



Holy Family Senior School, Ennis Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	Holy Family Senior School
Address	Station Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
Roll Number	07315N
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>Holy Family Senior School is committed to providing a learning environment that will foster all children's learning and encourage them to attend school regularly. Our aim is to provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school. We believe that our pupils will benefit from this education through regular attendance.</p> <p>We view each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. We strive for a greater understanding of the barriers faced by students and aim to put in place supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.</p>
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>Holy Family Senior School aspires to achieve the full potential of each child with particular concern for those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is our intention that the procedures identified in this statement of strategy will contribute to best practice in attendance and punctuality.</p> <p>In so far as possible, we aim to have full attendance from all of our pupils.</p> <p>Casual absences (for whatever reason) are discouraged as they have a direct impact on children's learning. We aim to support children and parents in achieving good attendance through direct communication with our HSCL</p>

	and SCP.
<p>How attendance will be monitored</p>	<p>Among the many strategies/measures we use to ensure regular attendance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We aim to provide a warm, welcoming and supportive learning environment for our pupils, one in which they are valued and respected and in which provision is made for their learning needs. • The Deputy Principal is directly responsible to monitor and promote good attendance in school, to evaluate attendance statistics on Aladdin and to promote positive planning and collaboration in improving attendance. • Aladdin and POD are our primary resources for monitoring attendance. • We have regular communication with parents and provide them with updates on their child's attendance if it is a cause for concern. Letters are mailed to parents if they have missed over 5 days in the first half term, 10 by Christmas and so on. Letters are sent at 4 different times during the academic year – by October mid-term, post Christmas, Easter and Summer. • We encourage parents to communicate reasons for absences to the school in writing or by phone call to the office and these reasons are recorded on Aladdin. • Class teachers keep all notes and records on file in the event of an inspection by EWO. • The deputy principal and class teachers are vigilant to patterns of absenteeism and refer concerns to our behaviour and care team who meet once a week. A follow-up by either the HSCL, principal or deputy principal is agreed and the case is approached in the form of a phone call or home visit to ascertain if the family / child is in need of support.
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target setting and targets • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance 	<p>Target Setting and Targets</p> <p>Our targets are reflected in our DEIS planning through our priorities and action plans. They are reviewed on an annual basis and amended /edited based on our review. This academic year, through rewarding good practice we aim to improve levels of attendance by 2% and reduce absenteeism in excess of 20 days by a further 2%. We also aim to improve our SCP targeted group figures by 1%.</p>

Thus resulting in attendance levels of 95%, absenteeism levels in excess of 20 days to 13% and our SCP levels to 94%.

Our action plan targets are as follows:

- To use HSCL teachers to target specific families where attendance or explanations for absences is poor
- To reward good attendance termly
- To ensure accurate recording of reasons for absence in Aladdin backed up by notes, records and medical certs
- To promote continued daily endeavours to promote good attendance through teaching and learning – roll call, newsletters, awards, motivation, and letters
- To record late arrivals and early leavers on Aladdin to further promote optimum attendance
- To review absences monthly at meetings with HSCL and SCP and report to EWO on a termly basis to develop and enhance strong links
- To develop a whole school attendance strategy
- To review targets annually to facilitate continued good practice.

The Whole-School Approach

- Attendance targets, statistics, areas of strengths/weaknesses etc. will be discussed at a whole staff level at staff meetings
- Regular collaborative meetings to be held as part of our Croke Park hour to discuss and review action plans
- Monthly meetings on the last Monday of each month with deputy principal, HSCL and SCP to monitor and review attendance of whole school population as well as targeted SCP group.
- Attendance addressed in Behaviour and Care team meetings
- Termly meetings with EWO to review good practice.

Promoting Good Attendance

- We hold regular and open class-level discussions with the children in class and at assembly on the importance of regular attendance.
- We publicly and positively affirm those children who have excellent attendance. They are awarded termly with attendance certificates and rewards.
- We praise and reward those who are making a serious effort to improve their attendance.
- Our school's code of behaviour takes a positive

approach to fostering good behaviour.

- We ask parents to value every minute that their children spend at school and therefore make sure that the children are sitting in their classrooms by 9.00am.
- In the same way we ask parents not to ask to let the children off early, unless for a specific appointment. We use a sign-out sheet for children who are collected early by a parent. This enables us to keep a record of such absences and make parents aware of how much time is being missed.
- We actively discourage term-time holidays. The principal will not authorise them nor will teachers assign work for children during their absence. They are responsible for a large proportion of our children missing up to / more than 20 days from school.
- We promote good attendance through communication with parents at P/T meetings, through our newsletter, induction / open nights, school booklet etc.
- We promote good attendance daily through teaching and learning – roll call, newsletters, awards, motivation, and letters

