

**Statement of Strategy for School Attendance
Griffen Community College 2021-2022**

Name of school	Griffen Community College
Address	c/o Kishoge Community College, Lucan Co Dublin
Roll Number	76454S
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	
<p>It is the aim of all stakeholders at Griffen Community College (GCC) for all pupils have full attendance in school. To this end GCC aims to be a safe, caring and stimulating place of education for all. Good attendance is promoted in GCC by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve their full potential through regular presence in class. This policy aims to reduce absenteeism and to motivate students to take an active part in their education. Parents, students and staff are expected to co - operate in the successful implementation of this strategy.</p>	
Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work to protect, in conjunction with all other aspects of school life, the care and welfare of the students. • To facilitate continuity and progression in the learning process by encouraging habits of regular and punctual attendance by our students. • To discourage absenteeism, lateness and unwarranted withdrawal of students during the school day or term. To ensure students benefit fully from opportunities that this school offers them. • To develop a sense of personal responsibility in our students. • To make all school partners aware of the links between school attendance and academic achievement. To ensure all parents / guardians, students and teachers are aware of their responsibilities to ensure high levels of attendance • To enable us to identify students who may be at risk and put supports in place to assist them • To ensure the school fulfils its legal obligations in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000 and other relevant acts. Under the Act, Education Welfare Boards have been assigned an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) whose duty it is to liaise with school in relation to any attendance problems which may emerge. The Principal must inform the Educational Welfare Officer where any of the following occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student is suspended from school for a period of not less than six days • The aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from school during a school year is not less than twenty. • A student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register by the Principal • A student is, in the opinion of the Principal of the school in which he/she is registered, not attending school regularly. 	
The school's high expectations around attendance	
<p>The school expects that in so far as is possible that all pupils fully attend school. Students who are unwell are not expected to attend school. Students who maintain a perfect school attendance record during each academic year will be recognised with a school certificate at the annual award ceremony.</p>	
Aims	
<p>The aims of this school policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage full attendance and punctuality. 	

- Detect and correct patterns of poor attendance as early as possible.
- Accurately record students' attendance.
- Raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.
- Promote a positive learning environment.
- Fulfil the legislative requirements of the Education Act 2000.
- Adhere to the guidelines as set out by The Child & Family Agency Tusla.

How attendance will be monitored:

Daily Morning Registration

- All students attend tutor time at 8:08 am in a designated room. The roll is recorded electronically on vsware. Roll calls in teachers handbooks will acts as the fire register. Registration is taken on vsware in every class period so the school can keep accurate records of students 'whereabouts at all times during school hours
- Absence notes are submitted to the class tutor. He/she will be subsequently amend the unexplained absence on vsware. A note of an appointment of a medical nature or important family business will be accepted as valid.
- Punctuality - School is open from 8.00 a.m. and students are required to be in their classrooms not later than 8.08a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Students who arrive at school after 8:08am are required to sign in at the office. The online record will be amended from Absent – (unexplained) to Late or Late with Note – (excused) by Admin staff. The student will receive a late stamp and a record will be taken of whether or not the student had a valid note of explanation. Discretion may be allowed regarding traffic conditions, the weather and other unforeseen circumstances. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under The Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Officer.
- Attendance is checked again at 9am by school admin before the school sends a text message to the contact highlighted on vsware (parent/ guardian) of the absent student. This text is sent every day between 9.30-10.00am
- Students who leave the school during the school day due to illness or appointments can either be collected by a parent/guardian or send in a signed note/dental appoint card or give verbal consent to a member of staff over the phone for the students to walk home. The student must then sign out at GCC reception. The signing out is inputted into vsware by the admin staff as Signed Out (SO), with the reason noted.
- When/ If that student returns to school they must sign back in at the school office who will amend their attendance. They will be marked present by teacher in their next class.
- Where students are absent from school for school related/ extra-curricular activities, this list is provided to the school office at least 24 hrs in advance and is entered in the system by the school office staff. The teacher who oversees the activity will prepare a list of attendee names and, prior to departure, emails a list of students leaving to the school office. If a student listed is absent from the trip, the teacher will notify the admin staff of the same promptly before departure.

