

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís,  
Nás na Rí,  
Co. Chill Dara.



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## POLICY ON ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

**School Name:** Meánscoil Iognáid Rís

**School Address:** Corban's Lane, Naas

**School Details:** Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is an all-boys Catholic voluntary secondary school under the Trusteeship of the *Edmund Rice Schools Trust*, formerly the Irish Christian Brothers. The school is named after the founder of the Order, Edmund Rice.

**School Management:** The Board of Management of Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is a statutory Board appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

### MISSION STATEMENT

Inspired by its founder, Meánscoil Iognáid Rís aims to provide Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition. The school endeavours to be a caring Christian Community which promotes to the best of its ability the personal, spiritual, physical and intellectual development of its students

### ETHOS

As an Edmund Rice School, Meánscoil Iognáid Rís seeks to promote the five key elements of an Edmund Rice School as espoused by the ERST Charter:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership in the school community
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership

**Aim:**

The aim of the School Attendance Policy is to provide an environment that encourages all students to attend regularly and punctually. It aims to:

- Work in partnership with parents and students to achieve maximum attendance of all students throughout the academic year.
- Discourage early school leavers.
- Ensure that adequate records of attendances and absences are maintained by the school as per the Education Act 2000 in respect of each individual student.
- Use available VSWare resources to support effective and efficient monitoring of attendance.
- Report on student attendance to the National Education Welfare Service, TUSLA

**Policy Content:**

In keeping with the values and principles of the Edmund Rice Charter, we want to make school and school attendance a pleasant and positive experience. We have designed a range of subjects and of social and extra-curricular activities to make our school as inclusive as possible, and to enable all students to participate fully and to benefit from their time at school.

Nevertheless, it is also important that we keep a strict control of attendance that we keep parents informed of their son's absences and that students will not be able to miss school without good reason and their parents' knowledge and consent.

Progress at school requires the best level of attendance and punctuality because both are essential for efficient class work and to optimise educational outcomes. The school's Board of Management has high expectations around school attendance and the Board communicates to parents that student's attendance in school is paramount, as there is a close correlation between student attendance and student academic achievement. It is recognised that some students and their parents need to be supported at certain stages in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.

Students must attend school daily for the full school term and must be on time for school. At present the school day is from 9.00am to 1.10pm, and from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. If students are absent or late for any reason, e.g. illness, they must notify the school as soon as possible via Permission Forms on the school App or by presenting a note of explanation in their student journal upon their return.

**The Role of the Parent/Guardian:**

Parents/guardians are obliged to fulfil their legal responsibilities and to ensure that their son attends school. They must contact the school as soon as possible whenever their son is unable to attend school - in accordance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000, Section 18, which states: 'Where a child is absent from school at which he or she is registered during part of a school day, or for a school day, or more than a school day, the parent of such a child shall, in accordance with procedures specified by the school, notify the Principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence'.

Family holidays should be taken during school holidays. Absences in excess of twenty days accumulated in the school year for students sixteen and under must be reported to the NEWS, TUSLA.

## **Monitoring Daily Attendance**

- The school encourages full attendance. This is communicated to parents/guardians clearly through the school journal, website, school app and in all meetings with parents.
- The school does not condone absences for family holidays etc., during term time and seeks to maintain the integrity of the school year. This is communicated to parents/guardians on an annual basis along with the school calendar for that year.
- Rolls are kept on the VSWare attendance management system - per student, per class, per day, both morning and afternoon. Subject teachers take a roll call in every class.
- Student attendance is monitored by: A) School Secretary, B) Subject Teacher, C) Form Teacher, D) Year Head and E) Principal & Deputies.
- Absences must be explained by a note in the School Journal, via the School App or by phone with the School Office, where this will be noted on the VSWARE absenteeism monitoring system. A written note in the journal is required if the parent/guardian has not explained the absence through the School App.
- Parents of absent students receive a text message at 10 am every morning, indicating the student's absence.
- Where the Year Head notices recurrent absenteeism, they should liaise with the student.
- Attendance patterns are discussed at weekly Year Head meetings.
- The Year Head will contact home where concerns arise regarding attendance.
- The Year Head will monitor absenteeism and consult with the Guidance Counsellor and Deputy Principal/Principal as necessary. In cases where specific students have attendance difficulties, the Year Head will engage with parents/guardians to agree acceptable targets with a view to motivating students to improve attendance.
- The importance of attendance and punctuality is regularly affirmed at assembly by Year Heads.
- Sanctions are applied by the school where necessary concerning attendance issues.
- Ongoing, serious cases of truancy are reported to Principal.
- The NEWS, TUSLA are notified when a student has been absent for 20 days or more.
- The school will maintain a strong liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer. Records of all contact will be kept by the School Authorities in a designated file.
- All official reporting will be carried out in compliance with the Guidelines set down by the NEWS, TUSLA.
- If parents/guardians are aware in advance that a student will be absent for a considerable period of time, they should contact the school.

