



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

## Statement of Strategy for School Attendance Mercy College Woodford

Name of school	Mercy College Woodford
Address	Woodford, Co Galway, H62N968
Roll Number	631711
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>In Mercy College Woodford our vision is to provide a school environment which encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually. We aspire to create an educational environment where students come to learn, to build positive relationships and to develop their skills and talents. In this environment they learn to take responsibility for themselves and others, so they can become independent adults and responsible citizens.</p> <p>Regular attendance builds students' sense of belonging and makes school a meaningful experience for them. It not only improves performance in academic subjects but aids all other areas of school life such as the nourishing of extra curricular interests and personal development. It promotes feelings of inclusiveness, positive self esteem, resilience and confidence and is one of the most significant factors in a student's success in school and beyond. Good attendance complements our Ceist ethos which values "creating an environment where all feel safe and valued and where students are empowered to participate in the life of the school".</p> <p>Mercy College Woodford is committed to the implementation of education legislation. In particular we are committed to the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (Section 22) which relates to absence from school, school attendance records and school attendance strategies.</p>
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>Mercy College Woodford has very high expectations around full school attendance, expecting each student to be in school every day and to be on time. This expectation and the importance of school attendance is communication regularly to students and parents through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole School assemblies</li><li>• Year Head meetings</li><li>• Parent Teacher meetings,</li><li>• Academic progress reports</li><li>• Letters and telephone calls to parents</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Award for full attendance</li> </ul> <p>Mercy College support parents by communicating the role they play in setting high standards for students regarding attendance and time keeping. The school calendar is made available to parents in the summer of the upcoming school year. Parents are reminded of the importance of arranging holidays, family events, dental and medical appointments etc. outside school time and to inform the school of the reasons for all absences. Parents have an opportunity to become more involved in the life the school through the Parents' Association. Through an involvement with the school, parents may develop a stronger sense of belonging to the school community and have a deeper commitment to the school and the education it provides</p>
How attendance will be monitored	<p><b>Day to day implementation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school attendance of individual students is entered into VSware by the class teacher for every class. If a student is not present, they are marked "absent" by the teacher.</li> <li>• Students who arrive at school after 9.00 am are required to sign in at the school office. Any student who arrives late for school must be either accompanied by a parent /guardian or provided with an explanatory note (written note, email or telephone call from parent)</li> <li>• The Administrator on duty will amend VSware from "absent" to "late" and stamp the student's journal with a late stamp.</li> <li>• Students who leave the school during the day due to illness or appointments must sign out at the school office and collected by a parent/guardian. The absence must be explained by parent/guardian using the pre-printed notes from their school journal, by email or telephone call.</li> <li>• Where students are absent from school for school-related extra-curricular activities, this is entered in the system as school activity. The teacher who oversees the activity prepares a list of the names and, prior to departure, provides a copy of the list to the office.</li> <li>• Deputy Principal and Year Heads monitor attendance. They meet with students if a concern emerges regarding absent days to discuss reasons for absence and supports to promote attendance</li> <li>• Deputy Principal contacts parents when student absence reaches 10 and 20 absent days. 10 day letter and 20 absent days letter sent to parents</li> <li>• Deputy Principal contacts parents by phone before 20 day absence reached to discuss reasons for absence and to discuss supports and strategies to improve attendance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attendance Data:</b> Attendance data is used to monitor overall attendance and punctuality levels. This allows Year Heads and Deputy Principal to identify trends and patterns both for the whole school and for vulnerable individuals. Students may be referred to the</p>

