up.
11) Liaise with the Student Care Team on matters pertaining to attendance, absenteeism and participation.
12) Identify students for whom regular attendance is a problem and to meet with students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend.
13) Discuss with such students the reasons for regular or multiple absences and collaborate with the student, parent, Student Care Team and external services, where necessary, to help devise, implement and review an Attendance Plan for such students, with the aim of resolving any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.
14) Contact parents (by phone) to establish the cause of non-attendance if a student is absent for more than five days without explanation.
15) Notify parents, by way of standard letter template, where a student has been absent for ten days (see Appendix II), using plain English to communicate.
16) Discuss attendance at Parent-Teacher meetings.
17) Contact parents, where appropriate, re a student's level of absenteeism. The Year Head may arrange a formal meeting with parents to discuss the situation. The Year Head may also refer the student/parents to local support services such as Carlow Youth Services. If, following such contact, no progress is being made as far as the student's attendance is concerned, then the matter will be referred to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).
18) If available, to contact home if a student is unwell and needs to be collected.
19) In consultation with parents and the Principal the following strategies may be considered or used as appropriate to the specific situations:
    - Setting Attendance Improvement Targets: The use of specific targets relating to attendance for individual students.
    - Timetabling: A reduction in the student's timetable if absenteeism is related to school refusal or stress. Such decisions are only taken in conjunction with the intervention of the NEPS psychologist.
    - A rewards system: Considering how the attendance reward and reinforcement system could be used to motivate and encourage an individual.
    - Curriculum: Consider possibilities for tailoring and differentiating curriculum offerings to the needs of individuals.
    - Promotion of extra-curricular activities: Identifying specific activities that may motivate and encourage engagement and attendance.
    - Links with youth and community groups: Community resources such as Carlow Regional Youth Services, Barnardos, migrant rights groups, church groups, community groups, disability organisations, support and welfare organisations – all may be able to offer supports for attendance.
20) Liaise with the EWO and Tusla regarding student absenteeism, providing appropriate referral documentation, as required.
21) Meet weekly at the Student Care Team meeting to discuss any students about whom they are concerned due to a problem with attendance, and seek advice on an Attendance Plan.
22) At his or her convenience, undertake spot-checks of student attendance and make follow-up calls to parents in any cases that require it.
23) Record the number of days a student is absent in student reports to parents. Acknowledge good attendance in the reports issued to parents.

24) Participate in national initiatives to foster improved school attendance e.g. the' Every School Day Counts' initiative each November, run by Tusla.
25) When the school and the Year Head have exhausted all efforts and there is no improvement in attendance, a referral is made by the Year Head to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services (See: http://www.tusla.ie./services/educationalwelfare-services/).

The Educational Welfare Officer and Tusla – Child and Family Agency (Educational Welfare Service):

On receipt of a referral from a school, Tusla's Educational Welfare Services will screen the referral and respond to the school. Where the student's case is allocated to an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), he or she will lead a plan to try and resolve the presenting attendance issue. The school will remain involved in the plan since it will be key to the resolution of the situation. The focus at this point will be to exhaust all possible welfare interventions to address the attendance issues.

When the student's attendance improves, the plan can be stepped down and those involved can offer less intensive support, while ensuring that the gains made are maintained.

When there is evidence that the student's parents are not making efforts to support their child's attendance, prosecution under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 will be considered. The Act requires that all welfare approaches be considered before legal action can be taken against a parent who is failing to ensure their child attends school.

Supporting re-engagement: Where a student has missed significant amounts of time, research findings underline the importance of helping a student to re-engage with learning and to catch up on missed material. When this does not happen, there can be further pressure on the student to disengage again and the good work done by the school in helping the student to get back to school can be undone. The school will engage with the home to assist in this process. In cases where a student has attended a hospital school or has been in receipt of home tuition the school will liaise with tutors to ensure the best possible re-engagement with school.

Principal and Deputy Principals

The Principal and Deputy Principals will:

1) Maintain the school roll.
2) Lead and promote whole-school attendance.
3) Provide a positive learning environment.
4) Provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that are supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.