Procedure –Registration following absence

In the event of an absence the student must present a written note of explanation in their student diary on her/ his return to the Tutor and the individual Subject Teacher (when requested). The note must be in the absence section at the back of the diary. These notes are then detached and kept in the pupil's file and recorded on vsware.

Registration for students attending appointments during the school day

Students who wish to leave the school early for an appointment (e.g. Doctor, Dentist etc.) must present a note of explanation to their tutor that morning where the note will be signed. They should then bring the signed note to the office for a school stamp. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they receive a sign out stamp and that they sign the register in the office. If the student returns to school following the appointment they must sign back in at the office.

Registration for students who leave school due to illness during the school day

In the event of a student becoming ill while at school, parent/guardian's permission to go home must be received before they sign out through the office. He/she must remain at reception until contact is made with the student's parents/guardians.

Registration for students who miss registration or class registers due to extra - curricular activities

Students who are participating in extra - curricular activities must sign out on the extra-curricular register

with the organising teacher. It is also the responsibility of students to notify class teachers beforehand that they will be absent from class due to sporting or other extra - curricular activities. A list of students leaving the school will be displayed in the staffroom on the day of the event.

Goals- To develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality

- Good attendance is promoted in the school by a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for his or her own learning and achieve their full potential through regular presence in class
- Throughout the curriculum, students are made aware of the incremental nature of learning and the implications for them of irregular attendance. This is also promoted through the Pastoral Care programme. Students learn to take responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance.
- The Year Head and or tutor meet with students for whom attendance or punctuality has been identified as an issue with the aim of reducing the rate of absenteeism and encouraging improved attendance. The early detection and correction of patterns of poor attendance and punctuality is the aim of this meeting.
- Reports to parents/Guardians will include a detailed breakdown of attendance for the period in question.
- General school communications, meetings with parents and other occasions e.g. Parent/Teacher meetings will be used to communicate to parents the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of unwarranted absences.
- Where unauthorised absences are suspected parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible.
- The schools reward system acknowledges excellent attendance and punctuality and recognises students who show significant improvements in attendance and punctuality.
- A sense of belonging and connectedness in school is developed through participation in school life and/or extra - curricular activities

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

- Target setting and targets
- The whole-school approach -A strategy for promoting good school attendance

The school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Information sheet on attendance will be placed in the school Journal see page 31
- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently in every timetabled class throughout the day.
- Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored in the school office and by the Principal.
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to:
 - a) TUSLA
 - b) The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
 - c) The Board of Management (BOM)

Target setting and GCC Targets

The BOM, school management, Tutor and staff will set targets with regard to attendance, punctuality and participation. Students will be consulted on the attendance and punctuality rules of GCC via the Student Council.

Specified Targets for 2021-2022

Attendance = 85% attendance for all students in the school (LCA students will require 90% attendance)

Punctuality = 95% of students attend Tutorial and classes each day

(To be reviewed May 2020 by BOM)

Strategies to achieve targets

- Building a warm, caring, respectful and compassionate atmosphere in which every person feels accepted and valued.
- The provision of an extra - curricular activity package which has something for everyone and encourages the participation of all students.
- A modern meaningful curriculum, which is inclusive of all students.
- Breakfast Club / Availability of school lunches, snacks where the need arises.
- Well - structured pastoral care system through the Student Support Team who meet weekly
- A comprehensive attendance recording system.
- Homework club / Learning Hub access at lunchtime
- The rewarding of students who have full attendance record – 100% on vsware
- The maintenance of close links between the college management and the Student Council and the Parent Association (when est.)
- The identification of students who are at risk of dropping out/ poor attenders will take place from an early stage – letters will be sent at Day 10/ Day 16-18/ Day 20.
- The establishment of closer contacts between the school and the families concerned.
- Frequent meetings/Calls with the EWO for the school.

