

Meánscoil na mBráithre Críostaí, Cill Chainnigh
Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny.

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ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION POLICY Jan 2020

School Name:	Christian Brothers Secondary School, Kilkenny
School Address:	James's Street, Kilkenny
School Details:	CBS Kilkenny is a Voluntary Roman Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills and is a single sex (boys) school.
School Management:	The Board of Management of CBS Kilkenny is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement

Inspired by its founder, CBS Kilkenny aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students.

Ethos

As an Edmund Rice School, CBS Kilkenny seeks to promote the five key elements of and Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership

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School Attendance Strategy

1.1 Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide an environment that encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually.

It aims to:

- Maximise and maintain student attendance throughout second level
- Discourage early school leavers
- Ensure that adequate records of attendances and absences are maintained by the school as per the Education Act 2000 in respect of each individual student
- Use available VSWARE resources to support effective and efficient monitoring of attendance
- Report on student attendance to TUSLA based on their guidelines (https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/FINAL_SAS_strategy_eng_2jun.pdf). We recommend that this document is read in conjunction with this policy.
- Work in partnership with parents and students to achieve maximum attendance of all students throughout the academic year.

1.2 Policy Content

Progress at school requires the best level of attendance and punctuality because both are essential for efficient class work and to optimise educational outcomes. The CBS Kilkenny Board of Management (BOM) has extremely high expectations around school attendance. The BOM communicates to parents/guardians that student attendance in school is paramount, as there is a close correlation between student attendance and student academic achievement. It is recognised that some students and their parents need to be supported at certain stages in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities. The rationale of this policy is consistent with Rule No.5 in the school's Code of Behaviour which states:

“Regular attendance and punctuality are essential for progress at school. There should be an awareness of the responsibilities of both school and parents in this area. Parents are reminded that they should not arrange family holidays during school terms.”

Students must attend school daily for the full school term and must be on time for school. At present the school day is from 8.45am to 12.55pm, and from 1.35pm to 3.40pm. If students are absent for any reason, e.g. illness, they must notify the school as soon as possible and also complete and present the generic record of absence in the student diary immediately upon their return.

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

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

This policy has been reviewed in accordance with CBS Kilkenny Child Safeguarding Statement and in line with The Children First Act 2015 and The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.

While reviewing the Attendance and Participation Policy due consideration has been given to all aspects of the wellbeing of students and staff at CBS Kilkenny and particularly to the Wellbeing School Improvement Plan (May 2018).

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

1.3 The Role of the Parent/Guardian

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

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

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

Family holidays should be taken during school holidays.

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

Attendance Procedures

1.4 Monitoring Daily Attendance

- a) During contact and meetings with parents/guardians the school encourages full attendance
- b) The school does not condone absences for family holidays etc., during term time and seeks to maintain the integrity of the school year. This is communicated to parents/guardians on an annual basis along with the school calendar for that year.
- c) Rolls are registered on the VSWARE attendance management system - per student, per class, per day, both morning and afternoon
- d) Student attendance is monitored by: A) Subject Teacher, B) Attendance Officer, C) Year Head, and D) Principal.
- e) Absences must be explained by completing the generic record of absence in the school diary, and if possible by phone with the school office where this will be entered appropriately on the VSWARE absenteeism monitoring system.
- f) The signatures of parents/guardians must appear in the front section of the school diary
- g) Where the Year Head notices recurrent absenteeism, they will liaise with the students and seek verification from the parents/guardians
- h) The Attendance Officer communicates weekly with the Year Heads with regard to absenteeism
- i) Attendance patterns are routinely discussed at weekly Year Head meetings
- j) The Year Head will contact home by letter where concerns arise regarding attendance
- k) The Year Head will monitor accumulations of absenteeism and consult with the Guidance Counsellor and Deputy Principal/Principal as necessary. In cases where specific students have attendance difficulties, the Year Head will engage with parents/guardians to agree acceptable targets with a view to motivating students to improve attendance.
- l) TUSLA will be contacted by the Year Head or School Attendance Officer when a student has been absent for an accumulated total of 20 days
- m) The school will maintain a strong liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer. Records of all contact will be kept by the School Authorities in a designated file.
- n) All official reporting will be carried out in compliance with the Guidelines set down by TUSLA
- o) If parents/guardians are aware in advance that a student will be absent for a considerable period of time, they should contact the school by phone
- p) Good attendance is praised, recognised and rewarded by presenting TUSLA attendance certificates at the Annual Awards ceremony.