## **Monitoring absence during the school day**

### **Punctuality:**

A student who arrives late to school must sign in at the front office before joining his class. These students will be recorded as LATE using the VSWare attendance management system. Concerns arising from persistent lateness will be brought to the attention of the Year Head by the subject teacher, the Form Teacher and dealt with appropriately.

### **Authorised Absence:**

A student must not leave the school grounds during the school day (except lunch time) without a written request from his parents/guardians and permission from the Principal/Deputy Principal or Year Head. Students must sign out at the office on leaving the school and sign back in at the office on their return. If a student is absent from class for school-based

activities, his absence will be recorded by his class teacher as SA (School Activity) on the VSWare attendance management system.

**Unauthorised Absence:**

Students who are absent for part of, or for a full school day, without parental or school permission will be registered as ABS (unexplained absence) on the VSWare system. The details of their absences will be referred to and dealt with by the Year Head. Where necessary further action will be taken and contact made with parents/guardians.

**Participation - Classroom**

Students are required to actively participate in the classroom thereby enhancing student wellbeing. Students must work consistently to their abilities, must participate actively in class and do whatever work is assigned to them. Students must have the books and equipment they need for various classes. Teachers will use various methodologies to enable student participation which may include:

- Encouragement of public speaking/reading aloud/presentations
- Development of organisational skills- Journals, uniforms, etc.
- Promoting class discussions & debate
- Use of surveys
- Negotiated learning
- Leadership development
- Group work
- Peer assessment
- Inquiry-based learning
- Project work
- Use of Team-Teaching

**Pastoral Care:**

- The school has a range of policies which support Attendance. These include the Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy, Substance Abuse Policy, Child Protection Policy and the I.T. Policy.
- The school has a Pastoral Care structure with Year Heads & Form Teachers. In-service has been provided for staff on positive behaviour, on classroom behaviour and on the role of Form Teachers and Year Heads.
- The school also has three Guidance & Counselling teachers and a Guidance Plan has been drawn up and adopted by the Board.
- In addition, the school employs from its own resources a qualified Psychotherapist.
- The school makes extensive provision for children with special educational needs.
- Incoming students are supported by Meitheal.
- There are many opportunities for student involvement within the school through the Students Council, Meitheal, and Prefects.
- A wide range of Awards are presented each year.
- Support for teaching and learning is given through school development planning and in-service.

### **School Community participation**

The school community is an important entity offering a courteous, co-operative and caring environment for all. Participation in the school community is a very important aspect of school life for teachers, students, parents/guardians, staff, school board and visitors and is promoted through involvement in school activities such as:

- Student Council
- Zambia Immersion Project
- Fundraising
- Triathlon
- Community Week in Transition Year
- Green Schools Initiative
- Global Schools Initiative
- Various thematic weeks (Catholic Schools week, Mental Health week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Maths week etc.)

Participation in the school community requires self-direction from the student and commitment from the teachers. It is an open and inclusive environment respecting the diversity of the school population in relation to religious denomination, sexual orientation and ethnicity promoting learning and personal development for all its members.

### **Extra-Curricular participation**

The participation in extra-curricular activities will enable the students to strive for and fulfil their potential. Teacher's unique interests are tapped into so that a wide variety of activities are made available to facilitate students to develop interpersonal skills, foster team spirit, improve individual sense of achievement and promote wellbeing. The school provides opportunities for the students to participate in non-academic activities that are important for a full and rounded education. Over 70 extra-curricular activities are available to students, some which include:

- Sport: Hurling, Football, Basketball, Rugby, Athletics, Soccer, Golf
- Music – collective and individual
- Computer skills
- Chess
- Young Scientist
- Debating
- Choir
- Traditional Band
- Bee-keeping

### **Review of Policy**

The school authorities will review this policy on a regular basis in order to stay up to date with current best practice and with relevant legislation in this area.

### **Approval**

This policy has been approved by Meánscoil Iognáid Rís Board of Management.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_