



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Saint Brendan's College, Belmullet, Co. Mayo

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Signature Of Chairperson.	Teresa McGuire
Signature of BOM member.	Michael Hurst



St. Brendan's College

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introduction:

As a school community, we believe that there is a direct relationship between a student's success in school and regular attendance. Students who have good attendance records enjoy their school experience more than students who do not attend regularly. Regular attendance at school is essential for all students so that they may reach their potential. Our school aims to foster a culture of regular attendance at school for all pupils. At St. Brendan's College, we aim for excellent levels of attendance and punctuality from all. In addition, we seek to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing problems with attendance at school. The provisions of the Education Welfare Act 2000 inform and support this policy.

Rationale:

The school Attendance Policy is directed by

1. The School Mission Statement
2. The Pastoral Care Policy
3. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
4. Our status as a DEIS school
5. Our commitment to the education of our students.

The Educational Welfare Act 2000:

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and attending to problems of absenteeism. It was signed into law on July 5th 2000.

The Education Welfare Act safeguards every child's entitlement to an appropriate minimum education by:

- Developing a national framework to promote regular attendance at school.
- Promoting a positive appreciation among students of the benefits to be derived from education and attendance at school.
- Identifying the causes of absenteeism and early school leaving and developing measures for its prevention.
- Supporting children at risk and those who experience difficulties in school in order to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.



The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was set up under this Act to support regular attendance and the education of young people. The function of the Board is to ensure that every child attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education. The Board also has an advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance and education provision.

Educational Welfare Officers are appointed to advise and support parents and schools and to follow up absences from school. Under the Act, parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it is recommended that the explanation be in writing. **It is compulsory for schools to notify the National Educational Welfare Board if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.** The Educational Welfare Officers focus on children at risk or experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any obstacles to their regular attendance at school. Alternative schooling will be sought for students who have been expelled, suspended or refused admittance to a school.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

- The Principal will have overall responsibility for the students of the school which includes attendance.

Deputy Principal

- The Deputy Principal will liaise with Principal on all issues regarding the welfare of students including attendance.

Year Head:

- Monitor attendance in Year Group through the daily role call and make students aware of importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
- If necessary make referrals to the HSCL and to the Pastoral Care Team.

Class Tutor:

- Ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences.

Class Teacher:



- Teachers are requested to record on VSWare all students in attendance and absent for each class period on a daily basis.
- Bring any concerns regarding student attendance to the appropriate class tutor.

Home SCL:

- The role of the HSCL is to forge links between the school and parents/guardians and to provide support where there may be concerns regarding a student's attendance.
- The HSCL will

Pastoral Care Team:

- Take referrals from Year Heads and work with the Principal/Deputy Principal to support students with regard to their attendance. These may include interventions by Care team; referral to HSLO or referral to the NEWB.
- Monitor students referred on an ongoing basis.

School Attendance Officer:

- Overall responsibility for reporting students' school attendance to the NEWB.
- Notify parents/guardians when 10 absences have been reached.
- Notify NEWB when 20 absences or 6 days (cumulative) suspension have been reached.

Parents:

- As the primary educators, parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school unless there is an unavoidable and legitimate reason for their absence.

Students:

- Each student has a personal responsibility to attend school each day.
- Every student is expected to be in attendance from 9.09 a.m. until 3.50 p.m. on every school day.
- Students must attend role call from 9.09 -9.15 a.m.
- It is primarily the responsibility of the student to sign the late book or attend registration to ensure attendance is recorded.

Rewarding students for attendance

At St. Brendan's College, we offer an environment in which students feel valued and welcomed. As a school, we emphasise to all our students that their presence in school is very important for both their individual learning and for the good of the whole school community. We acknowledge the importance of a positive approach to attendance and



punctuality. We will do all we can to foster a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality among students. Students who have excellent attendance in any given year are presented with a Certificate of Attendance at the end of each year.