A strategy for promoting good school attendance:

The BOM is committed to helping provide a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the students.
- The school will promote development of a positive self-concept and self-worth in the students via its tutor system and its daily check and connect session.
- Support for students, who have additional educational needs (AEN), are in place in accordance with the New Continuum of Support.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the AEN needs of students as they arise/change.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised if necessary.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the Principal in the first instance, and the tutor will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance. Parental Support will be sought in this endeavour

School roles in relation to attendance

School Administrative Staff:

- To input attendance not taken at tutor time including - Late's (no note)/ Late's with a note/ onto vsware.
- To work in conjunction with the Principal to submit NEWB reports
- To administer the signing in and out of students arriving late, leaving early for appointment or leaving due to illness and input of data into vsware to this affect.
- To send the daily text regarding student unexplained absences
- To amend attendance records if a parent/guardian phones/emails to explain a student absence once the text is received.

The School Principal will:

- Report to the BOM with regard to attendance levels and set targets for attendance and participation.
- Ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendance and absence of students
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education Welfare Act 2000:
- If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
- When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the academic school year.
- If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
- When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff

Attendance secretary:

- To ensure school complies with regulations under Education Welfare Act 2000.
- To ensure that there is a standard system in school for keeping records regarding students arriving late, departing early, attendance & non-attendance.
- To ensure that teachers maintain accurate attendance & non-attendance records, and to alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences.
- To contact parents formally when the student has reached 10, 16 & 20 days absent in an academic year.
- To liaise with SEN teachers, Year Heads and Tutors in implementing strategies for supporting students at risk of high absenteeism or dropping out completely.
- To maintain contact between school and parents to develop positive strategies to encourage full attendance of the students.
- To liaise with Tutors, Year Heads, SEN dept. and school management when completing TUSLA returns. Currently upon reaching 20 days absent in an academic year.
- To continuously review strengths, gaps and challenges in school's current policy and practice.
- To monitor attendance to identify trends & patterns in the data and to assess success, or otherwise, of strategies employed.

The school Deputy principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with DES regulations
- Support students who have poor attendance or participation.
- Monitor attendance records regularly.
- Monitor and investigate unauthorised absences of students from the school or from classes.

- To provide support to students whose families are experiencing difficulties.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences are suspected/occur.
- Contact parents/guardians when a student is suspended
- Inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences withdrawal of students from the school.
- Remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress
- Contacting parents when their child has reached 10 days of cumulative absences reminding them of the twenty-day rule- *see letter in appendix*
- Contacting parents when their child has reached 15-18 days of cumulative absences reminding them of the twenty-day rule - *see letter in appendix*
- Notifying the Principal/ to contact the EWO:
 - Once a student is approaching 20 days' absence cumulatively
 - When student has been suspended for 6 consecutive days.
- Liaising with Principal/ Deputy Principal (when appointed) in preparing the annual report for the NEWB and ensuring that students absence reports are submitted on designated dates.

Year Head

- To monitor regularly the attendance records on the vsware system for their given year group to identify students deemed “*at risk*” of developing poor attendance rates/attitudes.
- To provide support to students whose families are experiencing difficulties.
- To liaise with the tutors and care team to address the difficulties surrounding a particular student's attendance
- To meet, those students for whom attendance or punctuality is a problem in order to discuss the issue and identify strategies to try and address the difficulties.
- To encourage students to full attendance/ punctuality.
- Rewarding and acknowledging good attendance through the presentation of certificates at the end of the year Awards Ceremony.
- Contacting parents/guardians when unauthorised absences occur /a student is suspended /Poor patterns of absences are developing
- To remind the students of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality
- Ensure Tutors use rewards and recognition to promote attendance in their year group
- To conduct an attendance and punctuality audit at the end of each month and to raise concerns about worrying patterns of attendance /punctuality- refer to the care team.
- Contract home to acknowledge excellent attendance using the postcard system.

