



Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of School – Newpark Comprehensive School

Address - Newtownpark Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

School roll number – 81001i

The school's vision and values in relation to attendance

The aim of the school is to develop in our students: academic, intellectual, practical, manual and sporting abilities and skills; a capacity to deal with analytical and logical processes; a delight in spiritual, creative and artistic activities.

To foster respect, a sensitivity to the needs of others embracing diversity and to develop a sense of community in Newpark, family and in the broader social context.

We wish to develop in our students, self-esteem and self-confidence: to provide a supportive and caring community to enable our students to achieve their chosen goals, to equip them with a balanced outlook regarding life, work and leisure.

We are committed to creating an enjoyable environment in which the positive strengths of every person in this community are nurtured to the full.

The school's high expectations around attendance

The aim of Newpark Comprehensive School is to assist each student to reach their full potential by ensuring that as far as possible each student attends school to the greatest extent. The school strives to provide a welcoming and caring environment where each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We recognise the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and student attainment. Overall good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning while also recognising the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life.

In a 2018 survey carried out as part of an academic research paper, the student 'sense of belonging' in the school is high and this helps toward improving the level of attendance in the school.

Parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure their child is in school on every day that the school is open unless there is a genuine reason for their child not to attend (Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000)

Only absences related to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give permission for holiday absences.

How attendance will be monitored

Attendance of individual students is recorded electronically on the school management information system, VShare, and in paper roll books by form teachers/teachers every morning at registration or during the first lesson.

It is the responsibility of the form teacher to take the roll carefully and accurately. At present, the roll book serves the function of a manual backup to VShare.

The school sends a notification to the parent/guardian via the VShare app and/or text message when a student is recorded as being absent.

Parents must submit an absence note via the VShare app. This can be submitted for a past absence or future planned absence. This note must outline the reason for the absence from school.

In the event that a student needs to leave school before the end of the school day, parents/guardians should write a note in their child's journal. This note is counter-signed by the student's Form Teacher. The student should present this note to the Librarian when leaving the school.

In the event that a student needs to arrive to school after Registration, parents/guardians should write a note in their child's journal. The student should present this note to the Librarian upon arrival in school.

Details of students with recorded absences of twenty days or more are reported biannually to TULSA Education Welfare Service, as required under legislation. In these cases, parents/guardians receive a communication from the school notifying them that their child has been included in this report.

Parents/guardians are notified in writing on their child's Christmas and Summer reports of the total number of absences to date for their child during the school year.

Pupils whose attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Year Leader and/or Deputy Principal and/or Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must also inform the TUSLA Education Welfare Service/Education Welfare Officer in writing where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a student is excluded/expelled or suspended for six days or more accumulatively.

Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance

Target setting and targets

Attendance will be monitored by the Year Leaders and is an item on the agenda for the weekly meetings between Year Leaders, Deputy Principals and Principal. Those identified as potentially at risk are brought to the attention of the Student Support Team in the school. Specific interventions are implemented to meet the needs of the students.

The whole-school approach and promoting good school attendance

Newpark aims to:

- Encourage students to attend school regularly and punctually, raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Accurately and effectively record students' attendance every day and notify parents/guardians by text of an absence of their child
- Monitor student attendance and lateness, identify students who may be at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns
- Ensure that procedures are in place to promote attendance and participation, and to identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance

- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns

Encouraging Good Attendance

Attendance records are available to parents/guardians on VShare and are recorded on Christmas and Summer term reports

The importance of attendance is stressed at parent/guardian presentations and meetings

Recognition is given at Year Assemblies with the presentation of attendance certificates

Form Teacher promote positive attendance in their interactions with students

Year Leader/Deputy Principal/Principal meetings, Student Support team meetings discuss attendance and follow up on students with irregular patterns of attendance

School roles in relation to attendance

Subject Teachers – mark attendance every class they teach or supervise and monitor absences to ensure they are legitimate

Form Teachers - maintain attendance records in accordance with procedure every morning during registration, keep records of absences and absence notes, contact parents/guardians when absences are not explained in writing, encourage students to attend regularly, inform the Year Leader of students that are a cause of concern regarding absences

Year Leaders, Deputy Principals and Principal – monitor and review attendance in the relevant year groups, contact parents/guardians about absences, meet with students and parents/ guardians regarding problematic attendance, report relevant absences to Tusla Educational Welfare Service via SAR and AAR, and refer relevant individual students to the Educational Welfare Officer through an EWS referral.

Student Support Team – review students with problematic attendance referred to the team, assign key respondent and follow up with appropriate intervention/support.

Statutory Involvement in Attendance Issues

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that ‘the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day’.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if a child is expelled, if a child is suspended for six days or more accumulatively, and if a child has missed more than 20 days.

Tusla EWS is furnished biannually with the School Absence Report (SAR) and once per academic year with the Annual Attendance Record (AAR) within six weeks of the end of the school year.

Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than five days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians via either email or telephone call when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the school may be set up, if deemed necessary.

The Education Welfare Officer, following all reasonable efforts by the Education Welfare Service to consult with the child's parents and the principal of the school, may serve a *School Attendance Notice* on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)

Students have a responsibility to - attend school regularly and punctually, inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to absences.

Parents / guardians can promote good school attendance by - ensuring regular and punctual attendance, informing the school via VShare of the reasons for any absences, discussing planned absences with the school and if possible refrain from taking their children out of school during term time, ensuring, insofar as is possible, that appointments (medical or otherwise), are arranged for times outside of school hours, contacting the school immediately if they have concerns about attendance and working with the school and Tusla EWS to resolve any attendance issues.

The school – keeps in contact with parents/guardians regarding attendance and absences.

Transfer to another School - Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the principal of a child's current school must notify the principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress, as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between secondary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

Communication with other Schools - when a student transfers from Newpark Comprehensive School to another school, the school record in relation to attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer. When a child transfers into Newpark, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school and appropriate records sought.

Annual visits by the school Guidance Counsellors highlight challenging or problem attendance records of individual students transferring from feeder primary schools.

How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored – attendance reviewed weekly by Form Teachers, Year Leaders, Deputy Principals and Principal.

Evaluation - The success of this attendance policy is evaluated through improved attendance levels as measured through records and statistical returns, happy confident well-adjusted children and positive teacher and parental feedback.

This policy was reviewed in the 2021/2022 academic year and will be reviewed again as required, in line with changing information, guidelines, legislation and/or feedback from school stakeholders.

An update was included in relation to *How attendance will be monitored* (partial absence) in the 2022/2023 academic year.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management, Newpark Comprehensive School at its meeting on 9th March 2022.