5) Lead the policy process for the design, implementation and review of the Attendance and Participation Policy, including the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (See Appendix X for the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance).
6) Put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance and Participation Policy and Statement of Strategy for School Attendance.
7) Raise student, staff and parental awareness about the importance of attendance.
8) Promote and foster a culture of optimum school attendance and participation by students.
9) Support teachers and Year Heads in their roles in supporting student attendance and participation.
10) Meet weekly as members of the Junior Care Team, Senior Care Team and the Special Educational Needs Team to discuss, support the implementation and review of supports for students with regard to attendance and participation.
11) Oversee the implementation of the three-tiered approach to intervention in student attendance and absenteeism issues.
12) Provide rewards for student attendance.
13) Link with external support and agencies as required e.g. NEPS Psychologist, Tusla, EWO etc. and ensure the support for the work of the EWO with the students who have chronic attendance difficulties.
14) Submit EWO referrals and referrals to Tusla.
15) Link in with and lead initiatives that promote attendance e.g. Tusla 'Every School Day Counts'.
16) Furnish pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.
17) Monitor whole-school attendance.
18) Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.
19) Include Attendance as an item on the Staff Meeting agenda, where appropriate.
20) Submit Annual Attendance Report (AAR) to Tusla, annually, including the total number of days lost through student absence in the school yar, the total number of students who were absent for twenty days or more during the school year, the total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted and the total number of students who were suspended.
21) An end-of-year review will form part of the Board of Management's annual report on attendance (as per section 21(a)(b) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to Tusla's EWO service and the Parents' Council. The review will be prepared collaboratively by Year Heads, Deputy Principals and the Principal.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will:

1) Submit the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to Tusla.
2) Report on annual attendance to Tusla and the Parents' Council.
3) Ratify and support the school's Attendance and Participation Policy and Code of Behaviour regularly.
4) Request and review attendance statistics via the Principal's Report.
5) Report all suspensions / expulsions / reduced timetables.
6) Provide funding for attendance initiatives.
7) Oversee the school roll.
8) Comply with all circulars and directives from the Department of Education and Skills and from Tusla.

Section G: The Uses of Attendance Data: Recording and Monitoring School Attendance

General Attendance Monitoring

General monitoring of attendance is used to:

- Monitor overall attendance and punctuality levels,
- Identify trends and patterns in attendance,
- Identify specific times of the school year, week or day when attendance levels are lower,
- Monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups or individuals and
- Track attendance for a specified period of time.

Early Intervention with Groups and Individuals

Early intervention is used to:

- Set targets for improvement in attendance and reduction of absences,
- Trigger early interventions at whole-school, class or group level and individual level,
- Identify individuals with poor attendance and intervene accordingly.

Monitoring Interventions

Monitoring interventions is conducted to:

- Monitor attendance targets for individuals or groups (e.g. a Year Group),
- Monitor the effectiveness of the School Attendance Strategy / Attendance and Participation Policy and
- Devise and monitor the impact of individualised Attendance Plans.

We Follow Best Practice in Recording

- We have a standard system in Presentation College for keeping records about students arriving late, departing early, attendance and non-attendance. VSware is our Data Management System for recording attendance and absences.
- Teachers maintain accurate attendance records.
- Teachers record details of student non-attendance.
- Teachers alert relevant staff (Year Head) if there are concerns about student absences.

Section H: Monitoring and Review of the Policy and Statement of Strategy

The Board of Management and the Principal will make arrangements to check how the Attendance and Participation Policy and Statement of Strategy for School Attendance is being implemented on an ongoing basis and how well it is working. Ways in which this will be done include:

- Opportunities for staff to share experience about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets;
- Update on attendance levels at each Board of Management meeting, with reference to the school's attendance targets;
- Formal end-of-year review of the Attendance and Participation Policy and Statement of Strategy as part of preparation of the Board of Management's annual report on attendance (as per Section 21(6)(a)(b) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000) to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the Parents' Council.

Section I: Communicating the Attendance and Participation Policy, including Statement of Strategy

Members of the school community were actively involved in the reviewing and development of the school's Attendance and Participation Policy and Statement of Strategy for School Attendance, and consulted as part of the process. This includes Staff, Student Council, Parents' Council and the Board of Management. The policy is made available on the school website under the Parents Tab at www.presentationcollegecarlow.com

This policy has been reviewed, amended and ratified by the Board of Management on 16th January 2020

Signature of Chairperson: _____
For and on behalf of the Board of Management

Date of next review: January 2021

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix I

Standard Letter Template Sent by Subject Teachers to Parents Reflecting Concerns About a Student's Absence

Date: _____

Student: _____ Class: _____ Subject: _____

Dear Parents,

I wish to bring to your attention some concerns I have regarding the attendance of your son/daughter for his/her classes in the subject named above.