Responding to Poor Attendance

- Referrals can be made to our weekly Behaviour and Care team re poor attendance or noted patterns of inattendance.
- HSCL will make a home visit / phone call if needs arise around poor attendance
- We have regular communication with parents and provide them with updates on their child's attendance if it is a cause for concern. Letters are mailed to parents if they have missed over 5 days in the first half term, 10 by Christmas and so on. Letters are sent at 4 different times during the academic year.
- In accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000 we report all absences over 20 days at the end of each school quarter.
- Our Home-School Community Liaison teacher will visit families who may need encouragement and support in ensuring their child/children attend school.
- Our School Completion programme works closely with the principal, deputy principal, HSCL and Behaviour and Care Team and groups of targeted families who we have concerns over to ensure that supports are in place to ensure their child

	<p>stays in school for as long as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We keep regular, open, communicative links with the EWO to foster a strong supportive working relation between school and TUSLA • Cases where a child has a substantial number of unexplained absences or where we have cause for concern in relation to absenteeism are referred to the EWO • The EWO may call for preventative meetings sporadically during the year based on concerns regarding attendance • Our class teachers and support teachers seek to ensure that children who may be experiencing learning difficulties are actively supported and encouraged with appropriate teaching. Homework is tailored to the individual needs of these pupils.
<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p>The Principal, Deputy and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Barnes, the principal and Jillian Bridge, the deputy principal have overall responsibility for school attendance • The Board of Management provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis. • To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circulars and The Education Welfare Act 2000 • Management will lead on the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy and closely monitor progress and evaluation • We will initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues • We will notify TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensure support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties. • We will furnish pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments <p>Teachers and Staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers, SNAs and secretary should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the deputy's attention whenever they have a concern.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at morning registration by 10:30 am • Teachers will support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling <p>The Staff and Management of HFSS are committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.</p>
<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p>Parents / Guardians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are obliged to explain their child's absences either by note or by phone call. • Reasons will be recorded in Aladdin and notes will be retained in child's file. • When the child returns to school after an absence, parents/guardians should give/send a written note to the class teacher which contains the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. • These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. • Parents are required to backup illness / medical related absences with medical certs/appointment cards • Teachers will record as unexplained on Aladdin if an absence is not explained • Teachers will not assign work for children who are absent from school because of holidays. • The principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. <p>Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring regular and punctual school attendance • notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason • working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems • making sure their children understand that they, as parents, support consistent school attendance • discussing planned absences with the school • refraining, if at all possible, from taking term-time holidays • showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework • encouraging their children to participate in school activities

- praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.) are arranged for times outside of school hours
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

Children

- Children are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher
- Children have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Children should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Children are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

Supports

- Our School Completion Programme works with targeted groups of children who we feel are at risk of leaving school early. Through project work, working with teachers, parents, collaboration with the principal, deputy and HSCL they strive to improve attendance and school attitude in our students and parents.
- Our HSCL teacher has regular contact with parents through home visits, phone calls and through courses and events held in our parents' room on campus. Through providing a welcoming environment to parents and working closely with them we aim to sustain and improve our school attendance figures
- We are a DEIS band 2 school in the centre of a busy town with over 40 different nationalities represented by our children. Our school provides a free breakfast club to children, free healthy snacks at break times and free healthy hot and cold lunches of their choice which they can pre-order online each evening.
- We also have a homework club to support students who are struggling academically and where completing work at home would pose a

	<p>challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We work closely with our school counsellor, NEPS and run the Friends for Life programme across many of our class groupings <p>Enrichment Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Generation Clare, with funding from SVP work within our school to provide low-cost music lessons to our students. We currently have guitar, percussion, concertina and piano lessons in place thus giving children an opportunity to learn an instrument which they otherwise might not have • Each evening after school, our staff provide free after school activities - hurling, football, badminton, athletics, yoga - to engage our students. We hope that having these incentives will encourage greater attendance and develop a sense of belonging to the school community • We build strong practical business skills and enterprise skills through The Junior Entrepreneur programme and Junior Achiever Programme • We are actively involved at a whole school level in a number of leadership development programmes such as The Green Flags, Active Schools and The Yellow Flag, and have a very active Students Council in operation in school. <p>Linkage with other Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have strong linkage with other schools in our area through IPPN, local principals network meetings and HSCL cluster meetings • We work closely with our post-primary schools especially in the context of transition, but also frequently have their T.Y. students involved in initiatives in our school like Athletics, Gaeilge Club or work experience • Through music and the arts we liaise with other schools in the community through combined school initiatives
<p>How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statement will be introduced and discussed at a whole staff meeting before being presented to the Board of Management. • It will be put on our school website for a 2 week period for parents to view in advance of it going to the BOM • It will be monitored directly by the principal Sarah Barnes and deputy principal Jillian Bridge • Through regular monitoring of Aladdin, liaising with class teachers and adhering to our DEIS

	<p>targets and targets and action plans listed above we aim to monitor the statement tightly and further improve our attendance figures.</p>
<p>Review process and date for review</p>	<p>We will review this policy when required under new legislation or when requested by the DES or TUSLA. Likewise if new initiatives are implemented into our school we will edit this statement accordingly.</p>
<p>Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management</p>	<p>23rd March 2017</p>
<p>Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla</p>	<p>12th June 2017</p>