

**Moyne Community School  
Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the Board of Management of each School must prepare and submit to Tusla – Child and Family Agency a Statement of Strategy For School Attendance.

Section 22(1) of the Act states that:

*‘The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students (hereafter in this section referred to as a “statement of strategy”).’*

Furthermore, Section 22(3) of the Act requires:

*‘The board of management of a recognised school shall, in preparing a statement of strategy, have regard to such guidelines issued by Tusla regarding the preparation and carrying into effect of statements of strategy.’*

Name of school	Moyne Community School
Address	Moyne, Co Longford
Roll Number	91436D

**The school’s vision and values in relation to attendance**

Moyne Community School’s Mission Statement clearly articulates the core principles that underline all of our activities, endeavours and policies

*Moyne Community School offers a holistic education, upholding the Christian values and traditions of the communities from which the school evolved. We are committed to enabling students and staff to develop their full potential within the school’s formal and informal curriculum, in a friendly, safe and caring environment’*

Good attendance is central to the achievement of our school mission. This Statement of Strategy will give a strong focus to the school’s approach to attendance. It will gather together all the practices and interventions aimed at promoting and supporting school attendance, and express these as a clear and systematic framework of support for school attendance.

In drafting this statement Moyne Community School wishes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of attendance throughout the school year.

Moyne Community School endeavours:

1. To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the pupils.
2. To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process.
3. To ensure that pupils benefit fully from the opportunities that this school offers them.
4. To ensure parents/guardians, pupils and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance.
5. To ensure that the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and other relevant acts.

#### The school's high expectations around attendance

In introducing this statement and its procedures and policies Moyne Community School hope to

1. To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality.
2. To keep accurate records of pupils' whereabouts at all times during school hours.
3. To encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
4. To inform parents/guardians on the vital role they play in their child's school attendance and punctuality.
5. To reduce the rate of absenteeism and lateness and encourage full attendance where possible.
6. To detect and correct patterns of poor attendance and punctuality.

#### How attendance will be monitored

The school day commences at 9:00am each day and ends at 4:00pm on Monday and Tuesday and 3:40pm on other days. Bells sound at 8:50 and 8:55 indicating pupils and teachers should be prepared to commence class at 9:00am

The school uses the VSWare management information system to record pupils' attendance and punctuality in the morning.

- The first roll call is taken immediately and is the roll call that indicates attendance or absence from school for that date. Pupils who arrive late must ensure they report to the General Office, with a parent/guardian to be signed in and ensure that an absence record for that day is not left unchanged. It is a parent responsibility to ensure late students are presented to the office.
- All staff will keep their own attendance rolls for every class on the VSWare system and will report any deviations between these and the morning roll to the Deputy Principal/Principal as soon as possible for early investigation.
- Spot checks of attendance will be carried out at any time by management and the school text messaging service may be used to alert parents to pupil absences.
- All absences must be explained in writing by parents by means of the special absence notes in the pupil's journal. Upon return to school this note must be given to the

General Office for copying. Parents should check student journals to check that absence notes been marked as received/copied. In exceptional circumstances a parent may telephone the school to say that their child will be absent for a period of time.

- Regular absenteeism for no good reason is a very serious matter. The school reserves the right to contact home to check on the details of absences with parent(s)/guardian(s).
- In the context of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 the relevant authorities will be notified when 20 days of absences have occurred.

**Illness during school hours:**

1. A pupil that becomes ill during the school day should, with their teacher's permission, report to the General Office.
2. The Clerical Staff will telephone a parent to inform them of the illness and the possible need to collect their child from school.
3. Parents should collect their child at the office. The parent and pupil must sign-out in the book in the General Office before leaving.

**Appointments during school hours:**

Parents are asked to make every effort to arrange medical/dental and other appointments after school hours. In cases where this is impossible, pupils should be instructed, if possible, to return to school after the appointment.

