

Attendance Policy



Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- the role of the NEWB
- levels of disadvantage
- changing attitudes to education

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- Identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have had an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the returns are made to the NEWB through the school office. The principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhair Tinreamh.

It is the responsibility of the principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.20am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The class teacher will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the National Education Welfare Board.

Recording, Reporting and Monitoring Attendance

- Class teachers are required to call and mark the DES Electronic Roll Book (Aladdin system) on a daily basis
- An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system. At the end of each month a hard copy of that month's Leabhar Tinrimh is printed and signed by the principal and filed.
- The school secretary records the annual attendance of each individual pupil on the Primary Online Database (POD), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, and Religion)

Keeping records of Absences

- The roll is taken each morning at 9.40 a.m. Any pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day. If a child arrives at school late, they can be marked present, but late. Class teachers are requested to record how many minutes the child is late.
- Parents will be informed of their responsibilities in relation to school attendance, and will be requested to provide written explanations for all absences from school, regardless of the length or nature of the absence.

- For pupils in 1st to 6th class the main means of communication between home and school is the School Homework Journal. There is a specific section in the journal, Explanation of Absence, which parents are asked to use.
- For pupils in Junior and Senior Infants parents are requested to write, sign and date a note explaining their child's absence.
- Individual notes and other written communication around attendance, such as Medical Certificates and other explanations for student absences should be filed. These will be retained for possible inspection by the National Educational Welfare Board.
- When a child is marked absent on Aladdin, teachers should ensure that they enter the reasons for the absence in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla - Child and Family Agency.
- Communication will be made with parents', drawing their attention to poor attendance, after 15 and 20 days absence.
- If a child misses school and a written explanation is not sent in, the class teacher must request this from the pupil or parent, depending on the class which the pupil is in. Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.
- The school must inform the Educational Welfare Service (TUSLA) in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- rewarding good attendance with certificates each term
- *Attendance Stars* – every day a class has full attendance that class receives a dot on their attendance star. The class with the most dots at the end of the month receives a class certificate and 10 minutes extra play time/golden time (up to the discretion of the class teacher)

National Education Welfare Board

The National Education Welfare Board is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended

- A child has missed more than 20 days.

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Boalavogue National School endeavours to create a warm, safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians.

- Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community.
- The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.
- Our school's code of behaviour takes a positive approach to fostering good behaviour.
- We ask parents to value every minute that the children spend at school and therefore make sure that the children are present for the assembly bell at 9.20am. Late arrivals are recorded on Aladdin by the class teachers. In the same way we ask parents not to let the children off early, unless for a specific appointment/reason. A note must be provided also and the pupils must be signed out at reception. This enables staff to keep a record of such absences and make parents aware of how much time is being missed. Each child/parent signs an absence log if they leave early.
- Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the National Education Welfare Board.
- New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.
- Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. It is hoped that this approach 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.
- See "promoting attendance"

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that ‘the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day’.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the National Education Welfare Service (TUSLA) if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the National Education Welfare Service (TUSLA) may serve a ‘School Attendance Notice’ on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school’s newsletter.

Transfer to Another School

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the principal of a child’s current school must notify the principal of the child’s previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the principal of the pupil’s new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil’s former school and of such matters relating to the child’s educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from *Boolavogue N.S* to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into *Boolavogue N.S* confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from *Boolavogue N.S* to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment. This includes transfer of information using the pupil passport.
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with Parents

The school circulated a link to the NEWB information booklet *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* to all parents in September 2018. The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated at least once a year. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school
- working with the school and NEWB to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
- discussing planned absences with the school
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework
- encouraging them to participate in school activities
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

End of Year Procedures

At the end of the school year, the attendance of each pupil will be reported to parents/guardians on their child's report card.

Evaluation

The success of any attendance policy is measured through:

- improved attendance levels as measured through roll records on Aladdin and statistical returns
- happy confident well adjusted children
- positive parental feedback
- teacher vigilance

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act
Empty Desks - CDU Mary Immaculate

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in *BooLavogue National School* since 2013 and was updated in September 2018. It will be reviewed again in September 2020.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)

_____ (Principal)

Date: _____

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