Since _____ your son/daughter has been absent for _____ classes out of a total of _____ classes in this subject.

In keeping with our Attendance and Participation Policy, Presentation College sees regular attendance at school as essential if students are to achieve their full potential from an educational perspective. Presentation College recognises that poor attendance correlates with a higher dropout rate and with lower educational outcomes and academic results. The level of education attained by students has a significant impact on their wellbeing as well as their vocational and life chances. Regular attendance and participation in school life enhance the quality of their education. Participation helps to develop friendships and enhances the experience of school. Presentation College encourages positive and regular school attendance and participation in learning, and an appreciation of learning within the school.

I would appreciate your support in resolving this situation by discussing the matter with your son/daughter with a view to improving the level of attendance at this subject. If you are experiencing difficulty in ensuring that your child attends school, you may wish to consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) and Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/) where you will find useful suggestions for supporting your child's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Subject Teacher

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix II

Standard Letter Template Sent by Year Heads to Parents Reflecting Concerns About a Student's Absence (Ten Days' Absence)

Date: _____ Student: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parents,

Our school attendance records indicate that your son's/daughter's level of absenteeism is a cause for concern.

Our school attendance records indicate that your son/daughter has been absent from school for _____ days since the start of the school year.

Our school's Code of Behaviour states that; 'Full attendance is expected at all times. The school sees regular attendance at school as essential if students are to achieve their potential from an educational point of view. The Year Heads closely monitor student attendance and consult with the local Educational Welfare Officer where a student's absenteeism causes concern. Students may be required to repeat a school year due to very unsatisfactory attendance.'

I am sure you are aware that regular attendance at school is extremely important and is beneficial for the student's academic progress, overall wellbeing and for optimal educational outcomes. A high level of absenteeism will have a negative impact on the academic results achieved by students in the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations, and well as having a potential negative impact on the student's confidence, wellbeing, social awareness and educational progress.

Please remember to send an explanatory note, signed by you, in your child's Journal, explaining each absence from school. The note must contain the correct date(s) of absence and specify a reason for absence(s) as well as your child's name and class.

I would strongly encourage you to ensure that your son/daughter attends school on a more regular basis and so assist him/her in achieving his/her full academic potential. If you are experiencing difficulty in ensuring that your child attends school, you may wish to consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) and Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/) where you will find useful suggestions for supporting your child's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Year Head

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix III

Standard Letter Template Sent by Year Heads to Parents When Reporting a Student's Twenty Day Absence to Tusla

Date: _____ Student: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parents,

Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged by law to report to Tusla – Child and Family Agency, any student whose absences from school reach a total of twenty days in the school year. The Education Welfare Officer may then make contact with the student's parents to discuss the situation and take whatever action may be necessary.

However, the Education Welfare Officer will take into account all genuine reasons for absences, such as prolonged illness, and in those cases no action will be deemed necessary.

Our school attendance records indicate that your son/daughter has been absent from school for _____ days since the start of the school year. Accordingly, your son's/daughter's name and your contact details have been forwarded to Tusla along with the reasons supplied by you for these absences.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries. If you are experiencing difficulty in ensuring that your child attends school, you may wish to consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) and Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/) where you will find useful suggestions for supporting your child's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Year Head

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix IV

Standard Letter Template Sent by Year Heads to Parents When Warning Parents About a Student's Absenteeism

Date: _____ Student: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parents,

Our school attendance records indicate that your son's/daughter's level of absenteeism is a cause for concern.

Our school attendance records indicate that your son/daughter has been absent from school for _____ days since the start of the school year.

Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged by law to report to Tusla - Child and Family Agency any student whose absences from school reach a total of twenty days in the school year. The Education Welfare Officer will then make contact with the student's parents to discuss the situation and take whatever action may be necessary.

