



## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy Virginia College 2023-2024**

### **Must be read in conjunction with the Code Of Behaviour**

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Tús Feasa Fiafraí*

Faithful to our motto, Virginia College is committed to providing quality teaching in a safe and positive learning environment. Whilst fostering academic and personal achievement, we aim to nurture an educational community of informed, responsible, and caring citizens for an ever-changing world.

The emphasis of this policy on attendance is to promote the engagement of all students in the school community as a context for character development and formation of the realisation of a sense of wellbeing. For effective student formation to occur in Virginia College, students must be in attendance and be as engaged with the life of school community as fully as possible. This is the fundamental aim of this attendance policy and strategy.

The Education Welfare Act (2000) places a statutory responsibility on schools and parents/guardians to provide for the optimum attendance of every student. Tusla oversees school attendance nationwide and each school has been assigned an Education Welfare Officer whose duty it is to consult with the school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge. The Attendance Officer/Principal must inform the Education Welfare Officer where any of the following occur:

- A student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively.
- A Principal is concerned about a student's attendance.
- The Board of Management decides to expel a student.
- A student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively.
- A student's name is to be removed from the school register.

#### **Roll call:**

Tutor time and roll call takes place each morning from 8.48am to 9.00am. Each tutor must take an accurate roll call and record this precisely on VSware. In the event of computer system's failure at

8.48am, a list of absent students must be sent to the school office. An absence text alert is issued regularly to parents/ guardians based on the data input by teachers. Any student returning to school following an absence during the school day must sign in at the school office.

### **Procedures for Monitoring Punctuality:**

If a student arrives between 8.48am and 9.00am they are recorded as late. All students who arrive after 9.00am for school must sign in at the school office to allow for their attendance record to be amended. A late text alert is sent to parents.

When a student reaches 3 lates, over a two-week period, they will be placed on after school detention.

If a student is persistently late, more than ten lates, the Attendance Officer will request a meeting with their parent/guardian to discuss the students' punctuality, there may be further appropriate sanctions in line with the Code of Behaviour (detention, in-house suspension, suspension etc.)

Punctuality is a valuable aspect of classroom management & is an essential quality in the lives of our students. It is essential that students attend class punctually to ensure an orderly learning environment.

All students are expected to be punctual for each class, each day.

### **Verifying and Recording Reasons for Absence:**

The Attendance Officer checks the daily list of absent students on their VShare dashboard.

If the Attendance Officer considers it appropriate, s/he may phone the home of the absent student to check the reason for absence (or may ask the Deputy Principal/Year Head to do so if teaching for the duration of morning).

Where possible, parents/guardians should notify the school via VShare before 9.30 a.m. of absence due to illness, family emergency, unexpected circumstances etc. to allow the absence to be recorded before the issuing of the text alert.

When students are away on school activities under the supervision of school staff they are recorded as being present but on School Activity (SA on VShare).

### **Permission to leave school:**

In the case of an absence/absences known in advance (e.g.: dentist, medical appointment, family occasion), parents/guardians can create a note on VShare stating this request. This request will be viewed and approved by the Attendance Officer or school management. If a student needs to leave school but does not have a note submitted on VShare, the student must speak directly with a member of the management team such as Year Head, Deputy Principal or Attendance Officer, who will confirm

the request with their parent/guardian. Once approval is confirmed by a member of the management team then the parent/guardian must collect the student from the school reception area.

If a student is given permission to leave class to ring home by a class teacher, the teacher will sign their diary giving permission to make the call. If they contact home and someone is available, they will come back to the class teacher and explain that they will be collected, however, the student must remain in class until they are called out via intercom when their parent/guardian arrives to school to collect them.

Parents/guardians must ensure that they have signed out the student by recording this in the sign out book at reception. Once complete, the office staff will amend the student attendance on VShare.

### **School Interventions in cases of Absence:**

Regular text alerts regarding absence – texts will be issued regularly for all unexplained absences based upon Roll Call.

- 10 days absence – A standard letter via VMail will be sent to parent/guardian.
- 15 days absence – A standard letter will be issued to parents requesting a meeting.
- 20 days absence – A standard letter is issued regarding the statutory notification to Tusla.

### **Contact with Parents/Guardians:**

Parents/Guardians must provide the school with an emergency contact number and ensure that there is always someone available for the school to contact, should it be necessary. If there is a change of contact number or address, school must be notified for accurate record keeping on VShare.

Students who have ongoing medical problems may need medical interventions during the school day. Staff will be informed & trained on the procedures for unwell students in their classrooms & those with medical needs. It is the responsibility of parents to notify the school at the time of admission of any medical condition affecting their daughter. The same responsibility exists should a medical condition be diagnosed at any stage during the student's time at the school.

Note: In the case of medical emergency, if parent/ guardian cannot be contacted, the school reserves the right to contact a medical professional/ ambulance service.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

#### **Students:**

- To be in school and in class punctually each day.

#### **Parents/Guardians:**

- Must share in the responsibility and support school procedures on attendance & punctuality.
- Must ensure that their son/daughter attend punctually each day.
- Where possible, should notify the school before 9.30 a.m. of absence due to illness etc.
- Must notify the school via VSware of absence when a student is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day.
- Must provide an explanation on the VSware request for the student absence/ request to leave school early.
- Must provide an emergency contact number / be available to collect their child in the event of illness.
- Should arrange medical, dental & other appointments outside of school time where possible.

**Tutors/Class Teachers:**

- To accurately record & monitor attendance in roll call each morning.
- To accurately record and monitor attendance at every class using the VS Ware system.

**School Secretary:**

- To issue attendance alert SMS messages to parents on a regular basis.
- To update student sign in/sign outs at the office and amend this on VS Ware

**Attendance Officer:**

- To be responsible for the implementation of the Attendance & Punctuality Policy & Procedures.
- To be responsible for monitoring students' attendance & VSware notes and for communicating with the student and their parents/ guardians when issues arise.

- Completion of Tusla attendance referrals in co-operation with the Principal/ Deputy Principal.
- To work in tandem with the Year Head when it comes to helping a student with late/attendance issues.
- To notify and meet with the Education Welfare Officer in circumstances as outlined above.
- To review the attendance & punctuality procedures on a regular basis.

**Year Head/Career Guidance/Counsellor:**

- To Alert Attendance Officer to any concerns they have about students' attendance.
- To work in tandem with the Attendance Officer when it comes to helping a student with late/attendance issues.

**Principal/ Deputy Principals:**

In implementing these procedures, the Board of Management in Virginia College endeavours to ensure that all students partake in and benefit from the education provided by regular & punctual attendance at school and class.

Parents are reminded that unauthorised absence from the school premises or from classes by students is a serious breach of Health & Safety Guidelines, Child Protection Guidelines & the School's Code of Behaviour.

The school authorities cannot accept responsibility for students who absent themselves from school or from a class for any purpose without prior permission.

Parents are responsible for students when they sign out during the school day.

The Principal/ Deputy Principal reserve the right to exercise discretion in the implementation of school sanctions in exceptional circumstances.

This attendance policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on the Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

**Review Date: November 2026**