



Statement of Strategy for School Attendance & Participation

Name of school	Galway Educate Together Secondary School
Address	Newtownsmith, Galway, H91 DP11
Roll Number	68347V
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	Create a school climate that supports participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>GETSS aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a positive approach to attendance and punctuality • Keep accurate records of students' whereabouts at all times during school hours • Support students in taking responsibility for their own punctuality and attendance • Reduce the rate of absenteeism and encourage full attendance where possible • Detect and correct patterns of poor attendance and punctuality as early as possible
How attendance will be monitored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate attendance records are maintained by teachers and the School Administrator. VSWare is used to take attendance in the morning during Tutor Time and at the start of every class during the school day. • Late arrivals to school and to class are documented accurately • Parents/Guardians use the VSWare app to log details of absences and partial absences and view student attendance records • The school administrator monitors the use of the app and amends VSWare to reflect changes to daily attendance due to latecomers or students signing out, as well as following up with a text message in cases of unexplained lates and absences. • Tutors are responsible for identifying emerging patterns of poor attendance and punctuality • At a weekly Student Support Team meeting, attendance is analysed and students in need of supports are prioritised. The School endeavours to put timely interventions in place to support student attendance, where necessary.
Communication around attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is clear and consistent communication between the School and parents/guardians around attendance and punctuality. The School operates effective communication systems by phone, text message and email. In person meetings, where necessary, provide additional support. • If a parent/guardian is experiencing difficulty in ensuring that their child attends school, we suggest that they consult the Tusla website (https://www.tusla.ie/services/) where they will find useful suggestions for supporting attendance at school
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Target-setting and Targets 2. Whole-School Approach (including promoting good attendance and 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Target-setting and Targets</u> Our attendance target is to match the national average for school attendance and absenteeism rates. The current absenteeism rate (2022) is approximately 7% nationally. The daily absenteeism in GETSS is c.13%. We aim to reduce this figure through awareness raising of the importance of regular attendance, ongoing commitment to quality teaching, learning, enrichment of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, improved communication and awareness raising with parents, and improved early intervention strategies with students. 2. <u>Whole-school Approach</u>

responding to poor attendance)

GETSS implements a tiered system of support for students, in line with the Tusla model (see figure a). The system is designed to support all, some and few students with a variety of strategies and interventions to help maximise student attendance and participation in school life.

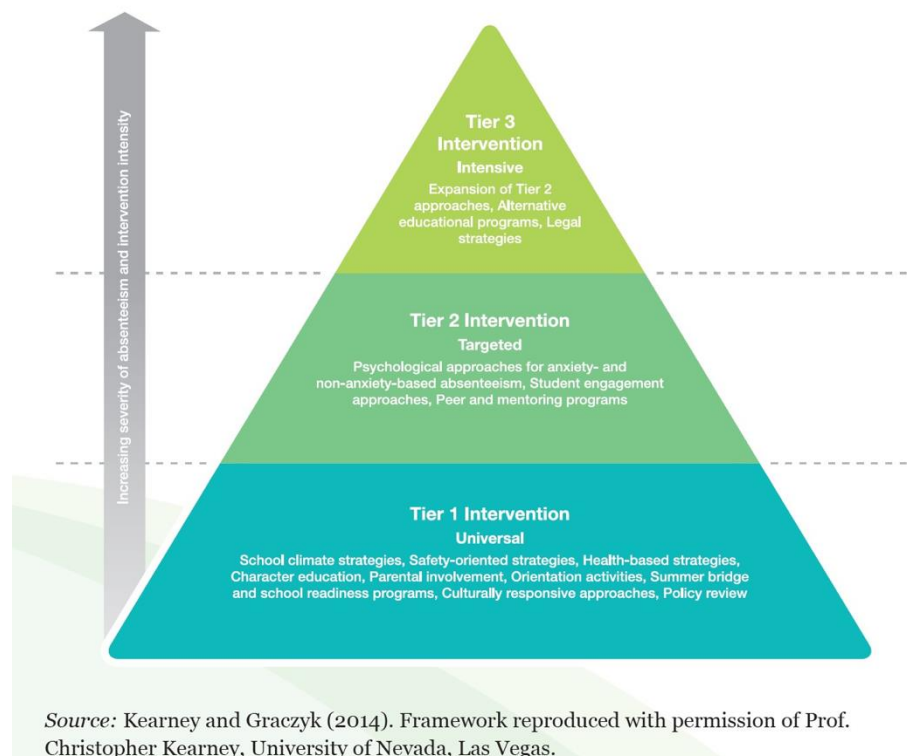


Figure a: Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework
(Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools, Tusla – Child and Family Agency, 2015)

Tier 1: Whole-School Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for All Students

To promote positive and optimum attendance, punctuality and participation among all students GETSS prioritises the following:

- The cultivation of a positive, welcoming and supportive school climate, where students experience inclusion, respect and belonging
- Quality teaching and learning, with a focus on active participation and collaboration
- Student wellbeing, through our wellbeing suite of subjects and initiatives that support students in their social, emotional and personal development, including Behaviour for Learning, Guidance Counsellor supports, SEN supports, student mentoring programmes, Study Skills, Mental Health Week, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Stand-Up Week, etc.
- Student safety, through our Anti-Bullying Policy, Code of Positive Behaviour, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, and Acceptable Use Policies
- Using Restorative Practice to:
 - build positive staff-student relationships and student friendships
 - deal with conflict and disagreement in a healthy way focuses on connection and healing
 - inform how we think, engage, speak, listen, and approach situations, helping us to learn how to ask, listen and share in a way that honours a positive learning environment for students and teachers
 - engage in positive and restorative dialogue with students and parents/guardians around matters relating to attendance and punctuality
- Provision of a broad and balanced curriculum, offering a wide range of subject choice to suit the various aptitudes, skills and preferences of students, to foster engagement in learning
- Provision of a varied co-curricular and extra-curricular programme, designed to encourage the full participation of students in school life school

- Staff professional development, to ensure that best practices are maintained by teachers and Student Support Assistants
- Clear and regular communication to students, parents and guardians on the importance of regular attendance, the incremental nature of the learning process, and the negative impact of poor attendance on student learning and student wellbeing
- Tutor support in relation to student attendance and punctuality, as well as in relation to learning and positive participation, including whole-class discussion and circles which focus on attendance and punctuality
- Maintenance of accurate attendance records, which parents/guardians can easily access using the school's MIS.
- A process of School Self-Evaluation and encouraging review and reflection of practices, and a process of continuous improvement

Tier 2: Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for Some Students

- Class teachers
 - engage in restorative dialogue with individual students around attendance and punctuality
 - communicate concerns around student participation and attendance, via email, or in person at Parent-Teacher-Student Meetings
- The School Administrator
 - communicates non-attendance for Tutor Time or morning classes to parents/guardians via SMS
 - communicates details of late arrivals to parents/guardians via SMS
- Tutors
 - use VSware attendance data to identify cases in which attendance and/or punctuality has become a concern
 - engage in restorative dialogues with students to ascertain potential causes for poor attendance/punctuality
 - organise attendance meetings with students to discuss potential solutions and set targets
 - engage in restorative dialogue with parents/guardians to flag concerns and discuss solutions and communicate targets
 - refer ongoing attendance concerns to the Student Support Team
 - acknowledge and affirm improved patterns of attendance/punctuality with students and with parents/guardians
- Student Support Team
 - discusses appropriate interventions
 - engages appropriate external supports
- Deputy Principal/Principal
 - communicates attendance/punctuality concerns to parents/guardians via email following 10 days' absenteeism and 15 days' absenteeism
 - invites students and parents/guardians in for an attendance meeting to ascertain potential causes for poor attendance/punctuality, discuss potential solutions and set targets
 - informs parents/guardians of mandatory referrals to Tusla following 20 days' absenteeism
 - attend clinics with the Education Welfare Office, where necessary

Tier 3: Strategies for Promoting Attendance and Participation for a Few Students

These include:

- Prompt identification of students who are at risk of early school-leaving through regular monitoring of VSware attendance records by Tutors
- Establishment of closer contacts between the school and the families concerned
- Organisation of Attendance Support Meetings attended by the student, parent/guardians(s) and Principal and/or Deputy Principal and/or other appropriate staff member, with a view to further target setting
- Seeking advice from the Educational Welfare Service (EWS)/Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
- Reporting absences in excess of 20 days to Tusla, as per the Education Welfare Act
- Seeking advice from the school's NEPS psychologist, in cases of school refusal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liaising with CAMHS and seeking professional advice of CAMHS Clinicians, where appropriate ● Possibilities for tailoring and differentiating curriculum offerings to the needs of individuals (e.g. the Level 2 Learning Programme) ● A reduction in timetable if absenteeism is related to school refusal or stress (Such a decision is only taken in conjunction with the intervention of the NEPS psychologist and in consultation with the EWO)
School roles in relation to attendance	<p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take a roll call in every class and enter accurate roll calls on VSware ● Record late arrivals in the morning accurately on VSware, including a timestamp ● Record late arrivals to class during the day as a demerit (repeated lates during the day will be dealt with in line with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour). ● Create a warm welcoming atmosphere in class for returning students ● Engage in RP conversations about absenteeism and punctuality with students, where necessary ● Discuss students' attendance records with parents/guardians at PTSMs ● Outline the importance of regular attendance and ensure that there is an understanding of the links between academic achievement and regular attendance. ● When organising games or events that result in student being absent from lessons, ensure accurate records are maintained by updating VSware with 'SA' (School Activity). <p>Tutors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a welcoming atmosphere for students under their care ● Conduct a morning roll call during Tutor Time and enter accurate data onto VSware ● Set targets for groups to reach around attendance/punctuality ● Monitor emerging patterns of poor attendance by reviewing students' attendance and punctuality on VSware ● Engage in positive and restorative dialogue about with students about attendance and punctuality ● Call home when there is no contact from home regarding absences after 3 days ● Contact home via email (template available), copying the DP, when there are 5+ <i>unexplained</i> absences with no or insufficient explanations, and set up Attendance Support Meeting with student to establish causes and set attendance targets ● Refer 10+ absences (of any kind) to the DP ● Refer 15+ absences (of any kind) to the DP ● Liaise with the SENCO on matters relating to attendance records of students on the SEN Register ● Liaise with the Special Class Tutor on matters relating to attendance records of students enrolled in the Special Class ● Liaise with the Punctuality Coordinator around morning lates and associated interventions <p>School Administrator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amend VSware to reflect changes to daily attendance due to latecomers, who, if they arrive at school after 8.30am, must report to the office before going to class ● Ensure that when a student is withdrawn from the school, a parent/guardian has authorised same ● Ensure students sign in and out. Update VSware with this detail, including timestamps ● Send a notification to parent/guardian in the case of an 'unexplained' absence ● Send a notification to parent/guardian in the case of an 'unexplained' late arrival to school ● Monitor VSware attendance data and ensure that attendance is logged for each lesson <p>Punctuality Coordinator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● monitor morning lates by running a weekly report ● intervene where necessary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3+ lates = RP conversation, discussing causes and setting targets ○ 5+ lates = SMS home seeking support from parent(s)/guardian(s)

