



Ballygarvan NS. Attendance Policy

1. Rationale

Ballygarvan NS bases its School Attendance Policy on the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

While there is a very strong tradition of good attendance in Ballygarvan NS we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular, punctual attendance at school. Quite simply, children cannot learn if they are not in school.

The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

2. Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Ballygarvan NS endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

3. Aims

This policy aims to:

- a) Outline Strategies to improve attendance.
- b) Encourage regular punctual attendance at school.
- c) Identify students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- d) Ensure that appropriate contact will take place between the school and the parents/guardian of these children.
- e) To provide for legislation concerning school attendance, in particular the Education Welfare Act.

The success of this policy will be assessed against the above aims.

The Principal and Staff Teachers, following consultation with the parents, together with the BOM, will be responsible for the implementation of this Policy.

It will be the responsibility of the Principal Teacher to co-ordinate a review of this Policy

School Attendance Policy

1. Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded electronically on the Aladdin computer based system on a daily basis.

Class attendance data is recorded automatically, by the same system thus replacing the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). **A monthly hard copy is printed, signed by the Principal and stored in the Principal's office.**

The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Aladdin system and the Primary Online Database, together with information provided in enrolment forms. (This information is password protected in line with the Data Protection Act and the school's Data Protection Policy).



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Parents/guardians are informed in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer 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.

Principal Ms. Mairéad Coakley makes returns to TUSLA.

The Principal notes children who are persistently late/regularly have unexplained absence and are persistently leaving early and contacts parents in order to ascertain reason for attendance issues and encourage better attendance. (Teachers can note time pupils arrive in Aladdin System so a record of late arrivals is available.)

2. Strategies.

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- Rewards in accordance with the Code of Behaviour: the Principal at the end of each school term issues certificates for 95% Attendance at the monthly School Assembly in front of the entire student and staff body. Small awards, (eg homework passes), given out in line with our Behaviour Policy
- Pupils whose attendance or punctuality improves are acknowledged in the Pupil of the Week Award or Principal's Award programmes.
- Pupils with 100% attendance for a school year are given certificates at the beginning of the next school term. Prizes are also awarded to those with more than 2 years 100% attendance.
- As stated in the Code of Behaviour parents are expected to notify the teacher of the reason for a child's absence in school journal. The teacher will record the reason for the absence. All class teachers record a pupil's absence, category of absence and reason – if any – on the school's on-line Administration software Aladdin. The Roll is called in all classes between 10.00 and 10.10am daily. Any pupils who arrive after Roll Call are marked absent. Pupils who arrive late before roll call are recorded as late.
- Parents are expected to phone Ballygarvan NS notifying the Secretary of the reason for a pupil's absence, the morning of the pupil's absence and provide a written note of explanation on return to school. All notes are placed in a plastic folder by class teacher. Notes written in Homework journals are cut out.
- Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. Late arrivals and early departures are also recorded on the "sign out sheet at the school's reception. Parents who pick up their children during the school day must "sign the child out" at reception. These "sign out" sheets are scanned and saved on a monthly basis.
- Pupils whose non-attendance/regular lateness is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.



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- Communication:
 - ✓ The school has developed a good relationship with the Education Welfare officer and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.
 - ✓ 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 Importance of good attendance/punctuality is regularly communicated to the school community through assemblies, PA meetings, BOM meetings and Newsletters.
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in May and a reminder is published in September. It is also made available on the school's website. 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.

- Identification of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems. These are categorised as follows;
 - a) Irregular Absentee: 5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
 - b) Seriously Irregular Absentee: 10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
 - c) Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.

- Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children.
 - a) For Irregular Absentees the class teacher will contact parents by phone to discuss the problem.
 - b) For Seriously Irregular Absentees the Principal will meet with parents with a view to ameliorating the situation.
 - c) For Chronic Absentees the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify parents of this by letter.

3. Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

The principal will write to parents in relation to non-attendance as well as employing the strategies outlined above.

The following situations will necessitate a letter from the principal:

- Pupils who exceed 12 days' absence after the first term and the absence is not related to prolonged illness or another acceptable excuse.
- If attendance does not improve a letter will be sent to parents/ guardians requesting a meeting with school principal.
- If a pupil exceeds 20 days a further letter will be sent to parents/ guardians informing them that the Education Welfare Officer will now be contacted.



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- A referral form to TUSLA will now be completed and forwarded to our local TUSLA officer.
- In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) 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 EWB two 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.
- Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer into Ballygarvan NS will be sought directly from the previous school.

4. 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 – with parental consent- 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.

The principal maybe consulted by the staff from Secondary schools regarding attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to secondary schools.

5. Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Annual attendance rates of at least 96%. It was 95% in 2016-17.
- A reduction in the number of pupils who miss 20 days or more to 20 or less. (It was 21 in 2016-17)
- Board of Management, Staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.



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Consultation:

This policy was developed in consultation with the post holders in the school, specifically Assistant Principal Ms. Nan Wyndham.

The strategies were discussed with the Student Council members and their suggestions noted and integrated into the final draft.

It was given to the Parents Association on 19/10/17 in draft form and their suggestions were integrated into the final draft.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management of Ballygarvan NS on 15/11/17

Signed: *Liam O' Donovan*
Chairperson BOM

Date: 15/11/17

Review date: November 2018