I am sure you are aware that regular attendance at school is extremely important and is beneficial for the student's academic progress. A high level of absenteeism will have a negative impact on the academic results achieved by students in the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations, with a potential negative impact on their wellbeing, confidence and social awareness. Regular attendance is also very important on a social level for the students as it allows them to integrate well with fellow students and be a part of, and involved in, everyday school life.

I would strongly encourage you to ensure that your son/daughter attends school on a more regular basis and so assist him/her in achieving his/her full academic and social potential. If you are experiencing difficulty in ensuring that your child attends school, you may wish to consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) and Barnardos (https://www.barnardos.ie/) where you will find useful suggestions for supporting your child's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Year Head

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix V

Standard Letter Template Sent by Year Heads to Parents When Affirming Excellent Attendance

Date: _____

Dear Parent(s),

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your child's excellent attendance at Presentation College to date this year. Our records indicate that your child has an attendance rate of _____.

We believe that this rate of attendance is to be acknowledged and affirmed, since records from Tusla indicate an average national rate of absenteeism at post-primary as approximately 6% to 7%.

I would like to thank you for your encouragement and support of your child in ensuring that he/she attends regularly and participates in school life. Research demonstrates clearly that excellent school attendance helps students to reach their potential, is linked to positive academic results and outcomes, builds confidence and self-esteem and helps students to develop social skills, independence, a sense of belonging and awareness of others' religions, cultures, genders and ethnicity. It also opens doors to qualifications and access to third level college, apprenticeships programmes and of course jobs.

I recently acknowledged students with very good to excellent rates of attendance in the school at our Assembly. I hope that your son/daughter feels assured of our ongoing support for him/her in Presentation College as we work in partnership with you to help ensure he/she reaches his/her potential and that he/she stays well and resilient throughout the course of his/her education in Presentation College.

With every good wish,

_____

Year Head

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix VI

Standard Letter Template Sent by Year Heads to Parents When Acknowledging Improvement in a Student's Attendance

Date: _____

Dear Parent(s),

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge your child's encouraging improvement in his/her attendance in Presentation College. Our records indicate that your child now has an attendance rate of _____.

I believe that this rate of attendance is to be acknowledged and affirmed, and I am very encouraged to see the effort made by your son/daughter to attend school regularly and to engage in his/her education in a committed manner.

I would like to thank you for your encouragement and support of your child in ensuring that he/she attends regularly and participates in school life. Research demonstrates clearly that excellent school attendance helps students to reach their potential, is linked to positive academic results and outcomes, builds confidence and self-esteem and helps students to develop social skills, independence, a sense of belonging and awareness of others' religions, cultures, genders and ethnicity. It also opens doors to qualifications and access to third level college, apprenticeships programmes and of course jobs.

I hope that your son/daughter feels assured of our ongoing support for him/her in Presentation College as we work in partnership with you to help ensure he/she reaches his/her potential and that he/she stays well and resilient throughout the course of his/her education in Presentation College.

With every good wish,

_____

Year Head

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix VII

Standard Letter Template Sent by Class Teachers When Flagging Student Repeated Absence from Class due to School Activities

Date: _____

Student: _____ Class: _____

Dear Parents,

Our school attendance records indicate that your son/daughter is involved in a School Activity on a regular basis, necessitating absence from class.

In Presentation College we strongly encourage and promote students' involvement in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities to help support their wellbeing, self-esteem, confidence and social development.

I wish to draw to your attention to the fact that your child's involvement in a School Activity has necessitated his/her absence from class in _____ (name of subject) on _____occasions since _____ (date).

Notwithstanding our full support for extra-curricular and co-curricular involvement, I am bringing this to your attention currently for your information and to ensure that you are aware of the potential impact of repeated absences from class on your child's academic outcomes in this subject. A high level of absence from class is likely to have a negative impact on the academic results achieved by students in the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations, and could have a potential negative impact on the student's confidence, wellbeing, social awareness and educational progress through under-achievement.

It is important that all students catch up on any work missed, including homework, and make every effort to work independently to achieve to their highest potential when they have missed time from any subject.

While I do not wish to discourage your child' involvement in School Activities, it is important also that I bring these repeated absences from class to your attention so that you can discuss with your child how best to find/maintain balance between schoolwork and School Activities, and to impress upon him/her his/her responsibilities to ensure that any work or learning missed during class time is caught up on, in the knowledge that it is difficult to catch up at a high standard where there are numerous absences from any subject.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Subject Teacher

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix VIII

Attendance Framework Template

Where a child's needs are complex or a targeted plan has been in place and is not working, school staff may wish to use the Assessment Framework to form a deeper understanding of the presenting problem.