The following procedures must be followed by pupils leaving the school during the school day:

- (i) Pupils going to appointments must present to the General Office at a time agreed with a parent. It is not possible to call pupils out over the intercom system as constant announcements interrupt teaching and learning. Secretaries are not permitted to leave the office area to call pupils from class.
- (ii) In exceptional cases a parent may ring the school to inform the Deputy Principal/ Principal of an appointment and to make suitable arrangements for collection. This must be followed up with a signed note of such an appointment.
- (iii) All pupils must be signed-out and signed-in by a parent/guardian upon return at the General Office.
- (iv) Parents wishing to have their children collected by another parent must contact the school to inform the office of the arrangement. Pupils will not be permitted to leave with other families/people unless the school has received clear notification that this is acceptable.

**Punctuality:**

A good record of punctuality is an essential part of any pupil's preparation for life as well as being essential to the smooth running of the school and to the continuity of teaching and learning:

1. All pupils are expected to be in attendance by 8.50 a.m. on each school day to get organised and to be punctual for first class commencing at 9:00am. Pupils are expected to be on time for every class throughout the day.
2. Pupils who arrive late for school are expected to be signed by a parent/guardian at the General Office as soon as they arrive, with their school journal. Please note

pupils who arrive late and do not report to the office may be recorded as absent for the whole school day

3. The school will monitor punctuality on a daily basis. If a pupil has a persistent late-coming record contact will be made with parents/guardians.
4. Pupils may be given disciplinary points as set out in the School Code of Conduct for persistent late-coming or not being signed in by a parent. This in turn may lead to sanctions such as After School Detention.

#### Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:

##### **Target setting and targets**

Moyne Community School in its policies and practices carry out extensive data review and analysis of school statistics. Quarterly and Annual Returns on school attendance are compiled and returned to Tusla as required by law.

Senior management have collected attendance and punctuality information from school records for the last number of years on a monthly basis. Annual absenteeism has hovered in the 9-11% range in the period 2010-2017. The strategies and practices referred to above have been developed using the evidence of the data collection. This process will continue to be ongoing and will feed into new strategies to tackle emergent problems.

Recent data has highlighted the following key points

- Absences in the range of 9-11% across the school. Yearly averages have been in the region of 10%. Initial interventions have gone a considerable way to moving from the high 11% levels. Initial targets were set to reduce absences and lateness by 5% per annum. The strategies employed were successful (particularly with regard to punctuality) although a plateau now appears to have been reached.
- On average 25% of pupils will miss 20 days or more in a school year. A considerable concern is that the majority of pupils in this category are senior pupils and therefore outside the Tusla reporting mechanism. This has led us in recent years to increase our reporting of days/dates of absences and awareness of the issue with parents.
- For 2017/18 the school is examining statistics on pupils being collected early for various reasons to assess the level of this occurrence.

##### **The whole-school approach**

To deliver the highest quality of education for each pupil attending Moyne Community School, it is essential that high attendance standards should be maintained. Absences from school affect not only the absentees but also those who are present in terms of overall morale and the necessity for teachers to repeat material which has been missed. Working together, home and school can ensure that pupils will realize their potential by regular attendance. (see list below for school roles in relation to attendance)

### **Promoting good attendance**

The calendar for the academic year is published annually in the school journal, posted to parents/guardians in June/July of the new school year and published on our website. It is hoped that this will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

The importance of attendance is highlighted during roll call by teachers and at assemblies by the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head

The number of days missed and lates recorded is stated clearly on pupils' progress reports after the Winter, Spring and end of year examinations. A list of the dates and categories of absence is also included with this report.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and encourages all pupils to become involved in these activities. Involvement in these activities in school can encourage pupils to attend.

In extreme cases where poor attendance is linked with poor behaviour or social and emotional challenges, assistance is offered to an individual pupil to support their relationship with school and therefore their attendance. This assistance may come from our Pastoral Care team, Chaplain and /or Guidance Counsellor.

The school continues to develop close links with our main feeder schools. Analysis of incoming pupil's passports helps to identify each pupil's strengths and areas for development and helps with the smooth transition from primary school into post-primary school. A comprehensive transition programme has been developed to ease the transition from primary to post primary school.

As part of the Wellbeing program first year pupils have timetabled classes with their Year Head, Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support teacher during which any difficulties can be discussed.

Certificates of attendance and exemplary behaviour are presented to pupils each year. These awards are presented based on pupil's attendance and general behaviour during the academic year. Pupils are informed that these Certificates are recorded on their file and are used for purposes of reference. Attendance awards are also presented during our Graduation Mass Ceremony for Leaving Certificate students. These awards highlight exemplary attendance over the course of the pupils' enrolment in Moyne Community School.