1.5 Monitoring absence during the school day

1.5.1 Punctuality

A student who arrives late to school must sign in at the front office before joining his class. These students will be recorded as LATE using the VSWARE attendance management system. Concerns arising from persistent lateness will be brought to the attention of the Year Head by the subject teacher, the Class Tutor and the Attendance Officer and dealt with appropriately.

1.5.2 Authorised Absence

Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the school day (except for senior students at lunch time). The generic “Permission to Leave” record must be completed in the school diary by parents/guardians. Furthermore, permission from the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head must also be granted. Students must sign out at the office on leaving the school and sign back in at the office on their return. If a student is absent from class for school-based activities, his absence will be recorded by his class teacher as SA (School Activity) on the VSWARE attendance management system.

1.5.3 Unauthorised Absence

Students who are absent for part of, or for a full school day, without parental or school permission will be registered as ILL or NIC (not in class) on the VSWARE system. The details of their absences will be referred to and dealt with by the Year Head, in line with the Code of Behaviour. Where necessary, further action will be taken and contact made with parents/guardians.

Participation

1.6 Classroom

Students are required to actively participate in the classroom thereby enhancing student wellbeing. The rationale of this policy is consistent with Rule No.6 in the school's Behaviour Code which states:

The school endeavours as far as possible to match the curriculum to the aspirations, abilities and interests of the students, but education is a collaborative process and the full and active co-operation of teachers, parents/guardians and students is essential.

Students must work consistently to their abilities, must participate actively in class and do whatever work is assigned to them. Students must have the books and equipment they need for various classes.

Teachers will use various methodologies to enable student participation which may include:

- Mixed ability grading
- Encouragement of public speaking/reading aloud
- Development of organisational skills- Diaries, uniforms, etc.
- Promoting class discussions & debate
- Use of surveys
- Negotiated learning
- Leadership development
- Group work
- Peer assessment
- Inquiry-based learning
- Project work

1.7 School Community participation

The school community is an important entity offering a courteous, co-operative and caring environment for all. Participation in the school community is a very important approach required by teachers, students, parents/guardians, staff, school board and visitors and is promoted through involvement in school activities such as:

- Student Council / Class representation
- Cairdeas
- Zambia Immersion Project
- Lourdes Pilgrimage
- St. Vincent de Paul
- Fundraising
- Community Care and Social Studies module
- Green Schools Initiative
- Global Schools Initiative
- Healthy Eating Programme
- Various thematic weeks (Catholic Schools week, Mental Health week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Maths week, Science week, Literacy week etc.)

Participation in the school community requires self-direction from the student and commitment from the teachers. It is an open and inclusive environment respecting the diversity of the school population in relation to religious denomination, sexual orientation and ethnicity promoting learning and personal development for all its members. This is consistent with rule No.2 in the school's Behaviour Code which states: *The school wishes to promote a positive school culture that is inclusive and respectful of all. It seeks to be a place where people feel happy, build their self-esteem and have a sense of belonging.*

1.8 Extra-Curricular participation

The participation in extra-curricular activities will enable the students to strive for and fulfill their potential. Teacher's unique interests are tapped into so that a wide variety of activities are made available to facilitate students to develop interpersonal skills, foster team spirit, improve individual sense of achievement and promote wellbeing.

CBS Kilkenny provides opportunities for students to participate in non-academic activities that are important for a full and rounded education. The following activities are available to students:

- Sport: Hurling, Football, Basketball, Handball, Athletics, Soccer, Golf, Kayaking
- Photography
- Journalism
- Music – collective and individual
- Computer skills
- Chess
- Young Scientist
- School Quiz Teams
- Debating
- Bridge
- STEM club
- IT club
- Choir
- Traditional Band

Review of Policy

The school authorities will review this policy on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with current best practice and with relevant legislation in this area.

Approval

This policy has been approved by CBS Kilkenny Board of Management.

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: _____