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS – ASSESSMENT Framework		
What is/are the identified problems		
To what extent is the identified problem to do with….. Please include supporting information	**The Student him/herself**	
	The Family	
	The School	
	The Community	
Summarise any supports or interventions already in place:		

Baseline:	
Create a baseline using the last four weeks (minimum) as the starting point:	
Identify any patterns and trends of the presenting problem:	
What do the following say about the problem?	
Student	
Family	
School	
Other Agencies if involved	

What strengths can be built on?	
The Student	
The Family	
Who could support the family?	
Other Family Members	
Other Agencies	
Analysis:	
Analysis of information gathered	
Completed by:	
Date of Assessment:	

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix IX

Attendance Plan Template

Student's Name:	**Class:**	
Name of Year Head:		
Names of Those Consulted on this Plan (Student, Parent):		
Start Date of Plan:	**Review Date of Plan:**	
Section 1: Understanding		
Reasons Stated for Absenteeism	**Contextual Factors Affecting Student's Attendance**	**Statistics: Number of days/half days missed, and lates since a stated date**
Section 2: Planning		
Ideas for Possible Solutions that take Account of the Reasons for Poor Attendance	**Attendance Improvement Target**	**Timeframe**

Steps to be taken to help achieve the Individual Attendance Improvement Target:
Key Responsibilities for the Actions, including who will monitor and keep records to check the progress of the plan: **Student:** **Parent(s):** **Year Head:** **Guidance Counsellor:** **Other:**
Section 3: Doing
What strengths does the student have to help him/her achieve the Attendance Improvement Target? **What support may be needed to help achieve the Attendance Improvement Target?**

Section 4: Review		
Review Progress	**Evaluate the Impact and Effectiveness of the Intervention**	**Future Progress – Any Changes Needed to this Plan?**

Signature of Student: _____ **Signature of Parent:** _____

Signature of Year Head: _____ **Date:** _____

Presentation College
Carlow

Appendix X

TUSLA An Ghníomhaireacht um Leanaí agus an Teaghlach Child and Family Agency

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	Presentation College
Address	Askea, Carlow
Roll Number	61141M
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	We promote and support regular and optimum attendance by students where possible, and believe that in order for students to reach their potential and prepare for the challenges and responsibilities of adult life, it is essential that they attend regularly and participate in school life to the best of their ability. **Guiding Principles:** ➢ Attendance and participation in school life matter. ➢ High expectations of attendance and participation for all students – for their attendance, their learning and participation in school life. ➢ Adopt a whole-school approach to attendance and participation, recognising how all areas of the student's experience at school impact on their engagement and attendance. ➢ Value a whole-child approach which recognises the complexity of some students' lives and the various supports for students' wellbeing and welfare. ➢ Working in partnership with parents and families to promote positive attendance and participation and prevent and deal with difficulties. ➢ Value and respond to diversity – we value the culture of every student and support all students in maximising the learning opportunities provided by the school. ➢ Recognising resilience and avoiding stereotypes – We recognise every child's capacity to attend school, learn well and achieve good outcomes. We will challenge stereotypes that might assume that students from particular background or with particular experiences will have a problem with