	<p>Student Support Team/School Counsellor/AEN Coordinator for support.</p> <p>The school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Officer, where a student has missed 20 or more days in a school year, when attendance is irregular or when there are concerns regarding the pattern of attendance. The Tusla referral process is followed in these cases. The school provides Tusla with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Attendance Report, School Absence Reports twice a year and notification of Reduced School Day as necessary.</p>																		
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target setting and targets</li> <li>• The whole-school approach</li> <li>• Promoting good attendance</li> <li>• Responding to poor attendance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Target Setting and targets:</b></p> <p>We believe attendance targets should be meaningful, attainable and relevant for our school. We have compiled data below which can be used as baseline data to monitor targets over the coming years. While attendance in Mercy College Woodford is better than the national average, we aim to reduce the number of students absent for twenty days or more by 1 % in the 2024-25 academic year.</p> <p><b>Review June 2025:</b></p> <p>The 2024-25 target of a 1% reduction was achieved and surpassed, with a reduction of 4%.</p> <p><b>Target 2025-26:</b> Aim to maintain this percentage of 6.5%</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="624 1025 1366 1272"> <thead> <tr> <th>Students Absent 20+ days</th> <th>National</th> <th>MCW</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024-25</td> <td>Not available</td> <td>6.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023-24</td> <td>Not available</td> <td>10.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>15%</td> <td>7.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>26.8%</td> <td>15.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>16.9%</td> <td>6.4%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Sources:  <i>TESS School Attendance Data Primary and Post-Primary Schools And Student Absence Reports Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2019-2022.</i>  <i>Central Statistics Office, "Educational Attendance and Attainment of Children 2022-23"</i></p> <p>In 2024 the Attendance Support Grant was used to purchase resources for breaktime activities including sports equipment and board games. The decision was based on feedback from consultation with students using a survey and follow up focus group where students identified factors that promoted school attendance.</p> <p><b>Whole-School Approach:</b></p> <p>Research findings indicate "that the overall school climate – a welcoming atmosphere, positive teacher-student relationships and a supportive teaching and learning environment – is at the core of success in every aspect of school life and work, including attendance. The quality of the whole-school ethos and culture is the most important school influence on students' attendance and engagement in learning" (Developing the Statement of</p>	Students Absent 20+ days	National	MCW	2024-25	Not available	6.5%	2023-24	Not available	10.5%	2022-23	15%	7.4%	2021-22	26.8%	15.1%	2020-21	16.9%	6.4%
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Strategy for School Attendance, Guidelines for Schools p. 13). The whole school community (students, teachers, parents, Board of Management) has a role in supporting school attendance. The roles are detailed below.

**Promoting Good Attendance:**

Mercy College Woodford provides universal interventions to all students (support for all) and targeted interventions to certain students (support for some and a few).

**Universal Interventions-Support for all**

- creating a safe, friendly and welcoming environment
- ensuring that students reach their full potential through access to sufficient resources, support and services
- having full and equal opportunity for all students to participate in school life.
- setting high expectations for students
- the quality of relationships between teachers and students
- promoting a sense of belonging and inclusion
- encouraging student voice and student leadership in school life through Student Council, Prefect Buddy system, Green School etc and providing opportunities for student inclusion in drafting of school policies
- providing opportunities for positive home-school communications
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- a fair and consistently administered Code of Behaviour
- providing appropriate interventions for students with SEN
- mixed ability groups
- putting systems in place for dealing with absenteeism and lateness
- providing programmes to promote positive attitudes to the reporting of Bullying
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance are identified early
- ongoing analysis of lateness and non attendance patterns
- Year Group/Class Group Events like Bonding Days, class outings, retreats
- acknowledging and rewarding good attendance
- providing a varied, engaging and relevant curriculum
- encouragement to students to join in extra curricular and co-curricular activities
- Circulating the school calendar to parents to facilitate parental planning of family events and medical appointments outside of school
- Effective communication with parents regarding high expectations for attendance.

**Responding to Poor Attendance:**

In dealing with poor attendance the student's welfare is of paramount importance and interventions are adapted to

	<p>respond to the student's particular needs.</p> <p><b>Targeted Interventions-Support for Some</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prefect Buddy system for First year students</li> <li>• Appointments arranged with the school counsellor for students who are having anxiety or mental health based absenteeism</li> <li>• Meetings may be held with the Year Head, Deputy Principal, Principal, the parents/guardians and the student(s) concerned</li> <li>• The school may offer a differentiated curriculum to certain targeted students</li> <li>• The school may seek the assistance of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), The Child and Family Agency (Túsla) and any other organisation which may be of assistance</li> <li>• Skills programmes in the areas of behaviour and support for families such as the Meitheal Programme are available</li> </ul> <p><b>Intensive Intervention- Support for a few</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive and supportive communication between school and home to determine reasons for student absence</li> <li>• Year Head /DP arrange meetings with parents/guardians regarding strategies and interventions to improve attendance</li> <li>• Pre referral meeting with DP and Education Welfare Officer</li> <li>• Students may be referred to the Túsla Education Welfare Officer for support and we will work closely with the Education Welfare Officer to support the student. Students may, with the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer, be offered reduced timetables or alternative educational programmes</li> </ul>
<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p><b>Students are</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required to attend school every day</li> <li>• Ensure that they arrive on time</li> <li>• Follow any instructions given by the school regarding the delivery of attendance notes to explain absence.</li> <li>• Follow school policies including the Code of Behaviour, Uniform and Anti Bullying policies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Parents/Guardians</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities. (Education Welfare Act 2000)</li> <li>• Ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unwarranted absences</li> <li>• Provide a written explanation for the student's absence on the first day of return to school</li> <li>• Provide the school with up to date contact telephone numbers and alternative emergency numbers so that the school may contact parents/guardians or other authorised parties if necessary</li> </ul>