### **Responding to poor attendance**

Moyne Community School seeks to reduce the earlier mention figures and to deal with attendance problems in the following ways:

- Reporting to parents/guardians when pupils are absent from school without permission.
- Tracking of pupils through the regular Year Head/Senior Management meetings.
- When a pupil's cumulative absences in any given school year exceed 12 days, the Principal will write to the pupil's parents to inform them of this and to seek an opportunity to discuss the matter with parents.

- When a pupil's cumulative absences in any given school year exceeds 20 days, the Principal will make a report to the Child and Family Agency, as required by law, and will continue to liaise with parents and the pupil in an attempt to encourage more regular attendance.
- Specific causes and concerns for attendance issues can be discussed with and resolutions sought using the care team in the school. Year heads, Chaplain and Guidance Counsellors along with the Deputy Principal and Principal will seek to assist pupils and parent facing difficulties.

#### School roles in relation to attendance

Pupils are asked to:

1. Punctually attend all scheduled classes every day.
2. To present a written explanation for their absence in the school journal on the day of return to school, following any absence.
3. To follow the procedures in place for illness and appointments during the school day.
4. To follow the procedures in place for lateness to school.
5. To catch-up on any classwork and homework missed upon their return to school. Pupils are advised and encouraged to contact classmates for this purpose.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are asked to:

1. Explain all absences by note in the relevant section of the school journal which should be sent to the school. The note should clearly state the reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent for three consecutive days, a telephone call or message should be sent to the school.
2. Follow the school procedures for signing in or signing out pupils.
3. Make every effort to ensure that pupils are in school on time each day. While there are unavoidable circumstances which will cause pupils to be late, repeated lateness and its acceptance will have a negative impact on the importance of attendance and punctuality in the mind of the pupils.
4. Exercise discretion in distinguishing between genuine illnesses which requires time off school and minor complaints which do not.
5. Make every effort to arrange medical and dental appointments after school hours. In cases where it is impossible pupils should be instructed, if possible, to return to school after the appointment.
6. Support their child's education by refusing requests for unofficial days off for activities which might include shopping, holidays or preparation for social events.
7. Ensure that their child is not so fatigued from a part-time job that time is missed from school.
8. Refrain from taking family holidays during school term. The school is obliged to include any such days in the total absences for the year.
9. Use access to VSWare to monitor their own child's attendance.

Class Teachers are asked to:

1. Record the attendance of every class every day using VSware. When substituting under the S&S scheme or when providing cover for personal leave, the teacher will complete registration for that class using the VSware system.
2. Impress on pupils the importance of regular attendance and insist on punctuality.
3. Acknowledge pupils returning from an absence by welcoming them back and supporting them upon their return on work missed.
4. Notify the General Office in a timely manner of pupils who will be absent from class due to a school activity so that notification can be placed on the system for the information of colleagues.
5. Set example by their own attendance and punctuality.

Year Heads are asked to:

1. Monitor with Senior Management the attendance records on VSware for the given year.
2. Liaise with the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor and Senior Management to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
3. Contact or meet, along with the Deputy Principal/Principal if necessary, those pupils and their parents for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue.
4. Contact parents/guardians where unauthorized absences are suspected.
5. Remind the Year Group of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

Administrative staff are asked to:

1. Administer the signing in and out of pupils (hard copy and VSware).
2. Create groups for any pupils taking part in extra-curricular activities during the school day and mark them as absent due to School Activities or Trips on VSware
3. Manually record all absence notes for each pupil.
4. Amend, ideally on a daily basis, the records on VSware from absences unexplained to absences explained when notes are received.

Senior management are asked to:

1. Work in cooperation with the Year Heads, Class Teachers, Administrative staff and implement the school policy.
2. Liaise with the Year Heads, LS teachers, Guidance Counsellor and Chaplain to address the difficulties surrounding a particular pupil's attendance.
3. Liaise with Administrative staff for pupils taking part in extra-curricular activities.
4. Meet, along with the Year Head the pupils who had unauthorised absence from class.
5. Inform new teachers of their obligation with regard to recording attendance and punctuality.
6. Pass all notes on to the Administrative staff for filing into pupil's records.

