

Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín's Attendance Policy

Attendance Strategies

Guidelines from NEWB are in preparation.

Schools may wish to revisit this topic when those guidelines are available to schools

Notice: This resource is intended to assist schools in devising their own strategies on attendance. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, schools are advised to consult up to date circulars, recent legislation or guidelines from relevant agencies if they have specific queries regarding this topic.

(A) Questions a school community might consider when addressing this area:

- What is the purpose of this statement? Is it...
 - To foster an appreciation of learning among students in the school
 - To encourage regular attendance at school.
 - Other...
- How will it relate to the characteristic spirit/ethos of the school?
e.g. Nurture each child to develop his/her potential in a caring environment where the talents of each child are valued.
- Who should be involved in drawing up this statement and how will their input be managed?

It should be a collaborative exercise between teachers, parents, Board of Management, Education Welfare Officer and pupils or others as appropriate. Consider options as to how consultation can best be achieved in the context of your school e.g. Can a small representative group be delegated to formulate a draft for consideration and comment by other partners and subsequently present the draft to Board of Management for ratification? (Please note final authority rests with the Board in accepting or rejecting such amendments)

Who will be responsible for the implementation and on-going monitoring of the statement?

- *Principal
- *Post holder
- *Coordinator
- *Teachers
- *Parents
- *Pupils
- *EWO
- *others

Title

Attendance Strategy Statement

Introductory Statement

A draft of this policy was put together on our Staff Planning Day, which was held on 16/3/09. It was then discussed at both Parents' Committee level and Board of Management level, before ratification. With regard to the timeframe of the original policy, this policy was reviewed, in consultation with Board, Staff and Parents, through the Parents' Committee in September 2013.

The policy was reviewed in October 2016, in consultation with staff, Board and Parents' Committee.

Rationale

Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín decided to devise its attendance at this time because

- It is a priority area identified by the staff
- We do not have our present practice noted in policy form
- It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

We wish, through this policy to instil life-long values in our students regarding the importance of education and attendance at school. Through effective implementation of this policy, we wish that every child will, through regular attendance at school be able to achieve their potential. We also hope to ensure that there is a cohesive, whole-school approach available to teachers when dealing with lack of attendance and also that it will help to instil the importance of attendance and a sense of understanding and cooperation with parents.

Aims

The school ideally hopes to achieve the following by introducing this statement.

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of school leaving early
- To promote positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines form TUSLA

Guidelines (content of statement)

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

- We define non-attendance as not attending school. *(a parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at "a national school or other suitable school" on each day that the school is open for instruction)*
- We record non-attendance in the Roll Book and also in the data base". A note will be sent periodically, through the Newsletter that a note of explanation is required every time a student is absent. *(Procedure will be communicated to parents, act obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the principal of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence" Notes or record of non attendance duly dated need to be kept) Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín will report certain non attendance matters to NEWB, in keeping with the Education Welfare Act. (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance)*
- Non-attendance of pupils and the effects that non-attendance has on pupil learning will be communicated to parents at the meeting at the beginning of the year (yearly meeting held for new parents in September), at parent-teacher meetings and also through the Newsletter.
- The Education Welfare Act requires a parent to notify the school when a child is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day in the manner prescribed by the school Whereby a child leaves school early, he/she must be signed out at the office.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance ...

- Those students who arrive late, will have to sign in in the "Leabhar Poncaíochta" in the office.
- In the case of those who regularly arrive late, the class teacher will speak to parents to inform them of the negative influence this is having on their education eg losing out on certain sections of education eg literacy, learning support etc. If this continues, the parents will be called to a meeting with the principal.
- We view remaining until the end of day as an integral part of attendance and punctuality too. If a child must be collected early, he/she must be signed out at the office and then a green card must be given to teacher before he/she may leave class. Those who are collected regularly early will also be monitored.
- Early intervention: We will target new parents at the meetings in September to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance
- Rewards: Certificates will be awarded at the end of year to recognise those who have not missed any school. Those who have made a good improvement will also be recognised here
- Reports: the total amount of days missed in a year is reported to parents in the end of year reports. If there is a concern in relation to attendance, this will be addressed at parent-teacher meetings.
- Parents: The school informs parents of both their and our duties under the Education Welfare Act. "Don't Let Your Child Miss Out" (leaflet for parents NEWB, 2004) will be given out at meeting in September
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- **Strategies in event of non-attendance**
(The school will inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register)
 - Parents must inform the school in writing/ by phone of child's absence from school and of reason.
 - This is then recorded by teacher in folder in class.
 - If no reason is offered to school on return of child, a slip will issue from the class teacher, affording another opportunity to explain. If the slip is not returned, the absence will be entered as unexplained.
 - After 10 days of absences, the teacher will send home a slip to inform parents that 10 days have been missed. This will be repeated after 15 days.

