

Bennekerry National School

Attendance Strategy Statement

Introduction

Bennekerry National School through its Board of Management, Staff and Parents/Guardians affirm the school's commitment to its student's attendance as an important aspect of the school ethos and school policy.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation such as:
 1. The Education Act 1998
 2. The Education Welfare Act 2000

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

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Bennekerry National School 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. Bennekerry National School aims to build and maintain a culture of high expectations amongst all staff and students for the student's learning, participation and attendance.

Recording and Reporting

It is the responsibility of the Principal to keep an accurate record of the students' attendance at the school and the reasons for any failure to attend. Teachers should maintain accurate class rolls and take responsibility for student absences within their classes. Late arrivals should also be recorded. The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded electronically via Aladdin on a daily basis. Individual class attendances are recorded daily in the digital Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). In addition each student is registered on POD (Primary Online Database) along with details of:

- Name.
- Address.
- Date of Birth.
- PPSN. (with parental permission)
- Nationality.
- Ethnic/Cultural Background.
- Religion.
- Class Standard.
- Teacher's Name.

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the school until the end of the academic year. Parents/guardians must also provide a note or enter a reason in the log book in the Secretary's Office if a child departs early during the school day.

- Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher.
- Teachers will alert the Principal if there are concerns about student absences.
- Parents/guardians are informed in writing in the end of year School Report of the total number of absences during the school year, up to the date of issue of the Report. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Teacher/Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.
- The school calculates the attendance of each child at least twice a year. (Dates provided by the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB.)) At these times, parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 15 – 19 days are informed by letter, detailing number of days missed and the fact that TUSLA may be informed of these absences. Also at these times, parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 19+ days are informed by letter, detailing number of days missed and the fact that the TUSLA will be informed of these absences. Parents are invited to contact the Principal if they have questions or if the school can be of any assistance in enabling the child to attend. Parents will be reminded of the community support services that are listed in the Guide for Parents & Guardians, should they need any additional support. The above letters are updated at each TUSLA cut-off date (and if a pupil has missed 3 more days since a previous letter, another letter is sent.)
- The school must inform TUSLA, 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.

Whole School Approach

We recognise how all areas of the student's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance. We recognise the complexity of some students' lives and difficulties. In response, we try to secure the involvement and support of many agencies and community supports for the student's overall well-being and welfare.

We work in partnership with parents and families as we place a premium on teamwork with parents to secure high levels of attendance, partnership in developing attendance policy and close working relationships with parents of individual students to address problems.

We affirm the school's commitment to valuing the culture of every student and ensuring that every student will make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the school.

We recognise every student's capacity to attend school, learn well and achieve good outcomes. The school will challenge stereotypes that might assume that students from particular backgrounds or with particular experiences will always have a problem with attendance and learning.

We aim to build each student's sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and their responsibility to their peers and their teachers to be at school every day.

A core part of our School Attendance Strategy is to raise awareness about the importance of attendance for a student's learning and school success, and to communicate high expectations for attendance. These expectations are shared by the Board of Management, the school management, staff and parents. They form part of the overall school climate (ethos and culture) and are clearly communicated to students.

Approaches include:

- Discussion about attendance at meetings with the Parents' Association, at the School Induction meeting and at parent-teacher meetings. [2]
- Discussion about attendance with each class grouping from first class up.
- Positive affirmation of attendance when the roll is being taken.
- Distribution of Tusla's Educational Welfare Services' leaflet entitled "Don't Let Your Child Miss Out". [2]
- Records of attendance in a student's Education Passport (see Circular 0027/2015).^{1 1} Schools are required to use the NCCA Education Passport materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information at the end of 6th class. The Education Passport should be sent to the relevant post-primary school following confirmation of enrolment and, ideally, by the end of June before entry to second level. The passport includes information on a child's school attendance.

Despite the best efforts by parents, in some circumstances they may be unable to ensure that their child attends school. In such circumstances, the school will seek advice from relevant professionals, e.g. Educational Welfare Officer, National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), regarding appropriate referrals for the student. We will continue to communicate with the parents and will be supportive in trying to re-engage the student in school.

Procedures for Notification of Student absences to the School

When a student is absent from school during part of a school day or for a school day or for more than a school day, section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a legal duty on parents to notify the Principal about the reasons for the child's absence. Section 23 of the Act requires that the procedures to be followed by a parent for notifying the school about absence must be formalised by the school and form part of the school's Code of Behaviour.

This guidance regarding notification of absences is included in the Code of Behaviour and is communicated to all parents and to other members of the school community, including students. Among the main requirements/procedures to be set out are:

- School opening times: 9.20 am – 2pm (Infant Class). 9.20am – 3pm (1st – 6th class).
- Parents should advise the school about absence prior to the event (if possible) or when the student returns to school (when absence is unexpected or unforeseen) or during the absence if it is prolonged. The Class Teacher is to be informed in writing on the student absent slips which are given to each pupil at the beginning of the year and again throughout the year as the need arises.
- The time/date of the students return to school should be communicated in writing to the class teacher in the case of planned absences.
- Explanation of a student's late arrival to school.
- Communication/explanation if a student needs to leave school early/before the end of the school day

Responding to Poor Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) states: 'The parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each day'.

Section 21 of the act obliges schools to inform 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 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 Tusla at least twice during school year through the online system. An annual report is submitted detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Strategies used in the Event of Poor Attendance

- Contacting parents on an informal basis when a child is absent regularly.
- Discussing school attendance with the student (where appropriate), with a view to finding an explanation for the absence and thereby a solution.
- Supporting pupils through the school Care Team (Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher).
- In the event of prolonged absence/irregular attendance the school will request a meeting with the child and parent to try to identify and resolve any barriers to attendance.
- Contacting TUSLA and/or the EWO

School Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal, Deputy Principal and class teachers to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's B.O.M.

School Principal

The school Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

Class Teacher

The Class Teacher will:

- Maintain the school electronic roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns he/she may have regarding the attendance of any pupils.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

Monitoring of Statement of Strategy

The strategy will be monitored:

- By teaching staff at school meetings
- By school Principal
- By B.O.M.

Review Process

The policy will be reviewed regularly by the school Principal and B.O.M.

Signed: *Edmund Burke* (Chairperson BoM)

Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management:

9th February 2018

Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Túsla:

10th February 2018