7. Submit the four reports and the Annual Attendance Report (AAR) to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) each year.
8. Review attendance rates each year and in consultation with all the relevant partners and set yearly improvement targets.

Principal/Board of Management are asked to

1. Ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of pupils.
2. Monitor attendance records regularly.
3. Make reports to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
4. Inform parents/guardians and pupils of the procedures for the notification of absences/withdrawal of pupils from the school.
5. Remind pupils and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences in pupil progress.

**Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)**

The school has long standing relationships with local voluntary organisations and meets regularly with the Educational Welfare Officer, Community Gardai, NEPS and other external agencies. Consultations and referrals can be made with appropriate agencies or personnel as the need arises.

**How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored**

Senior Management, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Parents' Association and the Student Council will be central to the monitoring and evaluation of this strategy. This will be done by continuing to collect data on attendance rates in monthly and yearly reports and comparing them to the previous year. This Statement of Strategy will then be reviewed and this review will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management

**Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management**

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**Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla**

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Signed by Chairperson Board of Management	
Date	

**This Statement of Attendance Strategy was compiled in conjunction with “Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools”, Educational Welfare Services Tusla – Child and Family Agency 2015**

As per the above document the following Relevant Legislation, Circulars and Statutory Guidelines have been complied with.

Education (Welfare) Act 2000	Relevant Sections of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
Section 17	Section 17 requires the parent to send their child to a recognised school every school day, except in very limited and specified circumstances, such as when the child is registered as being educated in a place other than a recognised school.
Section 20	Section 20 sets out the duty of the school principal to set up and maintain the school register. It describes the information to be maintained in the register, the management of the register, and the transfer of information about a student between school principals when a student transfers from one school to another.
Section 21	Section 21 provides for the maintenance by the principal of attendance records in the school, the reporting of student absences to Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services (EWS), duties of the Educational Welfare Officer regarding reported attendances, and the duty of the school Board of Management to submit a report on annual attendance levels in the school to EWS and the Parent Association.
Section 22	Section 22 requires each Board of Management to prepare the school Statement of Strategy in line with Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services’ ‘School Attendance Guidelines’ and to submit the Statement to EWS.
Section 25	Section 25 empowers Tusla’s Educational Welfare Services to serve a

	School Attendance Notice (SAN) requiring a parent to send his or her child to school every day, and to prosecute for breach of the SAN
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Education Act 1998	Relevant Sections of the Education Act 1998
Section 26	Section 26 sets out the procedures for the establishment of a parents' association and the reporting arrangements between it and the principal or Board of Management of that recognised school.
Section 27	Section 27 provides for Boards of Management of recognised schools to establish and maintain procedures for the purpose of informing students of the activities schools. This includes the provisions for the establishment of student councils.
Section 29	Section 29 sets out appeals procedures for schools. Appeals procedures in relation to suspension and expulsions are further defined in the Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007.

Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (NEWB, 2008)	Guidelines issued under Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act for the preparation by Boards of Management of a school Code of Behaviour
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Data Protection Acts	The main Irish law dealing with data protection is the Data Protection Act 1988, amended by the Data Protection Act (Amendment) Act 2003. See <a href="http://www.dataprotection.ie">www.dataprotection.ie</a>
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Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011)	Children First sets out specific protocols for HSE social workers, Gardaí and other front-line staff in dealing with suspected child abuse and neglect. See <a href="http://www.dcyia.ie">www.dcyia.ie</a>
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Department of Education and Skills	
Circular 0034/2011 Standardisation of the school year	Standardises the dates for Christmas, Easter and midterm breaks
Circular M29/95 Time in School (post-primary schools)	Requires post-primary schools to be open for a minimum of 167 days per year, with a minimum of 28 hours of instruction per week.
Circular 0040/2012 Implementation of School Self-evaluation (post-primary)	Sets out rationale and purpose of School Self Evaluation, evaluation processes, suggested time allocations, actions and targets, and supports available to post-primary schools.
Circular 0039/2012 Information in relation to actions under the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Standardised Testing, Reporting, Library Support and Other Matters	Sets out rationale, purpose and use of the Education Passport to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information at the end of 6th class.