

# Coláiste Dún Iascaigh



## **STATEMENT OF STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**



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Bord Oideachais agus  
Oiliúna Thiobraid Árann  
*Tipperary Education and  
Training Board*

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## Coláiste Dún Iascaigh Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	Coláiste Dún Iascaigh
Address	Cashel Rd, Cahir
Roll Number	76063D
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Research shows that students who do not complete primary or post primary education have a significantly greater risk of long-term unemployment.</p> <p>There is strong correlation between lack of educational certification and unemployment. It also reduces their future educational prospects. Consequently, poor attenders have much more limited life chances.</p> <p>Regular school attendance and participation in training is crucial to avoid this scenario.</p> <p>School attendance is also important for the social and emotional development of the student. It provides an opportunity for students to develop positive relationships.</p> <p>Students not attending cannot avail of the many supports provided by the Coláiste to address the needs of the students. Children who attend school regularly are less likely to be drawn into anti-social behaviour and/or become involved in crime. Regular attendance also develops a culture of reliability.</p> <p>Research shows that if interventions are not made, school refusal, increases incrementally. Ultimately, in many cases students who have poor attendance also withdraw from society in general.</p>

<p>Coláiste Dún Iascaigh's Attendance Statement and Expectations</p>	<p><b>“Coláiste Dún Iascaigh is deeply committed to the reduction of school refusal. The Coláiste’s Attendance Strategy reflects the priority it places on attendance. This is shared by management, teachers, Board of Management, school staff and parents/guardians. It sets realistic targets for the reduction of school refusal.”</b></p>
<p>Statement of Explained absence</p>	<p>Children should only be absent from school when it is absolutely necessary e.g., due to illness, family bereavement or other exceptional family circumstances. Year heads, class tutors and teachers will remind students regularly of the importance of good attendance.</p>
<p>Principles underpinning Attendance Strategy of Coláiste Dún Iascaigh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School refusal often related to school – student anxiety in the school environment</li> <li>• Can also be related to medical or domestic circumstances</li> <li>• Early intervention is key to addressing the problem</li> <li>• The attendance records of incoming first years should be scrutinised to identify at risk students</li> <li>• The issue of school non-attendance has a snowball effect. If not addressed, it increases incrementally</li> <li>• Ultimately, school refusals may withdraw from society</li> <li>• Close and accurate records of attendance</li> <li>• Involve Parents/Guardian</li> <li>• Encourage positive attendance through certificates and rewards</li> <li>• Develop mentoring</li> <li>• Involve senior students</li> <li>• The school environment should be a comfortable, safe and attractive place for all students</li> <li>• Develop positive relationships</li> <li>• Encourage dialogue</li> <li>• Have effective policies on bullying</li> <li>• Have strategies to reduce anxiety for students who have issues in this regard</li> <li>• Involve other agencies for support and assistance</li> <li>• Set a realistic target to reduce the percentage of school refusals</li> <li>• Develop effective whole school strategies to improve attendance</li> <li>• Use VSware to monitor attendance and facilitate parents and guardians to explain student absences</li> </ul>
<p>Commitment of student regarding attendance at Coláiste Dún Iascaigh</p>	<p><b>Attendance and Punctuality.</b>  I understand that in order to achieve to the best of my ability my attendance must be regular, and I should only be absent from school or leave early in exceptional circumstances. I have a duty to be punctual for school and classes. VSware is the official record of attendance at school. It will be monitored regularly. I will require my parents / guardians to inform school through VSware Parent App, of any explained Absence. This will be verified by Year Heads who will update attendance records.</p>

<p>Attendance Targets Coláiste Dún Iascaigh</p>	<p>I understand that prolonged absence will be notified to Tusla. A medical certificate should be furnished for illness where possible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase overall attendance by 3%</li> <li>2. Number of students with 20 or more absences to decrease by 3%</li> <li>3. Number of students with full attendance to increase by 3%</li> <li>4. Daily absence rate to be less than 10% of student population</li> </ol>
<p>How attendance will be monitored in Coláiste Dún Iascaigh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance records are available on VShare. Staff, parents and students (over 18) have access to VShare.</li> <li>• Parents/guardians will be required to present themselves at the school to sign out a student early.</li> <li>• In the event of a student being absent for a period without notification to the school, the year head/attendance officer will make contact with home. Parent/guardian will be contacted again after 15 days unexplained absence and Tulsa will be notified after 20 days.</li> <li>• <i>Rewards will be put in place for classes with the best attendance and/or students with most improved attendance in the year e.g. 'Every Day Counts 20 Day Challenge'.</i></li> <li>• Students will be required to report to the office principal/deputies/attendance officer if signing in late. Parents will be contacted if patterns emerge.</li> <li>• Teachers when unavailable for class will provide assignments and revision tasks for students.</li> <li>• Year heads/class tutors/attendance officer/ support staff will monitor student attendance.</li> <li>• Attendance will be addressed at mentoring sessions with class tutors.</li> <li>• A monthly review of late arrivals and absences is carried out by year heads and support staff.</li> </ul>

<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target setting Whole-school approach</li> <li>• Promoting good attendance</li> <li>• Responding to poor attendance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students and parents/guardians are made aware of the importance of full attendance and also the negative effects that absenteeism has on student learning and wellbeing.</li> <li>• The academic calendar for the entire school year is sent home, available on the school website and included in the student journal and parents/guardians are strongly discouraged from taking their children out of school during term time.</li> <li>• As a staff we are very aware of the correlation between disengagement and poor attendance. Attendance is monitored very closely and as soon as a pattern of absenteeism begins to emerge the year head/ support staff inform parents/guardians.</li> <li>• Teachers use various teaching methodologies to make sure students are engaged. Poor student engagement is one of the main reasons why students have high absentee levels.</li> </ul>
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<p>Everyday Counts in Coláiste Dún Iascaigh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Management and Parents' Committee is kept up to date on attendance patterns.</li> <li>• A record of attendance is available on VSware and forms part of the student's report at Christmas and Summer. It is also discussed at parent teacher meetings.</li> <li>• The importance of regular attendance is emphasised at school assemblies and class mentoring sessions.</li> <li>• Parent's Committee given strategies and documentation from Tusla regarding school attendance and the <a href="#">'Every Day Counts'</a> Campaign.</li> <li>• There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities offered to encourage student participation and good attendance.</li> <li>• Students are encouraged to get involved with student council, extracurricular activities projects and clubs. This fosters a sense of belonging.</li> <li>• Mentoring of first year students is provided through year heads and support staff.</li> <li>• Students with full attendance are awarded the Tusla certificate at the end of the school year and students with very good attendance (5 days or less absent) will also receive a cert at year group assembly at end of year.</li> <li>• Classes with best attendance rewarded following 20 Day <a href="#">'Everyday Counts'</a> Campaign.</li> </ul>
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Dialogue with Parents / Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early identification and intervention are important for students with poor attendance. As soon as a pattern of absenteeism emerges, the year head meets with the student and makes verbal contact with parent/guardian to discuss causes of absenteeism.</li> <li>• The Coláiste uses school structures such as the Student Support Team Pastoral Care to support individual students with poor attendance and to draw up an intervention programme.</li> <li>• Circulation of Tusla <a href="#">'Don't Let Your Child Miss Out'</a> leaflet for parents/guardians through school website.</li> <li>• The Response to Intervention Framework will be used in cases where whole-school structures do not meet the need of a student (Support for All, Support for Some, Support for Few).</li> <li>• If parents/guardians have difficulty in getting their child to attend school, they should make contact with the relevant year head of their child.</li> <li>• Parents/guardians and children will be supported by the year head and student support team. This may take the form of a meeting or meetings with one or more of the following – Career Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Class Mentor, Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal.</li> <li>• If our intervention programme is unsuccessful, the Coláiste refer the student's case to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services or other child/family support services.</li> </ul>
School roles in relation to attendance	Teachers, Year Heads, SEN Co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellors, Student Support Team, Chaplain, Pastoral Care, Deputy Principals and Principal all play an active role in ensuring that students maximise attendance.
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<p>The Coláiste has links with a number of networks to raise awareness and to promote good attendance. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents' Committee &amp; Student Council</li> <li>- School Board of Management</li> <li>- Tusla Education Welfare Services Officer</li> <li>- Garda Youth Development Project (DEN)</li> <li>- Principals of other local secondary schools - Collaboration with local transport providers - Tusla Social Work Dept</li> </ul>

How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	The senior management team in the school will monitor the Statement of Strategy. The strategy will also be monitored by the Student Support Team. If the strategy is not working effectively it will be re-evaluated and new strategies will be put into place.
Review process and date for review	This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis. The review will take place with the school partners – students, staff, parents/guardians and Board of Management.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	11 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	February 2021



## School Refusal.

### School Attendance Strategies

The purpose of school attendance practices is for them to have a positive effect in encouraging students to regularly attend all their classes. The following practices have been identified as strategies and activities having a positive effect in encouraging students to regularly attend all their classes.

1. Clarify school standards related to attendance.
2. Ensure a senior member of staff is responsible for attendance matters.
3. Publicise the consequences of truancy and enforce them consistently. For example, parents should be notified they have a right to meet with appropriate school personnel or the local EWO to discuss solutions to their child's truancy when the student first meets the definition of a truant, and students should be notified that they are subject to suspension, restriction etc....
4. Monitor student attendance and absence through a computerised attendance record-keeping system that keeps track of any unexcused absences.
5. Keep accurate attendance records that show who has been reported as a truant three or more times per school year and what efforts have been made to hold a conference with the parent or guardian and with the student.
6. Place responsibility for verification of excessive excused absences for illness on parents and students. If the reasons for the absences are not verified by a doctor, count those absences as unexplained.
7. Where possible telephone parents/guardians to verify/look for a reason for absences.
8. Use bilingual aides to contact parents with limited English-speaking ability and send out school attendance notification letters in the language appropriate to the family.
9. Make home visits concerning student absences if parents/guardians cannot be reached by telephone.
10. In consultation with the parents and after the school have exhausted efforts to deal with the attendance issue, the school will refer the student to a relevant body i.e., NEWB, HSE ETC.
11. Hold class competitions for special prizes donated by local businesses. Use perfect attendance as the eligibility requirement for the competition. This can be expanded to include most improved attendee, best effort etc....
12. Send commendation letters to students and parents for perfect attendance and improved attendance.
13. Have small or large rewards to be awarded to the classroom with the best attendance record; allow teachers to spend financial rewards for any purpose selected by the class members or the teacher.

14. Initiate a "Mentor" system in which older students with good attendance are permitted to assist/work with younger students on a weekly basis.
15. Personalise relationships between children and those who are responsible for enforcing the attendance policy particularly those considered at "high-risk'.
16. Develop an "Adoptee Program" in which a teacher volunteers or is given responsibility to make weekly informal contacts with "high-risk" students.
17. Have a consistent system of pupil passes for legitimate time out of school.
18. Have a willingness on the part of all staff to accept that improving attendance is the responsibility of everyone and not just that of the principal or the HSCLO.
19. Have a positive culture/ethos which is based upon a firm foundation of respect and care of self and others.
20. Practice positive reinforcement.
21. Ensure that all pupils experience some measure of success at school.
22. This is not an exhaustive list and it will be important for the Education Welfare Officer and the school to work together within a creative framework.