	attendance and learning. ➢ Focusing on personal responsibility – We aim to build each student's sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and their responsibility to their peers, parents and teachers to be at school every day.
The school's high expectations around attendance	We have high attendance expectations for all students from all cultures and backgrounds. We will challenge stereotypes that suggest that particular groups of students will have a lower than average attendance rate. We provide a welcoming school climate and environment with quality teaching and learning, with a plethora of co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment and sporting activities in which students have a chance to engage, learn and develop their wellbeing.
How attendance will be monitored	Subject teachers monitor students' attendance in their classes, and report concerns to the Year Head. Year Heads monitor students' attendance in their Year Groups. Students with excellent attendance rates are acknowledged and rewarded. Students presenting with absenteeism that is a source of concern will be followed up on, and intervention strategies put in place where appropriate. Communication between the Year Head, Student and his/her Parent is key to this process. An Attendance Plan may be put in place where the need arises, where improvement targets are agreed, implemented and reviewed.
Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance: • Target-setting and targets • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance	**Target-setting and targets** ➢ Our attendance target is to match the national average for school attendance and absenteeism rates. The current absenteeism rate (2019) is approximately 6% to 7% nationally. The daily absenteeism in Presentation College is c.10%. We aim to reduce this figure through awareness raising of the importance of regular attendance, ongoing commitment to quality teaching, learning, enrichment and sporting activities (co-curricular and extra-curricular), improved communication and awareness raising with parents, and improved early intervention strategies with students. ➢ Year Heads may agree at the Student Care Team meetings to adopt particular improvement targets and actions to improve student attendance with their Year Group(s) e.g. improve on last year's attendance rate, set an improvement target per class/Year Group for a specified period of time using the data available on VSware and rewarding achievement in this regard. **The whole-school approach** ➢ Our whole-school approach is to foster a culture of supporting positive and regular school attendance and participation, with accurate record-keeping, reporting procedures, monitoring and support structures. ➢ Senior Management, Year Heads and Subject Teachers work in collaboration with students and their

	parents to support good attendance and participation. **Promoting good attendance** ➢ We promote good attendance by providing a welcoming, positive school climate and good student-teacher relationships with a focus on learning and each student reaching his/her potential. ➢ We reward good attendance by affirmation of the students concerned, communication with parents and the award of Certificates of Excellence at the school Awards Ceremony as well as posting Certificates of Excellence in Attendance home to students who have fewer than five days' absence in the school year. ➢ We provide a broad and balanced curriculum including a variety of practical subjects to engage students in learning and to suit various learner's needs. ➢ We enjoy strong support structures in the school for all students, including an effective Guidance Department, the Junior and Senior Student Care Teams, Special Educational Needs Team, Student Leadership Opportunities (e.g. Meitheal, Prefects, Student Council, Learning Hub). ➢ We participate in programmes and initiatives such as Tusla's 'Every School Day Counts' and the Praise Project to foster positive attendance and engagement in learning. ➢ We have an effective school organisation which is inclusive and consultative with students, staff, parents and the Board of Management. ➢ We foster effective links with external agencies, feeder primary schools and community agencies e.g. Carlow Regional Youth Services, NEPS, Tusla, our Educational Welfare Officer. **Responding to poor attendance** ➢ We respond to poor attendance by early detection and intervention strategies with an effective flow of communication between subject teachers, Year Heads and Senior Management. ➢ We adopt Tusla's three-tiered model of support for all, some and few with a range of interventions appropriate to each e.g. My Friends Youth Resilience Programme for Some, the Praise Project for Some, Attendance Plans for Few, Mentoring for Few.
School roles in relation to attendance	The roles of the following are included in the Attendance and Participation Policy, pp 15-22: Board of Management, Principal and Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Subject Teachers, Teacher Organisers of Events and Teams, Parents, Students.
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	➢ Presentation College enjoys positive links with feeder Primary Schools which are visited by the Guidance Counsellors to establish relevant information on students who enrol in the school. ➢ Students from the local Primary Schools attend our annual School Musical.

	➢ The Guidance Counsellors pro-actively support links between the students and community agencies and groups such as Carlow Regional Youth Services, the HSE Psychology Service in Shamrock Plaza and Barnardos. ➢ School Management actively link with NEPS and the Tusla EWO in relation to student attendance and absenteeism, including School Refusal. ➢ We communicate with parents via school reports, availability of attendance records on VSware, text alert service for absenteeism, letters home expressing concern or reporting absenteeism and also communicate with parents to establish causes of students' absenteeism and collaboratively plan and review effective intervention strategies.
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	➢ The Statement of Strategy will be monitored by the ongoing review of our student attendance data and discussion of same at our Student Care Team meetings. ➢ Monitoring will include feedback from teachers, students and parents in relation to attendance and participation in Presentation College.
Review process and date for review	➢ The Attendance and Participation Policy will be reviewed by a consultative process involving the Student Council, Parents' Council, Staff Working Groups and general staff consultation as well as the Board of Management consultation when reviewing the policy. ➢ The date of the next review of the Attendance and Participation Policy and Statement of Strategy is December 2020.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	16th January 2020
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	17th January 2020