

St Killian's College**Ref no: 323 0310**

An example of building an effective culture which sets high expectations about attainment and attendance ("if you are in school you will be taught, if you are taught you will learn, and if you learn you will achieve")

Please note that a school PowerPoint is linked to this case study and is available on www.etini.gov.uk Case Studies

Context:

St Killian's College is an amalgamated college in rural East Antrim and the Glens. After a year and a half year on two sites 19 miles apart, the school came together on one site in September 2011. It was noted that attendance in 2011-12 was two percentage points below the NI average and that there was a clear link between some students' attendance and their poorer outcomes.

Intervention:

Attendance became a priority in the school development plan from 2013 and a whole school action plan was created. The college set out its belief that good attendance and punctuality is central to the learning process and essential for a child to succeed. The action plan covers the following strategies:

- A whole-staff approach to dealing with attendance and an understanding that there is a very clear correlation between achievement and attendance. This is demonstrated through the analysis of results at both 'A' level and GCSE where top achievement and attendance are linked. See school Powerpoint.
- Following SIMS training the college moved to SIMS am/pm registers for 2013/14, followed up by the full use of SIMS Lesson Monitor. This helped both staff and students to be aware of their attendance and punctuality at school and greatly aided attendance monitoring and punctuality across the college.
- Expectations were raised to ensure that all are focused on the need for good attendance by developing a common understanding of what "95% attendance" equals 9 days of absence over the year, and why that is only satisfactory. A target of 97% was set as a whole school target which was communicated to pupils, parents and staff at every opportunity, including induction days at the beginning of September for all year groups, as well as at specific induction events for Year 8, 11 and 13.
- An attendance flyer is sent home at the start of every year to all students. At each parent/teacher meeting there is a flyer highlighting the importance of good attendance, and why, which is personalised to that student's attendance to date. If the parents did not turn up then it is sent home.
- Staff training highlights all the school's expectations and the roles of all staff in driving attendance up.
- There is an emphasis on attendance at all year team meetings with form teachers and year heads. Senior leaders of each key stage emphasise the importance of attendance to all students at induction days at the beginning of the school year.

- As part of the induction for year 8, 11 and 13, the parents were informed of the importance of attendance and their role in ensuring that their daughter/son should be attending school to the maximum possible and that there should not be any condoned absences. Form teachers, year heads senior team leaders have conversations with students about their attendance as necessary.
- **A school mantra has been developed:** “**if you are in school you will be taught if you are taught you will learn and if you learn you will achieve**”.
- The school-based care team has a standing item on attendance. Students who are deemed *school refusers* or who have difficulties preventing them from coming to school are discussed with the EWO who works closely with senior leaders to ensure personal strategies are put in place for students at risk. Standard letters are sent to parents if attendance falls to 90%. Between 90% and 85% a warning letter explains the procedures and below 85% a letter explains that the EWO will be visiting the parents.
- To celebrate attendance, the college developed rewards and recognitions for good attenders or who had improved. Celebration of attendance at both Prize Night and Junior Prize afternoon raises awareness of the link between academic success and attendance.
- Letters of congratulations are sent home at the mid-term in February to those students who have sustained 100% attendance to that point and the names of the students are placed on the Plasma screens around the school to promote awareness of attendance.

Impact:

- As an upshot of detailed reporting more parents report that they have conversations with their children about attendance; a number contacted the college to check the attendance report was accurate. This helped the college and students to ensure that attendance records were accurate which kept attendance high on everyone's agenda.
- Every half term the year heads receive the % attendance set against the other year group attendance. Competition emerged within year groups regarding their percentage attendance.
- The 2012 attendance of **91%** rose to **95% in 2014**. At post-16 students and parents are much more aware of the importance of good attendance and the introduction of Lesson Monitor has raised the awareness of where students are and that a roll is taken in each class.

The school keeps the effectiveness of the action plan under review and the following additions have recently been put in place:

- A reviewed attendance policy was sent to staff, governors, students and parents for feedback.
- An alert system informs staff that they have not taken the class roll.

- A parental guide provides further information on attendance.
- Various media forms are used to celebrate and promote good attendance.
- To sustain good habits among students parents and staff the importance of good attendance is reinforced, absences without notes is challenge and attendance is maintained on departmental and pastoral agendas.