



**Catherine McAuley School**  
**Roll Number: 18692i**

*Statement of Strategy*  
*For*  
*School Attendance.*

*Formulated May 2023*

*Reviewed June 2024*

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*To be reviewed June 2026*

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### **RATIONALE:**

This statement was prepared in consultation with the staff, parents, Board of Management and Educational Welfare Officers in order to highlight the strategies and measures in place in Catherine McAuley School to foster an appreciation of learning among pupils and encourage regular attendance at school. TUSLA's 2016 guideline document, *Developing the Statement of Strategy For School Attendance* was used in the formulation of this document.

### **REWARDING OF STUDENTS WITH GOOD ATTENDANCE:**

As a special school for pupils with mild and borderline mild general learning disabilities, targeting good attendance is part of our school action plan. Students with good attendance may be rewarded in the following ways:

- ✓ Presenting prizes at the end of term at Christmas and Summer term to pupils who have full attendance at the end of each of these terms.
- ✓ Presenting certificates to pupils who have almost full attendance at the end of each term and who have produced notes of absence for time missed.

### **STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE:**

The following strategies will be employed to improve attendance:

#### **Environmental:**

- ✓ The school will keep the highest quality cleanliness and appearance in the school, in classrooms, corridors and open areas to encourage pupils to attend school in attractive and appealing buildings.
- ✓ The school will ensure a calming atmosphere in classrooms and corridors in several ways including choices of colour for walls, fish tanks and other appealing pieces, public display areas for pupils' work etc.
- ✓ The school will provide additional external facilities to include a playground, well-being garden and sports facilities to increase the pupils' enjoyment of playtime and breaks during the school day.
- ✓ The school will preserve the grounds of the school especially the specimen trees and green areas and promoter the Green Schools' agenda.

## **Social/Wellbeing**

The school is cogniscent that many children experience social and wellbeing difficulties outside of school due to several factors including family difficulties and broken homes, local environment, ASD, mental health issues etc.

- ✓ Catherine McAuley School will promote development of good self-esteem and self-worth in its pupils (see Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy).
- ✓ The school staff seeks to make meaningful and trusting relationships where students feel that they are valued and where they know they will receive every support to help students to continue in education despite the above difficulties. This will include the work of the School Support team, The Student Council, The School Wellbeing Committee etc.:
  - School Support Team to link in with class teachers and identify any pupils at risk of poor attendance as early as possible in the school year.
  - The Wellbeing Committee will provide various opportunities for pupils to cope with wellbeing issues including wellbeing week, poster campaigns, Tammy Programme etc.
  - The Student Council will act as a conduit to school management for student ideas to improve the school to make it more attractive for pupils to attend.
  - Ms. Maeve O'Halloran, RNID, in her care/counselling will work closely with Principal, Deputy Principal and class teachers to support pupils in the 'at risk' category of potential poor attenders.
  - The role of the DLP and DDLP to support pupils at risk outside of school

## **Practical**

The school will supports to help pupils to attend school on a regular basis, especially pupils who may suffer from anxiety due to neurological condition of ASD, ADHD, EBD etc. which either prevents them from attending or make the more prone to suspension due to behavioural difficulties. These include:

- ✓ Breakfast club / school meals when needed,
- ✓ Sensory, quiet rooms and wellbeing areas
- ✓ Time out room
- ✓ Individual counselling
- ✓ Special events including sports, tours, activities etc.
- ✓ Assemblies recognising achievement

- ✓ Student/Class of the week awards
- ✓ Local and National art competitions
- ✓ School and educational initiatives both in school and in the local community
- ✓ School family days including graduations, grandparents days, musicals, concerts,
- ✓ Inter-school completions in sport and music
- ✓ Summer Provision
- ✓ Active schools week
- ✓ Celebrations including birthdays, Xmas, Halloween, special days etc.
- ✓ Links to external agencies for pupils with special needs including Special Olympics and Arch Club
- ✓ Social training events
- ✓ CES transition hours teacher, Ms Breda Fitzgerald building links between school and home for school leavers
- ✓ Work experience
- ✓ HSE vaccines

### **Educational:**

The school will provide an education that the pupils recognise as relevant, necessary, practical and interesting. To this end the school:

- ✓ Will provide Educational programmes at primary and post-primary levels which makes education accessible to all pupils at their cognitive level, which includes recognition of learning by state certification.
- ✓ Individual I.T devices for each student to assist with learning,
- ✓ Keep regular contact with parents through parent/teacher meetings, school journals, phone and email correspondence, termly school reports etc.
- ✓ Open nights for parents
- ✓ Show pupils, through education, pathways to post school education, training and employment.
- ✓ Invite guests to school to encourage the importance of education and school attendance.
- ✓ Additional Support where possible and appropriate for pupils who have extra complex special educational needs in accordance with DES guidelines and in consultation with the School Age Team in Blackberry Park, Limerick.
- ✓ School as host for interagency meetings on pupil welfare and attendance
- ✓ Involvement as a RELATE Explore school

## **Staff Involvement**

Each staff member will realise that they are a very important part in the procedures to help the pupils to attend regularly. This is done when pupils experience the following:

- ✓ Happiness in the classroom
- ✓ Encouragement, achievement and recognition
- ✓ Fairness in all aspects of school life
- ✓ Stimulating and varying methods of teaching and learning
- ✓ Ownership of learning
- ✓ Rewards
- ✓ Consistent approaches to the school Code of Behaviour
- ✓ Understanding of each pupil's circumstance and ability level
- ✓ Consistency of positive language used to pupils and the content of the discourse especially in relation to behaviour (what the teacher/SNA says and how it is said).

## **Managerial/Procedural**

- ✓ Attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance and the class teacher will notify the Deputy Principal / Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- ✓ The school will use regular newsletters and web texts via Aladdin to promote attendance and punctuality. The administrators on Aladdin system (Principal, Secretary and Deputy Principal) will be notified online of pupil attendances / absences on a daily basis. The system has been set up to alert the administrators of pupils who have missed 10 consecutive days. At this point the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Principal and class teacher will assess each case individually at this point and a phone call may be deemed necessary.
- ✓ Where concerns arise regarding pupil attendance, the class teacher monitoring attendance brings the concern to the attention of the Deputy Principal and or DLP or DDLP if necessary who will liaise with home. A meeting inviting parents / guardians may be necessary at this point. Failure to explain the pupil's absences satisfactorily at this stage may result in the Deputy Principal making a referral to the Education Welfare Board.

- ✓ The class teacher will encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually. Each school report will contain a section on school attendance sent at Christmas and Summer holidays
- ✓ The class teacher will ensure that contact is made with parents/guardians in instances where absences are not explained. A standard note is used for this purpose. Use of the school journal will be part of the school policy for this.
- ✓ The class teacher will keep a daily record of attendance in Aladdin. Absence notes / explanations will be recorded on Aladdin.
- ✓ Attendance figures are monitored daily by the Deputy Principal and secretary on Aladdin as part of the schools attendance strategy. Class teachers are requested to have electronic rolls completed before 10:30am daily. Reminder notes are sent out regularly in weekly staff memos.
- ✓ The Deputy Principal will also bring details of continued absences and patterns of absences to the attention of the class teachers and the Principal as necessary.
- ✓ The Principal and Deputy Principal will promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- ✓ Attendance will be featured regularly as part of weekly school assemblies.
- ✓ The Deputy Principal will inform the NEWB:
  - When a pupil has been missing for twenty or more days during the course of the school year.
  - When a pupil has been suspended from school more than once under the Code of Behaviour.
- ✓ The School Attendance Strategy operates to highlight pupils who are considered to be at risk of early school leaving.
- ✓ Evidence of non-attendance is a factor in including pupils in the various school related activities
- ✓ School Trips, school related sporting activities will be used as incentives to promote and encourage improved school attendance, outings to Crescent

Shopping Centre, cinema trips, Funderland visits, class tours, social training, sports related trips, school choir, school musical, quizzes etc.

### **IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE AT RISK OF DEVELOPING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS:**

The following strategies may be employed to identify students at risk of developing school attendance problems:

- ✓ On transfer to Catherine McAuley School, attendance records will be sought from previous schools on pupil attendance.
- ✓ Class teachers will inform the Principal / Deputy Principal of any concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- ✓ Contact with various agencies who are involved with such students.
- ✓ Deputy Principal will monitor attendances in all classes and follow up on any concerns with class teachers. Deputy Principal will monitor Aladdin database approaching the end of each half-term throughout the year for any patterns regarding pupil attendances that need to be highlighted

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF CLOSER CONTACTS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND HOME:**

Closer home/school relations will be fostered through:

- ✓ The class teacher.
- ✓ School Journal being used to send positive notes home.
- ✓ School Support Team being used as and when required.
- ✓ MS. Maeve O'Halloran supporting pupils as and when required.
- ✓ Deputy Principal liaising with Parents' Association.
- ✓ Attendance at meetings (Parent/Teacher, etc.).
- ✓ Attendance at Course Graduations throughout the school year.
- ✓ Merit Awards.
- ✓ Attendance at school events (eg Concerts, Masses, etc.).
- ✓ Regular newsletters to families.

- ✓ School Leavers transition support teacher
- ✓ Open-door policy to meeting Principal /Deputy Principal by appointment.
- ✓ Opportunity to contact class teacher via school secretary.
- ✓ Role of DLP and Deputy DLP in relation to advising parents

### **FOSTERING CONTACTS:**

Contact with the following bodies will be fostered and developed in order to promote the good attendance of students in Catherine McAuley School:

- ✓ TESS & local EWO's
- ✓ CAHMS
- ✓ TUSLA
- ✓ Student's former schools.
- ✓ NEPS.
- ✓ Social Workers, care staff and support staff (specific pupils)
- ✓ Catherine McAuley School Parent's Association
- ✓ Local Sports Partnership, local soccer clubs, etc.
- ✓ Community Gardaí and JLO.
- ✓ Local interest groups such as the Vincent de Paul.
- ✓ In-school and after school activities.
- ✓ Special School Sports Council

### **ENCOURAGING FULL PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL:**

In so far as is practicable, programmes will be developed with the bodies mentioned above which will encourage the full participation with students in the life of the school. Examples of these are:

- ✓ Attendance incentive scheme – rewards and incentives for full attendance. –
- ✓ Promotion of positive behaviour and rewards for same through school's School Support Team

**IDENTIFICATION OF ASPECTS AND STRATEGIES:**

The Board of Management, teachers and whole school community will be mindful at all times of:

- ✓ The identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of certain students. Pupil / teacher designed books and curriculum are fostered in the school to assist with this.
- ✓ The identification of strategies for the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school having regard, in particular, to the educational needs of students.
- ✓ The identification of strategies that will encourage more regular attendance at school on the part of such students.
- ✓ The need to review this strategy into the future to accommodate the changing needs of the school and of its population.
- ✓ Identifying flexible solutions to attendance issues by maintaining open communication with parents and guardians.

**REVIEW**

The policy is due for review in June 2026.

E.G. Browne  
Principal