- After 15 days of unexplained absenteeism, the school principal shall speak to parents to inform them of amount of days. Teacher's discretion can be used here in cases of a mixture of explained and unexplained absences.
- After 20 days(both explained and unexplained), a letter will issue from principal informing parents that the NEWB has been informed , as in accordance to the Welfare Act (a copy of this letter will be stored on the child's file and in the Attendance Folder in the office)
- After 25 days a meeting will be held with principal and the seriousness of the situation will be explained, and it will also be explained that if the situation does not improve, the relevant authorities will be informed eg Tusla/Social Workers. The effect of this non-attendance will be explained clearly to parents at this meeting
- Records will be kept of all this communication –both informal and formal.
- Parents obligations under the Act will be explained through the newsletter and they will also be referred to during both formal and informal talks held by teacher/principal and parents. Parents will be reminded also of the importance of instilling in their children the practice of attending school regularly and punctually.
- Standardised reporting will take place to theTusla at regular intervals throughout the year, however, the EWO may be contacted outside of these reportings when worries/issues/concerns are raised over particular children.
- Other relevant organisations may be contacted as needed (both charitable and state)
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- Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school
A principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education. The principal shall adhere to the school's code of discipline in relation to removal as a result of expulsion.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from a school the principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating child's record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.
(The principal of the current school must notify the principal of the child's last school attended that the child is now registered in their school "as soon as may be". 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.

Annual Report

- The board will inform the Education Welfare Officer of the level of attendance at the school for each school year at the end of the school year.

Success Criteria

- The class teacher has particular responsibility to ensure that he/she is adhering to school policy, and reports as should to principal
- The principal shall ensure that reporting to relevant bodies eg Tusla is being carried out, and, where necessary organise meetings with parents.

- Parents have a duty to report absences to school and to ensure that their children attend school regularly
- Students have a duty to attend school regularly

Roles and Responsibility

- Principal – reporting, organising meetings, inform new parents about school policy
- Class teacher – meetings with parents, monitor students attendance, report to principal where necessary
- Parents – see above
- Pupils – see above
- Education Welfare Officer – drawn from Welfare Act

Implementation Date

This policy will come into place from 1/6/09. It was reviewed in September 2013 and then implemented from November 2013.

This was reviewed in October 2016 and implemented from November.

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2020, or before if needed.

Ratification & Communication

The Board of Management officially ratified this statement at a Board of Management Meeting on 27/4/09. It will then be circulated to all parents

This policy was reviewed and the revisions were ratified at the Board Meeting on 25/11/2013. These revisions will be circulated to parents.

This was reviewed and ratified at Board Meeting on 24/10/16.

Chairperson's Signature: _____

Date: _____

REFERENCE (ATTENDANCE)

i Solas (March 2001)

Schools will be required to prepare and submit to the Education Welfare Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt to foster an appreciation of learning among the pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school. Such strategies would include rewarding pupils with good attendance records and identifying at an early stage pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.

Further guidelines are expected from the Education Welfare Board (when established).

i Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

18.—Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she is registered during part of a school day, or for a school day or more school. than a school day, the parent of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the code of behaviour prepared by the school under *section 23*, notify the principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

20.—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after the commencement of this section, cause to be established and maintained a register of all students attending that school.

(2) The principal of a recognised school shall, on the day on which the child first attends that school, enter the child's name, the date of his or her first so attending and such other particulars as may be prescribed by the Minister, in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school, and the child concerned shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed, as on and from that date, to be registered in that school.

(3) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after entering in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school the name of a child who is registered in another recognised school, so inform by notification in writing the principal of the second-mentioned school.

(4) The principal of the second-mentioned school referred to in *subsection (3)* shall, on receipt of a notification under that subsection, remove the name of the child concerned from the register maintained under this section in respect of the said second-mentioned school except where the child continues to receive part of his or her education at that school.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on receiving a notification under *subsection (3)* in relation to a child, notify the principal of the school first-mentioned in that subsection of—

(a) any problems relating to school attendance that the child concerned had while attending the second-mentioned school referred to therein, and

(b) such other matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.

(6) The principal of a recognised school shall not remove a child's name from the register other than—

(a) in accordance with *subsection (4)*, or

(b) where he or she has received a notification in writing from the Board that the child concerned is registered in the register maintained under *section 14*.

21.—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall cause to be maintained in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school.

(2) A record maintained under *subsection (1)* shall specify the following, that is to say:

(a) where a student attends at the school concerned on a school day, the fact of his or her attendance, or

(b) where a student fails to so attend, the fact of his or her failure and the reasons for such failure.

(3) A record to which this section applies shall be maintained at the recognised school concerned and shall be in such form as may be specified by the Board.

(4) Where—

(a) a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days,

(b) the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20,

(c) a student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register referred to in *section 20* by the principal of the school concerned, or

(d) a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly,

the principal of the school concerned shall forthwith so inform, by notice in writing, an educational welfare officer.

(5) On receiving a notice under *subsection (4)*, an educational welfare officer shall—

(a) consult with the student concerned, his or her parents, the principal and such other persons as he or she considers appropriate, and

(b) make all reasonable efforts to ensure that provision is made for the continued education of the child and his or her full participation in school.

