



## **Bandonbridge National School**

### **Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

**Date ratified by Board of Management: 02/09/2017**

**Date reviewed and updated:**

**Date of next review:**

## **Introductory Statement**

This Statement of Strategy was formulated in consultation with the staff, parents/guardians, and Board of Management of Bandonbridge N.S. following National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) guidelines, now called TUSLA.

## **Rationale**

It was decided to create this policy to foster good school attendance through promoting a positive image of school and education, by highlighting the work of TUSLA and making parents/guardians aware of the changes to the law in relation to school attendance, as they arise. To comply with legislation regarding child protection as outlined in our Child Safeguarding Statement and the annual risk assessment.

## **Aims**

1. To foster an appreciation of learning, regular attendance in school is vital in order to maintain momentum and consistency
2. To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality
3. To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early and to intervene positively to prevent that occurrence
4. To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
5. To promote positive attitudes to learning, both in the children and also their parents/guardians
6. To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school
7. To support the learning of High-Risk pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic or other such events during which pupils who have been medically certified as High Risk need to access distance learning.
8. To comply with the requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000 and to make parents aware of their statutory duties outlined in this Act ("Don't Let Your Child Miss Out" - leaflet for parents NEWB 2004)

## **Guidelines**

- As stated in the Bandonbridge N.S. Code of Behaviour and in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, when a child is absent from school, parents/guardians are expected to write a dated letter of explanation to the school. This can be done on the parent portal of Aladdin Connect or by email to [bandonbridgeoffice@gmail.com](mailto:bandonbridgeoffice@gmail.com)
- Parents/Guardians are required to phone, text or email the school on the morning of their child's illness.
- A letter/email/online form is requested informing the class teacher in advance of the child being absent from school (where possible) for an upcoming family event e.g. a wedding, funeral etc.
- Time in School: Junior and Senior Infants 8:45 – 1:25; all other classes 8:45 – 2:25 daily. Parents/guardians are encouraged to make doctor/dentist/therapy or other appointments for their children outside school hours if possible. We recognise that this is not always possible, so we have a sign in/sign out system so parents/guardians can collect pupils for appointments and drop them back to school afterwards to maximise time in school.
- Roll call takes place between 9:05 – 9:15 a.m. every morning.

## **Whole school strategies to promote attendance**

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

- The staff endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils by encouraging all children to do their best, to participate in all activities without fear of the consequences of failure, to feel valued as a member of the school and to be included in classroom activities and playground games.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, will be flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual children. We engage in extra-curricular activities which provide stimulating and exciting ways to engage with

learning: VEX Robotics, Junior Entrepreneur, Cór Fhéile na Scol, carol singing, church services, concerts, Science Blast, field trips, fund-raising etc.

- All school staff will promote development of good self-esteem and self-worth in its pupils, in line with our Ethos Statement, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Teachers will promote good mental health through their S.P.H.E. programmes; engaging with mindfulness, Active School activities, movement breaks etc. which help pupils understand their emotions generally but can help break a pattern of non-attendance
- Our school has established close contacts between home and school through:
  - ✚ Our school website and blog which highlights the activities of the school in a positive and life-affirming way
  - ✚ An annual Open Evening for prospective parents/guardians and their children
  - ✚ Induction Meetings for Junior Infants and/or their parents/guardians
  - ✚ Monthly Newsletters
  - ✚ Regular emails to parents/guardians
  - ✚ Communications via our online platform
  - ✚ Coffee mornings, social get-togethers and fund-raising events, “helping out days” etc.
  - ✚ Parent representatives on our Green Schools Committee etc.
  - ✚ Regular Parent-Teacher meetings and other communications
  - ✚ Parent members on our Board of Management
  - ✚ Our school has an active Parent Association which supports the work of the school and organises events throughout the year
  - ✚ Parents/guardians are invited to Sports Day, barbeques, church services, concerts etc.
  - ✚ Parent/guardian volunteers help on field trips/outings
- There is additional support for children with special education needs or EAL needs in accordance with DES and NCSE guidelines
- Pupils with good attendance may be rewarded in the following ways:
  - ✚ Presentation of full attendance certificates at the end of the week, month, term, year as decided by staff
  - ✚ A “Walk and Talk” time
  - ✚ Engagement with Tusla’s Every School Day Counts campaign
  - ✚ Rewarding classes with full attendance with a mention at assembly. The reward might be extra Golden Time, a night off homework or other reward at the teachers’ discretion
- The school holiday calendar is sent out to parents and is also available on the school website. Parents/guardians are alerted to any changes to the calendar by email, newsletter, text etc.
- School work will not be set for pupils who are absent due to family holidays (or in quarantine having returned from holiday in a country not on the current Green List). Family holidays should be taken during the scheduled school breaks.
- Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians with non-attending pupils. Initially the teacher will speak with the parents to discuss the matter. An incentive scheme may be put in place, at the teacher’s discretion.
- For repeated absences (especially for reasons other than illness) the Principal will invite to the parents to a meeting to discuss the problem. Should the situation persist the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer at TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, and notify parents of this by letter.
- Each child’s attendance for the year will be listed on end of year reports to parents. This will be listed as a proportion of the year as a whole. This information will be provided to Secondary Schools in the 6<sup>th</sup> class School Passport.
- The Principal will inform the Parent Association at their A.G.M. each autumn as to the levels of attendance during the immediately preceding school year.
- The school will endeavour to identify pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems, especially those which are unaccounted for, and will act on any concerns quickly before the situation becomes chronic; the school would view serious absence as missing at least 1 day a week.
- The school must inform the Educational Welfare Officer when a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year or where attendance is irregular or unexplained.

- The school will inform the Educational Welfare Officer where a child is suspended or expelled.
- This policy is available to view on our school website policy section.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

1. Each teacher and Special Needs Assistant is responsible for endeavouring to create a welcoming, positive atmosphere in the classroom to encourage those who may be reluctant attendees.
  2. All staff will familiarise themselves with the policy at the start of each school year.
  3. Class teachers are responsible for roll call and recording absences on Aladdin and recording the reasons for absences on the system when they receive notes from parents or the office.
  4. They are also responsible for filing letters of absences and reporting concerns about individual cases to their parents and the principal. They will note any reasons why a child may be attending irregularly: e.g. test days, bullying, failing academically, exclusion by peers, absent on days when particular subjects are taught etc.
  5. The school secretary will monitor the absences and communicate any phone messages, text, emails etc. which she receives to the relevant class teacher. Once a week, she will check that all reasons for absences and the relating note have been received. She will follow up with parents where notes have not been received. She will communicate to the Principal when a pupil has reached 20 days of absence.
  6. The Support Teachers may also be involved in non-attendance situations concerning children in their care.
  7. Parents have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school, to inform teachers why their child might not be coming to school, to promote a love of learning and fostering positive building blocks for their future lives.
  8. The BOM is responsible for drafting the policy and investigating incidences of non-attendance.
  9. The Principal will submit absence reports to TUSLA where necessary. She will contact parents about serious cases of non-attendance and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer or other relevant agencies on non-attendance issues.
  10. The Principal can only remove a child's name from POD, the Primary On-line Database, when she has been informed, in writing by the Principal of the child's "new" school, that the child has been registered there or when TUSLA notifies her that the child has been registered by the Board as homeschooled. When a child is removed from Bandonbridge N.S. the Principal is obliged to notify the "new" school of any problems in relation to attendance and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as she considers appropriate.
  11. The Education Welfare Officer for our area will endeavour to liaise between the parents, pupils, principal, class teacher and BOM in cases of non-attendance.
  12. Our school maintains contacts with a variety of agencies which also support the school in fostering good attendance:
    - ✚ Tusla: Don't Let Your Child Miss Out leaflet, Every School Day Counts resources
    - ✚ NEPS
    - ✚ Primary Care Service – Brothers of Charity
    - ✚ CAMHS
    - ✚ Bandon and Moviddy Unions of Parishes
    - ✚ Community Garda and JLO
    - ✚ Therapists and counselling services (Rainbows, behavioural, bereavement etc)
    - ✚ Local interest and community groups: Vincent de Paul, Aid Bandon Children
    - ✚ SENO
    - ✚ Guest speakers: i.e. Cybersafe Ireland
    - ✚ DES initiatives/Government initiatives
    - ✚ Social workers
    - ✚ Barnardos
- The Board of Management is responsible for ratifying this policy and ensuring the whole school community is mindful of:
    - ✚ The identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum which may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the

- part of certain pupils
- ✚ The identification of strategies for the removal of those aspects, insofar as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school, having regard, in particular, to the educational and well-being needs of pupils
- ✚ The identification of strategies that will encourage more regular attendance at school by such students
- ✚ The need to review this strategy in the future to accommodate the changing needs of the school and its population.

**Implementation Date**

This policy will be implemented immediately.

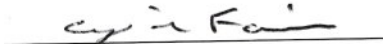
**Timetable for review**

The policy will be reviewed and amended when necessary.

**Ratification and communication**

This policy was ratified by the BOM and is made available to all parents on our school website.

Signed:



Dated: 02/09/2017