

BELLAGHY PRIMARY SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

SCHOOL ETHOS AND MISSION STATEMENT

Bellaghy Primary School strives to provide, in partnership with parents, a broad quality education so that all the pupils can reach their full potential within a caring, secure environment promoting self-discipline, motivation and individuality.

RATIONALE

We aim to ensure that all our pupils enjoy attending school. We believe that this is best achieved by providing a happy, caring atmosphere, in which children can grow, mature and realise their full potential. We also believe that encouraging good attendance and punctuality will help children to develop self-confidence, independence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for themselves. Good attendance and punctuality habits established at a young age, will prepare our pupils for the future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. This policy and our procedures for the management of pupil attendance and punctuality support our school aims and objectives.

Bellaghy Primary School has an exceptional record of attendance. Our average annual attendance is 97.5%.

THE MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE

Responsibilities of Parents

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

If a child is reluctant to attend school, the Principal should be contacted to allow any issues to be quickly addressed. A reluctance to attend, leading to an absence supported by a parent, can give the impression that attendance does not matter and may lead to the development of a poor pattern of attendance.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure children attend school regularly and punctually

- To ensure that children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, with all necessary items and to check that homework has been completed and signed
- To contact the school by telephone on the first day of child's absence giving the reasons and expected duration of the absence
- To provide us with a note signed and dated explaining the absence on the day that the pupil returns to school. (N.B. A note does not automatically ensure an authorised absence.) A submission explaining absence can also be submitted via the school app.

Authorised Absence – where the school has been consulted and can approve the absence.

Examples include:

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments during school hours
- Bereavement
- Exceptional family circumstances

Unauthorised Absence – where the school cannot approve the absence.

Examples include:

- Family holiday
- Pupil is kept off school unnecessarily
- When no written reason is provided
- Pupils who arrive at school after the morning register has been closed at 9.15a.m. and are too late to get a mark for the morning session (See PUNCTUALITY below)

Responsibilities of Pupils

At Bellaghy Primary School, we encourage children to take increasing responsibility for themselves.

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day

Responsibilities of Governors

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but on a day-to-day basis this is delegated to the Principal. The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures. The Principal reports to Governors on these matters.

Responsibilities of the School

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason
- A bi-annual summary of the child's attendance and punctuality (on school mid-year and annual report)

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Principal to:

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of the annual review
- Ensure that each member of staff receives the necessary training and support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The daily register is completed by the class teacher at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. If a child is absent for a morning or afternoon session only, this will be recorded. This information is then recorded electronically on the Department of Education's system. Attendance levels are monitored on an individual and a whole school basis.

Procedures for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Attendance or Punctuality

Where the class teacher has concerns about the level or pattern of a pupil's attendance or punctuality, they are discussed with the Principal. Where deemed appropriate the Principal will manage the absenteeism using the following procedures:

1. Contact the parent and arrange an appointment to discuss the issue in order to agree a strategy for improving attendance and/or punctuality.
2. Should such contact fail to resolve the issue, the school may refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Service for additional direction and support.
3. As a normal rule, any pupil whose attendance falls below 85% during the school year, will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service.

Parents may also seek advice and direction from the Educational Welfare Service.

The local Education Welfare Office is at:

Sandelford Special School,
4 Rugby Avenue
Coleraine

BT52 1HJ
Tel. 02870357290

A failure by parents to ensure their child's attendance can ultimately lead to prosecution.

MONITORING 'ATTENDANCE' DURING AN EXTENDED SCHOOL CLOSURE

During the event of a school closure, where children are communicating with their teacher online, each teacher will monitor each child's engagement with online lessons. Where it appears, a child is not engaging with online lessons, the teacher will contact the parent by telephone or email to encourage increased engagement. Staff are aware that for some parents, online learning is a challenge and Wi-Fi can be an issue. Where this is the case, the child will be issued with a paper pack to progress his/her learning. Frequent telephone conversations will be necessary in this instance to ensure the child is on target with his/her learning.

PUNCTUALITY

The school day begins at 8.55am. Pupils who are frequently late disrupt their own education and that of others in their class. The morning register remains open until 9.15am. Pupils who come to school after this time will be marked absent for the morning session and this will appear as an unauthorised absence on their school record, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

EVALUATION OF POLICY

The effectiveness of this policy and our procedures in monitoring and improving attendance levels is evaluated in several ways:

- Parents are given a summary of their child's attendance and punctuality as part of end of year report.
- The Board of Governors monitors the effectiveness of this policy through Principal's reports on attendance at Governor meetings.
- The annual attendance figures are published in the Governors' Annual Report to Parents.
- An officer from the Education Welfare Service regularly monitors attendance levels on a whole school and individual basis.
- EA receives information on pupil attendance as part of the annual audit.
- The Department of Education monitors the school's attendance statistics as part of the Annual School Census.

This Attendance Policy has been prepared in consultation with the teaching staff and parents.

Policy updated – September 2021