BANDONBRIDGE NATIONAL SCHOOL

Breastfeeding Breaks Policy

Policy basis. This policy gives effect to Department of Education Circular 0060/2018 on breastfeeding breaks for registered teachers. In arranging breaks, the school will take reasonable measures to facilitate the requested pattern while having due regard to the welfare and educational needs of pupils.

1. Entitlement and Application

Within 104 weeks after the birth of a child, an eligible teacher who has returned to work may avail of breastfeeding/lactation breaks, without loss of pay, for up to one hour per working day.

- The teacher must notify the Board of Management/employer in writing at least four weeks in advance and provide a copy of the child's birth certificate.
- The break may be taken as one 60-minute break, two 30-minute breaks, or three 20-minute breaks.
- The pattern of breaks will be agreed following consultation between the employer and teacher, taking account of the teacher's request and the educational and welfare needs of pupils.
- A teacher working less than full hours may avail of the provision on a pro-rata basis.
- When breastfeeding/lactation ceases, the teacher should notify the employer in writing as soon as possible.

2. Cover and Continuity of Teaching

Department-funded substitute cover is not provided for breastfeeding breaks. Accordingly, the Principal will organise appropriate internal arrangements, as required, to maintain pupil supervision and continuity of teaching and learning. Arrangements will be considered case by case and may involve reasonable timetable adjustments or shared internal cover.

3. Planning and Handover

Where another teacher will provide class cover, the following practical arrangements will apply:

1. The teacher availing of the break will provide an appropriate plan of work, including the intended learning, lesson structure and necessary resources.
2. Where regular or planned cover is required, arrangements and plans will be agreed with the Principal in advance.
3. A brief handover will take place where needed to ensure continuity for pupils. For recurring Monday cover, this should normally be completed by the preceding Friday.

4. Practical Cover Options

Depending on the timing of the agreed breaks and the school timetable, possible arrangements may include:

- adjusting SET/in-class support or station-teaching timetables where educationally appropriate;
- rotating cover so that the impact is shared and the same pupils or groups are not repeatedly affected;
- aligning a break, where feasible, with periods when pupils are appropriately supervised through scheduled school activities;
- for Infant teachers, considering whether an agreed break at the end of the pupil day can minimise the need for class cover; and
- other workable arrangements agreed by the Principal and relevant staff.

Note: These are options rather than fixed entitlements or requirements. Any arrangement must preserve appropriate pupil supervision, teaching provision and the effective deployment of school resources.

5. Posts of Responsibility

A teacher who holds a post of responsibility will continue to fulfil the duties attaching to that post, with appropriate organisation as necessary, while also meeting their core teaching responsibilities.

6. Implementation, Success Criteria and Review

- Implementation: This updated policy takes effect from September 2026.
- Success criteria: the teacher's statutory entitlement is facilitated; disruption to teaching and learning is minimised; pupils remain appropriately supervised; and arrangements are workable for the staff concerned.
- Review: the policy will be reviewed following its operation in practice, when Department guidance changes, or as otherwise required by the Board of Management.