- Further lates = 'Late Lunch (written RP reflection and collaborative target setting)
- Further lates = parent(s)/guardian(s) invited in to discuss punctuality supports with Punctuality Coordinator/Deputy Principal/Principal

Student Support Team

- Discuss and implement suitable interventions for students who have been identified as having poor attendance
- Engage outside agencies and supports, as appropriate

Deputy Principal/Principal

- Encourage regular attendance by students
- Remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress
- Inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences of students from the School
- Ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students
- Support teachers and Tutors in their roles in supporting student attendance and participation
- Meet weekly as members of the Student Support Team to discuss and review supports for students regarding attendance, participation and punctuality
- Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy
- Contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected.
- Send standard absence emails to parents/guardians where frequent absences occur (10+, 15+ and 20+ days absent).
- Discuss and implement suitable interventions for students who have been identified as having poor attendance
- Organise Attendance Clinics with parents/guardians and students to discuss absenteeism, identify causes, discuss solutions and set attendance targets
- Engage with TUSLA's Educational Welfare Service as appropriate by doing the following:
 - making a formal referral to TUSLA if a student is absent on more than 20 occasions. A referral will be accompanied by a standard email to parents regarding notification to TUSLA.
 - submitting the Annual Attendance Report (AAR) to Tusla, as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
 - arranging Attendance Clinics with the EWO
- Engage with other relevant support services such as CAMHS and NEPS as appropriate

Parents/Guardians

- Ensure that students regularly attend and arrives at school on time
- Set high standards in relation to attendance and punctuality
- Notify the school of absences using the VShare app, before the absence if possible, or otherwise immediately afterwards
- Avoid taking students out of class unless there is a very serious reason
- Avoid taking students on holidays during term time
- Notify the school as soon as possible if the student is suffering from a contagious/infectious illness
- Monitor student attendance data on the VShare app
- Acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the School in relation to attendance issues

Students

- Ensure regular attendance and avoid unwarranted absences
- Be on time in the morning and for each lesson
- Adhere to the procedures set out for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day, e.g. sign-in/sign-out system
- Talk to the Tutor if having trouble with attendance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to parents/guardian or Tutor if you are having trouble with attendance <p>Board of Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to Tusla • Ratify and support the school's Attendance Strategy and Code of Positive Behaviour regularly • Request and review attendance statistics via the Principal's Report • Provide funding for attendance initiatives, where necessary • Comply with all circulars and directives from the Department of Education and Tusla • Provide an annual report on attendance (as per section 21(a)(b) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to Tusla's EWO service and the Parents' Council, prepared collaboratively by the Deputy Principal and the Principal.
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School's Attendance Strategy has been developed in consultation with parents/guardians, students and staff. • The school regularly engages with parents/guardians and students in the promotion of good school attendance and participation practices • The School works with outside agencies, including the EWS, NEPS and CAMHS to support student attendance
Review process and date for review	Class Tutors, the Student Support Team, School Management and the School Administrator will review the process annually. Next review: May 2025.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	Ratified by the Board of Management at a Board meeting on June 4 th , 2024
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	Due to be submitted to Tusla in June 2024.

Ratified by the Board of Management of Galway Educate Together Secondary School at a Board Meeting held on June 4th, 2024.

Signed: 

Date: 4th June, 2024

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed: 

Date: 4th June, 2024

Principal