- To adhere to the procedures set out in this Strategy for the 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
- To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays

#### **Teachers**

- Maintain accurate attendance records including when substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave.
- To input the attendance for all periods into the VShare system. If there is a technical difficulty the class teacher will record the attendance manually on paper and submit to the School Reception
- If a student arrives late to class, teachers must record same on VShare
- To impress on students the importance of regular attendance and insist on good punctuality.
- To alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences or punctuality

#### **Year Heads**

- Monitor attendance and punctuality for of Year Groups
- To remind the pupils during the assemblies of the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Meet with students if concerns around attendance and/or punctuality arise
- Examine patterns and contact parents in the first instance regarding absences / lateness.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected
- Liaise with the Student Support Team/Deputy Principal/Principal/EWO to address ongoing difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance when required.

#### **Deputy Principal**

- Monitor attendance patterns of students
- Meets with students. parents/guardians to discuss concerns and interventions. Phone call and letter to parents/guardians at 10 days absence; phone call and letter to parents/guardians at 20 day absence
- Work with Year Heads, School Counsellor and AEN Coordinator with respect to students who do not attend regularly
- Liaises with EWO if pre-referral or referral meetings are required.
- Conducts reporting of twice yearly School Absence Report Attendance to Tusla Portal should a student be absent for more than 20 days or should a student's attendance be of concern to the school.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completes the end of year Annual Attendance Report to Tusla</li> </ul> <p><b>Principal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students</li> <li>• Monitor attendance records regularly</li> <li>• Report to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000</li> <li>• Inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences withdrawal of students from the School</li> <li>• Remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress</li> <li>• Responsibility for the analysis of trends, the provision in so far as possible programmes, timetables and any other strategies that encourage regular attendance.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Board of Management</b> is responsible for the ratification, following consultation with teachers, students, parents and Principal, and implementation of an Attendance Strategy which encourages regular attendance and an appreciation of learning among students.</p>
<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p><b>Students</b> – Year Head and/or Deputy Principal meet with student to discuss reasons for absence. Supports and strategies put in place together with the student.</p> <p><b>Parents/Guardians</b> – Year Head and/or Deputy Principal builds positive and supportive communication with parents/guardians, recommending interventions and strategies to promote school attendance.</p> <p><b>Student Support Team</b> Strategies put in place depending on student needs such as academic/social/emotional</p> <p><b>School Counsellor</b> referral as necessary to counselling agencies such as Galway Youth Counselling, CAHMS</p> <p><b>AEN coordinator</b> referral to SENCO/National Educational Psychological Service (<b>NEPS</b>) as necessary.</p> <p>The school may seek the assistance of the National Council for Special Education (<b>NCSE</b>), the Health Service Executive (<b>HSE</b>), the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (<b>CAMHS</b>), Tusla Education Support Service (<b>TESS</b>), Education Welfare Services (<b>EWS</b>), The Child and Family Agency (<b>TúsIa</b>) and any other organisation which may be of assistance.</p>
<p>How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored</p>	<p>Monitoring of the Statement of Strategy will be most effective following a whole school approach. Staff maintain vigilance so that students who are at risk of school refusal are identified early.</p> <p>When students have been identified as at risk, parents /guardians are contacted and arrangements are made to meet in school. If the student has been absent for some time a school</p>

	<p>return plan is put in place. The plan is devised in collaboration with the student and parents/guardians and may include such measures as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A phased return</li> <li>• A reduction in number of subjects for house exams or an "open book" exam</li> <li>• Meet with Counsellor or another teacher</li> <li>• Support with self-esteem, friendships and resolution of conflict where appropriate</li> <li>• Further contact with SEN team where appropriate</li> <li>• Educational assessment where appropriate</li> <li>• Referral to and collaboration with other agencies where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Review process and date for review</p>	<p>Review of Statement of Strategy will be conducted involving Student Council, Staff, Parents Association and Board of Management. Targets will be reviewed and the Attendance Strategy will be adapted as necessary Date for review:</p>
<p>Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management</p>	<p>10 / Sep / 2025</p>
<p>Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla</p>	