



# Attendance Strategy for Bunscoil Bhríde

## Introduction

The Board of Management of Bunscoil Bhríde wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning. The Board recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning. The Board also recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a pupil's life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships.

In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management, from the beginning, views each child in the context of her family circumstances. A holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed, by striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by pupils and the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

## Aims and Objectives

This policy aims to:

- promote a positive learning environment
- promote a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
- facilitate children to have a voice in school matters
- encourage full attendance where possible
- encourage punctuality
- foster an appreciation of learning
- raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- raise everyone's expectations of our school attendance
- ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensure awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identify pupils at risk
- develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- reward good attendance and improvements in attendance

## Compliance with School Ethos

Bunscoil Bhríde 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 throughout the school year.

## Roles and Responsibilities

- All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy
- Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance.
- The Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh on Aladdin and making returns to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management

### **Punctuality**

- School begins at 8.50am.
- All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.
- A child will be recorded on Aladdin as late to school if they arrive after 8.50am.
- When teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage.
- If there is still no improvement in punctuality then an Aladdin message should be sent home notifying parents/guardians of the issue.
- If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal.
- The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late.
- The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

### **Recording Attendance**

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin school administration software, on a daily basis. If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken at 9.50am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in. Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary. They are monitored by the class teacher and records are kept on the Aladdin school administration software.
- The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded by Aladdin.

### **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- developing mutual trust and respect with students
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters via the Student Council
- listening to students' concerns
- having high expectations of students' attendance
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- collaborating in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils

- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early for individual children
- intervening early with personalised support (e.g. curricular incentive, targeted attendance chart, behaviour plan or mentoring) and engagement with families and their children
- addressing personal (e.g. parent-child conflicts) and practical issues (e.g. access to health / mental health care)
- inviting parents/guardians of new entrants to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained
- reminding Parents/Guardians of the importance of regular school attendance from Junior Infants onwards
- publishing the calendar for the coming school year annually in June and posting it on the school website (it is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term)
- involving parents in discussion and reflection about attendance
- requesting parents to participate in reviews of attendance strategy
- awarding termly certificates for students with full attendance and annual prizes for students with full and nearly full attendance
- escalating the response by the school in proportion to the complexity of the child's needs
- monitoring progress or lack of and noting when the threshold is met for a referral to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services

**Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:**

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- working with the School and TUSLA Child and Family Agency to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good 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 via the Aladdin Connect app of the reasons for absence from school
- ensuring, insofar as is 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 via the Aladdin Connect app if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

**TUSLA Child and Family Agency is informed if;**

- A child is expelled for 6 days or more

- A child is suspended for 6 days or more
- A child has missed more than 20 days

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

### **Communication with other schools**

- Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school, via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) that the child is now registered in their school.
- When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.
- When a child transfers into Bunscoil Bhríde, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., a letter of transfer will be sent to the Principal, and appropriate records sought.

### **Communication with parents**

- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.
- When a pupil has accumulated 10 or 15 absences in any one school year, a standard message informing the pupil's Parents/Guardians is sent automatically via Aladdin Connect. This states the school's obligation to inform TUSLA Child and Family Agency of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year.
- Parents are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings or at other times and are informed of the school's concerns.
- The Principal will have responsibility for all communications with Parents/Guardians in relation to attendance.
- All pupil absence must be explained by the parents/guardians to the teacher via Aladdin Connect. When such an explanation is not forthcoming, the class teacher will seek clarification from the parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians must also provide provide a reason via Aladdin Connect if a child departs early during the school day.

### **Evaluation**

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar Rolla records (on Aladdin) and statistical returns
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

### Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the BoM of Bunscoil Bhríde in June 2021. It was reviewed in February 2024.