(6) The board of management of a recognised school shall, not later than 6 weeks after the end of each school year, submit a report to—

(a) the educational welfare officer who has been assigned functions under this Act in relation to that school, and

(b) the parents' association of the recognised school concerned established under section 26 of the Act of 1998 (where so established), on the levels of attendance at that school during the immediately preceding school year.

(7) A report under *subsection (6)* shall be in such form and comply with such requirements as may be determined by the Board.

(8) An educational welfare officer may during any school day enter a recognised school and inspect the register maintained at that school under *section 20* or a record to which this section applies, and take copies of extracts from such register or record.

(9) For the purposes of this section a student shall be deemed not to be absent from school where any period of absence is authorised by the principal and relates to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved.

22.—(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students (hereafter in this section referred to as a “statement of strategy”).

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of *subsection (1)*, a statement of strategy shall provide for—

(a) the rewarding of students who have good school attendance records;

(b) the identification at an early stage of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems;

(c) the establishment of closer contacts between the school concerned and the families of students to which *paragraph (b)* applies;

(d) the fostering, promoting and establishing of contacts by the school with—

(i) other schools that provide primary or post-primary education,

(ii) bodies engaged in the provision of youth work programmes or services related thereto, or engaged in the organising of sporting or cultural activities, and

(iii) such other bodies within the area in which the school concerned is situated as the board of management considers appropriate;

(e) in so far as is practicable, the development, following consultation with the bodies referred to in *paragraph (d)*, of programmes of activities designed to encourage the full participation of students in the life of the school;

(f) in so far as is practicable, the coordination with other schools of programmes aimed at promoting good behaviour among students and encouraging regular attendance at school by students, and the exchanging of information relating to matters of behaviour and school attendance with such schools;

(g) the identification of—

(i) aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of certain students, and

(ii) strategies—

(I) for the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school having regard, in particular, to the educational needs of students, and

(II) that will encourage more regular attendance at school on the part of such students.

(3) The board of management of a recognised school shall, in preparing a statement of strategy, have regard to such guidelines issued by the Board regarding the preparation and carrying into effect of statements of strategy.

(4) A statement of strategy prepared and submitted by the board of management of a recognised school, in accordance with *subsection (1)*, shall be carried out by that board of management in accordance with its terms.

(5) The board of management of a recognised school may, with the consent of the Minister, and for the purpose of giving effect to a statement of strategy prepared and submitted by it in accordance with this section, appoint such and so many teachers employed by it, as it considers appropriate, to liaise with the parents of students registered at the school concerned and to give such assistance to the families of those students as the board of management concerned considers appropriate.

(6) Two or more boards of management of recognised schools may, if they consider it appropriate, coordinate, and cooperate in, the carrying out of the statements of strategies prepared and submitted by them, in accordance with *subsection (1)*.

(7) The Board shall issue guidelines to boards of management of recognised schools for the purposes of this section.

(8) The statement of strategy prepared by the board of management of a recognised school shall be included in the plan prepared by it under section 21 of the Act of 1998.

23.—(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare, in accordance with *subsection (2)*, a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school (hereafter in this section referred to as a “code of behaviour”).

(2) A code of behaviour shall specify—

(a) the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;

- (b) the measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;
- (c) the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
- (d) the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and
- (e) the procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child's absence from school.

(3) A code of behaviour shall be prepared in accordance with such guidelines as may, following consultation by the Board with national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations and trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, be issued by the Board.

(4) The principal of a recognised school shall, before registering a child as a student at that school in accordance with *section 20*, provide the parents of such child with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school and may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on a request being made by a student registered at the school or a parent of such a student, provide the student or parent, as the case may be, with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school concerned.

Education Act 1998

15.—(2) FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD

- (c) consult with and keep the patron informed of decisions and proposals of the board,
- (d) publish, in such manner as the board with the agreement of the patron considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students and admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs, and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected and such directions as may be made from time to time by the Minister, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned, are complied with,

References

- Education Welfare Act 2000
 - “Empty Desks” 2000, Michael Finneran: Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
 - INTO Q&A booklet Education Act & Education Welfare Act
 - Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES website www.irlgov.ie/educ). Also as Appendix CPSMA Handbook
 - Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
 - (2) Suspension
 - (3) Refusal to enrol
 - Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d)) (DES website)
 - Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5) (DES website)
 - Management Board Members’ Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA.
 - (1) Guidelines for School Behaviour and Discipline.
 - (2) A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- *These references apply until new guidelines are issued by the Education Welfare Board
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
 - Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
 - Discipline in the Primary School INTO August 2002
 - Enhancing Self Esteem INTO 1995
 - The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers INTO
 - The Principal’s Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
 - Quality Circle Time in the primary school. Jenny Mosley. LDA 2000
 - Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
 - Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
 - Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
 - Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
 - School’s own SPHE Plan
 - Anti Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
 - NPC website www.npc.ie
 - IPPN website www.ippn.ie
 - INTO website www.into.ie
 - SDPS website www.sdps.ie