



# Ballinahinch National School

## Scoil Náisiúnta Baile na Ínse

### *BALLINAHINCH NATIONAL SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY 2018/19*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

While there is a strong tradition of good attendance in our school, changing social habits and patterns require us to monitor and to put strategies in place to counteract poor or irregular attendance. The changing social fabric of the nation is altering attitudes to school and 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.

#### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Our aim is to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

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

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH SCHOOL ETHOS**

In Ballinahinch National School we want 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 and punctuality throughout the school year.

#### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- Individual attendance is recorded daily on the school administration system and reasons for absences are noted.

- Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. If a child is absent, when the child returns to school s/he should give/send a written note to the class teacher, which contains the child's name, the date of absence and the reason for absence. The onus is on the parents to give a written explanation to the school explaining a child's absence, otherwise no explanation will be noted as the reason for the absence and this will be returned to the Education Welfare Officer.

The school keeps a record of all absences, using the following codes as set down by the NEWB.

- A Illness
- B Urgent Family Reasons (eg. Bereavement)
- C Expelled
- D Suspended
- E Other (eg. Holidays, Religious Observance, Emigration)
- F Unexplained
- G Transfer to another school (written confirmation received from other school)

- Attendance is monitored and if child is absent for long periods without explanation, parents are contacted by the Principal/Deputy.
- Parents are discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays during school time. The school calendar is published at the beginning of the school year and it is hoped parents can use this to plan holidays.
- Parents will receive a text message from the school when 15 days absence has been recorded and thereafter we have regular communication with them and provide them with updates on their child's attendance if it is a cause for concern.
- Absences of 20 days or more are submitted to NEWB at the end of each quarter (and parents are informed by letter).
- We ask parents to value every minute that the children spend at school. Children should be in their line at 9:20am and we also request parents not to collect children early, unless for a specific appointment. We use a sign-out book for children who are collected early by a parent. This enables us to keep a record of such absences and make parents aware of how much time is being missed.
- The class teacher will also monitor punctuality. Lateness is usually not the child's fault but if a pattern develops it will be discussed at the parent/teacher meeting and parent's co-operation in improving punctuality will be requested. If the problem persists the Principal will then contact parents in an effort to resolve any difficulties.
- When a child transfers to another school, the new school informs us in writing and the child is then taken off our register.

## **A STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard the school will endeavour to ensure that:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote the development of positive self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Supports for children, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines.

- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of children.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilized.
- The attendance rates of children will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child (in such instances, the parents/guardians will receive a text message, when the child has reached 15 days absence).
- Children with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

## **PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe, welcoming and happy environment.
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding.
- Holding regular and open class-level discussions with the children on the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early.
- Encouraging strong home school links so that parents feel free to discuss family problems.
- Publishing attendance policy and reminders on the school website.
- Addressing parents at the AGM and Pre Enrolment parents on the importance of attendance and punctuality.
- Publicly and positively affirming those children who have excellent attendance with Annual Attendance Awards.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

The school circulates the NEWB information booklet *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* to all parents in Junior Infants. The school also informs all parents of the implications of nonattendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. 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.
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support and approve of 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. □ Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensuring, insofar as 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 the school in writing, if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are being collected by someone not known to the teacher.

### **Pupils:**

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on a specified day.

### **POLICY OF MARKING WORK FOR PUPILS WHO ARE ABSENT:**

It is the policy that work is not marked for children who miss school due to going on holidays during school time. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to complete any curriculum work missed during a planned absence.

An exception is made for pupils who miss work due to illness or a stay in hospital. Teachers will where appropriate give work to parents/guardians for these pupils.

### **EVALUATION**

The success of any attendance policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar rolla records and statistical returns.
- Happy confident well adjusted children.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher vigilance.

### **Implementation**

This policy was updated in Ballinahinch National School in 2019.