Class Tutor

The class tutor will:

- To ensure that the attendance system is operating effectively and efficiently and to report any issues to the office
- Take the first roll call of the day on vsware ***accurately at 8.08am.***
- Collect any absence notes from students and sign their journals
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences and amend vsware as required. Send any information/ letters to the office for safe keeping in student files.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Monitor late's and late's with notes and contact home on the third late in one calendar month
- Inform the Principal/Deputy Principal/ Care Team of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance/punctuality of any pupil allowing the early identification of “*at risk*” students.
- Give attention/support to students whose families are experiencing difficulties
- Communication (telephone call/letter) with parents/guardians on the third consecutive day of a student's unexplained absence. If they do not get an answer, or have concerns they should then report to the Principal.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere for returning student, particularly after a prolonged absence.

- Praise students within the group on full attendance and set targets for class groups to reach.
- Notifying the Year Head/Principal when a student is **approaching** 10 days' absence.

Teachers

- To record the attendance of every class every day carefully & accurately on 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 (essential information in the event of an evacuation of the school).
- If there is a technical difficulty the class teacher will record the attendance manually on paper and input later on vsware.
- To mark students doing extra - curricular work or sport appropriately = **SCH** code
- To ensure that students who arrive late to class have signed in at the office or have a note in their journal from the teacher who kept them late.
- To ask for notes of explanation following absences from class and to inform tutors if notes are not presented to explain absence from class.
- Teachers to notify any discrepancies in class registration to the tutor via email for amendment.
- Discuss students' attendance records with parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher Meetings.
- To regularly remind students about the importance of **full and punctual attendance** for effective learning to occur in the classroom and to set example by their own punctuality
- Signed notes/ journals must be given to all students who are given jobs/ asked to leave class / go to toilet
- Acknowledge students, welcome them back and support them upon their return to school
- Carry out an initial investigation and refer to tutor /year head if the student does not have a satisfactory explanation for absence from your class.

Responsibilities of Management

- To regularly monitor attendance and participation in school
- To coordinate the identification of students who may need assistance to fully participate or attend school regularly
- To support students who are have poor attendance or participation
- To report to the BOM with regard to attendance levels and targets for attendance and participation

Responsibilities of Board of Management

- To prepare a school attendance strategy and to review a school attendance strategy
- To review the attendance and participation report when presented

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

Responsibilities of Parents/ Guardians

GCC has a positive and proactive approach towards attendance. It encourages parents/guardians to take an active role in the education of their children and to support the school's attendance strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000).

Parents/Guardians are responsible in law for ensuring that their children attend the school at which they are registered. Under the Education Welfare Act 2000 parents must inform the school if their children will be absent from school on a school day with the reason for the absence, for example, illness. In GCC the written explanation must be in the student diary on their return to school. *The NEWB strongly advises against taking children out of school to go on holiday during term - time.*

Parents/Guardians have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school or otherwise receives an education. If the NEWB considers that a parent is failing in his or her obligation, it must send the parent a School Attendance Notice warning that legal action will follow if the child does not attend school regularly. Before doing this, the school must make reasonable efforts to consult with the parents and the child. If the

parent fails to comply, he or she may be prosecuted. If the parent claims that suitable alternative education is being provided, he/she must prove this. It will be a defence for the parents to show that they have made all reasonable efforts to send the child to school - in such cases, the Health Service Executive (HSE) must be informed.

Parents can do a great deal to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should:

- Provide to the school reliable up to date contact telephone numbers and alternative emergency numbers.
- Take an active interest in their sons/daughter's school life.
- Check the school diary regularly and sign it weekly.
- Attend parents' evenings and other school events.
- Ensure that their child completes his/her homework and goes to bed at an appropriate time
- Be aware of letters from school which their child brings home.
- Ensure regular and punctual attendance of students each day, dressed in full school uniform and fit to learn.
- Make all appointments for their children outside of class time where possible.
- Ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as an illness.
- Notify the school as soon as possible – preferably on the first morning – of any absence by phone or email.
- If a child is absent, when the child returns to school s/he should give a written note to the tutor 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.
- To inform the school in advance of any planned absences from school
- To provide a written explanation for the student's absence on the first day of return to school to be handed to the Class Tutor.
- Avoid booking family holidays during the school term – exams will not be rescheduled if they are missed due to holidays. Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: "*a pupil's absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved*". The school Principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.
- Talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
- Work with the School and Education Welfare Service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Avoid collecting their child unexpectedly from school as this causes significant disruption to teaching and learning. If this collection is necessary adhere to the procedures set out in this strategy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day. **Signing in and out of school** at the school office.
- Students who leave the school during the day due to illness or appointments can either be collected by a parent/guardian at the school office or give verbal consent to a member of staff over the phone for the students to walk home. The student must then sign out in the school office. The signing out is inputted to vsware by the admin staff as Signed Out -SO, with the reason noted on vsware.
- Notify, in writing, the school if a student is to be collected / signed out early by someone not known to the school. This is essential as the daily assembly register is the fire register and therefore must be kept as accurate as possible.
- Acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- When not in school ensure all homework posted on MS Teams is completed.
- Failure to comply with any of the above procedures for leaving the School during school hours is a serious breach of the School's Code of Behaviour

Responsibilities of Student:

- Students are expected to be in school before 08:08am.
- Students have a clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Students are not permitted to leave the school grounds during the school day.
- Students are expected to be in all classes on time.
- Students are expected to attend all classes and to participate to the best of their ability.
- Take responsibility for recording their own attendance if late by signing in at the office.
- Following an absence from school, students are expected to present a written explanation to their class tutor on the day of return to class.
- Students should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Students who have a medical/dental appointment during the course of the school day, must have a note in their diary requesting permission to leave school early. They must be signed out at the main office by a parent/guardian. If the student returns to school following the appointment they must sign back in at the office.
- It is the responsibility of students who are absent from class/school for any reason to find out details of work missed by logging onto MS Teams. This applies also to students who miss class due to sporting or other extra - curricular activities.

All students are expected to comply with this policy.

If a student is suspended:

On rare occasions a student may be absent from the school due to suspension for breach of discipline. In such instances parents will be consulted in advance and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies in such instances. Where a student is suspended, they should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications. All school work must be completed and uploaded on MS Teams along with any additional work that was assigned.

School Strategies to Promote attendance**Environment**

- GCC provides a safe welcoming positive learning environment for our students.
- GCC positively rewards students with full attendance and improved attendance in school terminal awards ceremony.
- GCC focuses monthly on student attendance rewarding those with monthly full attendance with verbal praise and a postcard home.
- Encouragement of full attendance by students particularly on days prior to school breaks.

Communication

- An effective mode of communication, via student journal exists between teachers and parents. Regular contact on issues regarding homework, uniform, curriculum areas etc. Ensure these issues do not contribute to the non-attendance of pupils
- Early intervention: New parents to the school are made aware of attendance requirements and the importance of attendance in GCC.

Information

- Parents are discouraged from taking holidays during school time.
- Parents will be informed of their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the School with regard to the Education Act.
- Tutor(s)is/are asked to send names of students they identify with poor attendance- after ensuring efforts are made to help children at risk as soon as possible.

Reports

- Every parent is provided with details of their child's total attendance for the term in the student's

school report. Attendance patterns are also discussed at parent-teacher meetings.

Success Criteria

Clear outline of responsibilities of all school partners.

An effective record of attendance and trends will be kept and monitored.

Clear lines of communication will be developed between parents and the school on the issue of attendance.

Legislation

The Education Welfare Act 2000. The main provisions of this Act are as follows:

- a. Schools are required to establish and maintain a school register, showing attendance or non - attendance for each student.
- b. Every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years of education in post primary, whichever comes later.
- c. The Act established a National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The NEWB has appointed Education Welfare Officers to work with schools to encourage school attendance.
- d. The act stipulates that the school is obliged to report to the NEWB every time:
A student has been absent for 20 days or more cumulatively
A students attendance causes concern for the school
A students name is removed from the register
A student has been suspended for 6 days consecutively.

How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored

The Statement of Strategy will be monitored by the Board of Management and will be communicated with all staff regularly.

Review process and date for review

The Statement of Strategy will be reviewed when necessary or within three years. (2021 - 2022)

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

23rd September 2021

Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla