St. Paul's Secondary School

Oughterard

Roll# 63101K

Statement of Strategy re school attendance

Name of School:	St Paul's Secondary School
Address:	Oughterard, Co. Galway
School Roll No.:	63101K
The School's vision and values in relation to school attendance:	This Statement of Strategy re school attendance affirms St.Paul's Secondary School's commitment to the promotion of high levels of attendance among its students. In St. Paul's Secondary School we are committed to encouraging our students to develop a pattern of regular and punctual attendance so that they can fully benefit from the education provided. Catholic education is a lifelong process of human growth and development. In order that each student can grow and develop holistically, it is critical that (s)he attends school regularly and participates in all aspects of school life. Regular attendance facilitates continuity and incremental progression in a student's learning as well as ensuring that each student can benefit fully from all the opportunities that St. Paul's offer. This in turn can enhance the self-esteem of each individual. By participating in school life, students can feel a sense of belonging to the school community. All stake-holders including parents, students, staff and Board members are expected to co-operate in the successful implementation of this Strategy.
The School's high expectations around attendance:	This Statement of Strategy aims to build a culture of high expectations among all staff and with every student for the student's learning participation and attendance. Attendance at school is a legal requirement and St. Paul's has a legal obligation to monitor, record and where necessary, make reports to the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) in the situations as named in the Education Welfare Act 2000. In St. Paul's students are expected to attend and be present punctually every school day i.e. on Monday and Tuesday from 9am – 3.50pm and on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday from 9am – 3.10pm. Furthermore, students are encouraged to take part in extra-curricular activities and be active participants in all aspects of school life. Students are reminded by staff that students can achieve their full potential – "be the best that can be" by attending all of their classes regularly; that consistent attendance enhances a better understanding of material being taught which in turn leads to better results and attainments.

	The students are also made aware of the implications of irregular attendance. Attendance is promoted through our pastoral care programme and at school assemblies. Absences due to term-time holidays/reasons other than illness are strongly discouraged.
How attendance will be monitored:	An accurate record of all students' attendance at St. Paul's and the reasons for any failure to attend is maintained in the school. • Attendance is accurately recorded at the beginning of each morning by class teachers on the school's Management Information System e.g. COMPASS. • A master list of absent students is posted daily in the staffroom. Teachers can check this list against their own roll calls. A text is sent to parents of students who are absent where no phone call has been received. • The school must be notified of all planned absences. • Unplanned absences e.g. Illness must be notified by phone to the secretary on the morning of the absence. • When the student returns to school following an absence the "explanation of absence" slip at the back of the student journal must be completed and signed by a parent/guardian outlining the number of days absent and the reason for the absence. • This must be handed into the school secretary on their first day back at school. • Any student who arrives late for 1st class must go to reception and sign in the 'Late Book'. • Notes re lateness are requested. • The secretary changes the record on the rollcall re that student from 'absent' to 'late'. • The secretary checks that each teacher has submitted their roll call at 9am. Reminders are given to teachers who fail to submit the rollcall. • In the event of a student having to leave the school grounds during the school day, a note signed by parents/guardians must be handed in at reception before 9am. Parents/Guardians must present themselves to the school secretary at reception to collect the student. The parent/guardian and student must the 'Sign Out/In Book' as appropriate. • No student may absent themselves from any class for any reason without the teacher's permission. If a student is ill, they should report to the school secretary at reception with their teacher's

	permission. Contact may be made with parents/guardians, where necessary. • The school may telephone/text a parent/guardian to notify of or verify a student's absence. • The school will communicate with parents/guardians of students whose attendance/punctuality is a matter of concern. • The school will notify the NEWB if a student is absent for 20 days or more within a school year or for reasons as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000. • Teachers, Year Heads, and Deputy Principal monitor attendance. Attendance is a topic discussed at every Year Head meeting with Principal. It is also discussed at Pastoral Care/Support meetings. Teachers alert year heads if there are concerns about student absences. • Electronic roll calls to be taken after every class. • Deputy Principal and Principal meet weekly re attendance. • School reports contain the number of days a student has been absent and has been late to school. • Parents are encouraged to contact school if there are any matters of concern re attendance.
Summary of the main elements of the School's approach to attendance:	St. Paul's Secondary School encourages and expects high levels of attendance at school by its students. Every effort is made to provide a supportive, positive and welcoming school environment. Every effort is made to identify and address the needs of each child re student engagement with school. In order to promote high levels of student engagement and attendance, the following is the approach the school has taken:
Target setting and Targets:	Attendance targets provide a clear measure of improvements in attendance levels in the school. They are a way of checking the impact and benefit of the attendance strategies. • They raise awareness about attendance amount staff, students and parents. • They provide a sense of commitment to attendance and a sense of pride in school achievements. • They provide an ethos of continuing improvement.
Targets for 2017/2018:	• Individual specific attendance targets to be set with certain students. • To improve attendance to PRE COVID Levels.

	• To reduce the number of students who were absent for 20 days or more by 5%. • To reduce absenteeism by 5% on an annual basis (1 day for each student). • Individual specific attendance targets to be set with certain students.
The Whole School Approach:	In this school attendance matters. The whole school community is committed to promoting high levels of attendance and participation amongst students. The Board will submit this Statement of Strategy re Attendance to the Patron/Trustee – CEIST. The Board of Management will play an active part in reviewing and developing the Statement of Strategy. It must ensure that all of the measures required to promote and support attendance are in place and set out in the Strategy of Attendance. The Principal under the direction of the Board of Management leads and guides the work of the Statement of Strategy and will ensure its communication and co-ordination. • In the school teachers, staff, Principal and Deputy Principal endeavour to create and maintain a positive, friendly and safe environment for all. • Parents are informed of the school's obligations as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000 at Open Information Evenings and in the school's Code of Behaviour. The importance of attendance is stressed and emphasised during assemblies during the year. • The school furnishes Parents/Guardians with a school report two times a year (some years receive progress reports as well), which includes details of a student's record of attendance. • Attendance is also discussed with class teachers at relevant Parent Teacher Meetings. Support is given to students who have difficulty with or who are reluctant to engage with certain aspects of the school curriculum. • The school has a uniform policy. This avoids social labelling and financial hardship. • A text is sent to parent/guardian if a student is absent. • Parents/Guardians are contacted by the school if there is a concern re absenteeism.

	• Parents/Guardians are contacted by the school when a student's absence exceeds 20 days in the same school year and Túsla is also informed.
Promoting Good Attendance:	The following approaches will be taken to promote good attendance: • The importance of good attendance is highlighted at assemblies. • Attendance is discussed at Parent Teacher Meetings, at Student Council Meetings and is an item on the agenda of Parents' Association Meetings going forward. • Teachers positively affirm attendance while taking rollcall. • A record of attendance is included in school reports. • The Student Council have a 'Wellness Week' each year which promotes positive mental health and good nutrition for students. This helps to encourage and help students to stay well. • They also fundraise to make the school environment more appealing. • Attendance is an item discussed at Board Meetings and Staff Meetings. • A prize is given for the best attenders in Transition Year.
Responding to Poor Attendance:	Early intervention is key to promoting good attendance. Early identification of 'at risk' students by looking at absences detailed in Education Passports from Primary Schools and our school term reports for other years provides the information for timely, positive intervention and support. Timely and accurate information allows us to act quickly to intervene before a habit of poor attendance takes hold. • At the beginning of the Academic Year parents of students who have had 20 or more days absence the previous year will be contacted by the school. • Attendance meetings held weekly. • Attendance or agenda for Year Head Meetings every week. • Engage in early dialogue with students and parents. (Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal). The School's internal processes provide individualised support (Year Head, Deputy Principal). • School Multi Agency support processes used to help those students having difficulty at home and to help them re-engage student in school.

	• Working with individuals who may need additional support, e.g. students with SENS, students in care, students experiencing emotional/behavioural difficulties, students from families where there has been a history of poor attendance, students from socio-economically deprived family, LGBT students, students who have experienced bullying. • Attendance contract will be signed where necessary.
School Roles in relation to Attendance:	• Students attend school every day unless there is a valid reason not to. • Remind parents to ring school on day of absence. • Following an absence from school to present a completed 'Explanation for Absence' slip in the back of school journal and give in to reception on day of return. • Be punctual to all classes. • Sign Late Book if they arrive after first class. • Sign 'Sign In' and 'Sign Out' book if they are returning/leaving during school day. • Absences due to extra-curricular activities is excused but students must make up missed work.
Parents/Guardians:	• To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000). • To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students every school day and to avoid absences. Where possible it is encouraged to arrange appointments outside of school time. • To ring school on first day of absence. • To provide written explanation of student's absence on 1st day and return to school. • To inform school in advance of any planned absences from school. • To provide the school with reliable contact details/numbers. • To adhere with the protocol set out in this strategy re withdrawal of students from school during the school day. • To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues. • Any student who needs to leave the school during the school day must be collected and signed out by a Parent/Guardian at reception and students sign in on return.

Principal:	• To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students. • To monitor attendance records regularly with Deputy Principal. • To liaise with Deputy Principal re making reports to the Education Welfare as required by the Education Welfare Act 2000. • To inform parents/guardians and students of the procedures for the notification/explanation of absences and withdrawal of students from the school. • To re-inforce to students and parents/guardians the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact frequent absenteeism can have on student progress. • To facilitate mixed ability classes in so far as it is possible throughout the curriculum.
Deputy Principal:	• To work in conjunction with the Principal, Year Heads, Class Teachers, Tutors (where they exist) and Administration staff to implement the school attendance strategy. • To monitor attendance regularly. • To liaise with Year Heads and Pastoral Care Team to address difficulties surrounding a student's attendance. • To meet with Year Head and any students who had unauthorised absence from class/school. • To send a text to each absent student's parent/guardian if student is absent on a particular day. • To phone parents/guardians if there is a particular concern.
Year Head:	• To monitor regularly the attendance records for their given year. • Year Heads are provided with a print-out of their students' attendance records fortnightly. • To liaise with Deputy Principal/Tutors/Pastoral Care Team/Teachers to address difficulties surrounding a student's attendance. • To meet with Deputy Principal to discuss a student whose attendance/punctuality is a problem. • To contact parents/Guardians when an unauthorised absence has occurred/is suspected to have occurred or when patterns of absence begin to develop.

Class Tutor (where class tutors are present):	• To liaise with the Year Head if any problems arise re attendance.
Class Teacher:	• To record attendance of every class for every school day. • To input attendance of class on eportal after 1st class in the morning and after every class for senior students. If there is a technical difficulty, the teacher should record the roll manually and submit to reception. • To impress upon students the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality. • To provide reception with a list of students going on any school related activity/trip and post on staff noticeboard prior to departure. • To refer a student to the Year Head if there is any concern regarding attendance.
Administrative Staff:	• To input attendance from class teachers when submitted. • To administer the signing-in/signing-out of students. • To administer the signing-in of late students. • To phone parents/guardians or send them a text to inform them that their son/daughter is absent or if there is a particular concern.
Partnership arrangements (Parents, Students, other Schools, Youth and Community Groups):	• Ongoing communications on attainment, attendance, behaviour and pastoral care issues are maintained with Parents/Guardians through reports, Parent/Teacher meetings, the School Journal and direct contact. • Parental involvement to support school policies is strongly encouraged. • Policy development and review as much as possible includes input from parents via the Parent's Association as part of the collaborative process. • A variety of Parent Information evenings are organised throughout the school year to enhance the role of parents in their child's education. • There is a defined system in place in the school to meet with Parents/Guardians where an issue has emerged in relation to a student's attendance or progression. • Student opinion and input is invited in policy development/review and school planning as much as possible via the Student Council. • Annual visit by the Principal to all feeder schools.

	• Strong links between the SEN team and primary teachers where special needs are diagnosed and evident. • Invitations are issued to primary schools to attend school shows during the year. • Where students are transferring to or from other schools, the school liaise with those schools to gain or provide information to aid school attendance. • Strong links between the school and local youth agencies (Barry Dillon, Youth Leader) and organisations in the community. • We maintain constant positive links with our local Gardaí and invite officers to talk on various issues.
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored:	• Opportunities will be given to staff to share experiences about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets. • At regular BOM meetings give update on attendance levels with reference to the school's attendance targets. • Formal end of year review of the Statement of Strategy as part of preparation of the Board's annual report on attendance to Túsla.
Review Process and Date of Review:	• Review report on attendance with reference to targets. • Review staff experiences with Year Heads/Deputy Principal/Principal.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by Board of Management:	
Date the Statement of Strategy was submitted to Túsla:	

Reviewed.

This Statement of Strategy was (ratified) by the Board of Management of St. Paul's Secondary School on _____28/06/2022.

Signed: Diarmuid Lee

Chairperson. - Appointed in absence

Date: 28/06/22