

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

Phone: 056 7721402

email: office@cbskilkenny.ie



ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION POLICY January 2023

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 Aims

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

The policy aims to:

- Maximise and maintain student attendance throughout their second level education
- Discourage early school leaving
- Ensure that adequate records of attendance and absence are maintained by the school
- Use VSware 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). It is recommended 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. CBS Kilkenny Board of Management (BOM) has high expectations around school attendance. The BOM communicates to parents/guardians that student attendance in school is paramount, because there is a close correlation between student attendance and student academic achievement. It is recognised that some students and their parents/guardians 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 CBS Kilkenny 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/guardians in this area. Parents/Guardians 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 3.40pm, with the exception of Wednesday which is from 8.45am to 1:30pm. If students are absent for any reason, e.g. illness, parents/guardians must notify the school as soon as possible, preferably before 8.45am on

that school day. Parents are required to submit an Absence Request on VSware for Year Head approval. Communication from parents/guardians reporting student absences are entered appropriately on the VSware absenteeism monitoring system.

Only students whose parents/guardians have satisfactorily communicated with the school are allowed to leave the school premises during the school day, with the exception of lunch time (6th Year students on designated days 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 check out with the front office and to check 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 into force in May 2018 and this policy has been reviewed in accordance with best practice as detailed in this legislation.

1.2.1 Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Admissions Policy, Code of Behaviour, Suspension & Expulsion Policy and other relevant policies, all of which are available on **cbskilkenny.ie**.

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.

Parents/Guardians 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 must be taken during school holidays.

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

Records of attendance and punctuality are available to parents/guardians to view on VSware. Parents/Guardians are requested to monitor their son's attendance and punctuality on a regular basis.

A doctor's certificate must be provided, where appropriate, to the Year Head in the case of student absences due to illness. In the event of long absences, parents/guardians are asked to maintain contact with school authorities.

Attendance Procedures

1.4 Monitoring Daily Attendance

- a) Through all 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) Year Head, and C) Senior Management Team.
- e) Absences must be explained by completing an Absence Request on VSware.
- f) The signatures of parents/guardians must appear in the front section of the school diary.
- g) Where the Year Head notices recurrent absenteeism, s/he will liaise with the students and seek verification from the parents/guardians.
- i) Attendance patterns are routinely discussed at weekly API meetings
- j) The Year Head will contact home by phone and/or letter where concerns arise regarding attendance.
- k) The Year Head will monitor accumulations of absenteeism and will consult with the Counsellor and Deputy Principals/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 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 this regard.
- 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 in advance through VSware (“future absence”).
- 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 check 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 and dealt with appropriately.

1.5.2 Authorised Absence

Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the school day (except for 6th Year students at designed lunch times). Partial absences must be submitted by parents/guardians and approved by the Year Head on VSware prior to the absence. Students must check out at the office on leaving the school and check back in at the office on their return.

Where a student presents as sick during the school day, a “Permission to Leave” slip must be completed by the Year Head. This slip must then be presented to office staff before parents/guardians are contacted and the necessary collection arrangements are made.

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 a full school day without parental/guardian 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 remotely) and do whatever work is assigned to them. Students must have the books and equipment they need for various classes. Students must attend PE classes, except when excused for medical reasons, and must have the proper clothing and equipment for those classes.

Teachers will use a variety of methodologies to enable student participation, which may include:

- Mixed ability grading
- Encouragement of public speaking/reading aloud
- Development of organisational skills- diaries, uniforms, lockers, etc.
- Promoting class discussions & debate
- Use of surveys for student feedback
- 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 of teachers, students, parents/guardians, staff, school Board of Management (BOM) and visitors, and this is promoted through involvement in school activities such as:

- Student Council
- Cairdeas
- Lourdes Pilgrimage
- St Vincent de Paul
- Fundraising
- Community Care and Social Studies modules
- Green Schools initiative
- Global Schools initiative
- Healthy Eating Programme
- A variety of themed 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. CBS Secondary School Kilkenny is an open and inclusive environment respecting the diversity of the school population in relation to religious denomination and sexual orientation and ethnicity, promoting learning and personal development for all of 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

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

It is the responsibility of students who are absent from class/school to know details of work missed. This applies also to students who miss class due to sporting or other extra-curricular activities.

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

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

This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change from year to year.

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: _____