Procedures:

- In the school year from September 2015/16, the school is in the process of setting up a text message service alerting parents to a student's absence.
- The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis. This helps to identify, at an early stage, students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- The Year Head meets with the students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend. The Year Head/ Deputy Principal/Principal may, at this early stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school, to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.
- After 10 days absence, a letter is sent to the parents/guardians by the Year Head inviting them to the school to discuss the situation.
- The Year Head communicates the names of students of concern to the Pastoral Care Team at their weekly meeting. The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support team or outside agency as appropriate.
- After 20 days absence, a letter is sent by the NEWB co-ordinator to the parents/guardians of students to inform them of the school's obligation to inform the NEWB and inviting them to the school to discuss the situation if they wish.
- Students may not be absent from school except when the absence is unavoidable due to illness, urgent family reason or other legitimate and unavoidable reason.
- It is the responsibility of the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) to furnish the school with a signed and dated note outlining the date and reason for every recorded absence. Such notes will be collected and filed and used in returns to the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).
- School management communicate regularly with parents outlining their concerns regarding holidays; medical and dental appointments being scheduled during term time. Parents are requested to ensure all discretionary absences occur outside term time. School management furnish them with a calendar of the school year to assist them in this regard.
- Students arriving late to school must report to the office to sign in before proceeding to class. Such students are expected to produce a note from their parent/guardian explaining the reason they were late. Late arrival to school on a repeated basis may



be viewed as a breach of discipline and appropriate sanctions may apply. The Parent(s) / Guardian(s) may be requested to make an appointment to discuss attendance with us. If the Principal has a serious concern about a student he may arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies.

- In the event of a student becoming ill or getting injured during the day they should inform their class teacher who may send them to the Principal or Deputy Principal to obtain permission to go home. If such permission is granted contact with their parents/guardians should be through the school office. Students should not contact home via a mobile phone or prior to getting permission to leave the school premises. Parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements for the collection of their son/daughter at the school office.
- During the school day every student must attend every class according to their Timetable unless prior permission has been received from the Principal or Deputy Principal. The unauthorised absence of a student from any class during the school day will be viewed as a breach of the school's Code of Behaviour and sanctions may apply.
- Students who may be absent from class due to school-related activities, such as sport, are allowed on the understanding that students source and complete all homework. Students may be removed from activities if there is a negative effect on their school work.
- A student wishing to leave the school premises for a legitimate reason during the school day **must be signed out by a parent/guardian at the school office**. Any student who leaves the school premises without such authorisation will be deemed to have breached the school's Code of Behaviour.
- When a student may be absent from school due to suspension for breach of discipline, parents will be consulted in advance. He/she should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications.

Procedure for recording explanations for absences:

- Explanations for Absence notes are provided to students in the back of their school journal
- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed and handed to the Year Head at roll call on the day of return
- The reason for the student's absence is entered by the Year Head on the student's database

School activity/Work experience

Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded as school activity (SA). Teachers organising the school activity provide the secretary with the list of students involved the day prior to the event. The secretary will pre-enter the students' absence. The Staff member organising the event will confirm the presence/absence of the students.



Late Policy

Students are encouraged to get into the routine of being at school on time. Students who arrive late disrupt the class and miss important instruction time. If a student arrives to school after 9.15 a.m. he/she must sign in at the school office. All late arrivals will be recorded by the school.

Communication with Parents

- Parents are routinely informed of their child's attendance and punctuality record through regular school reports and parent-teacher meetings.
- On a pilot basis for the 15/16 school year, the school is in the process of setting up a text message service alerting parents to a student's absence.
- Parent(s) / Guardian(s) may be notified via letter, phone call or text messaging if the school has a concern about a particular absence any time on any given date.
- A letter is sent to parents/guardians once a student has been absent in excess of 10 days and when a student is absent in excess of 20 days.
- The Parent(s) / Guardian(s) may be requested to make an appointment to discuss attendance with us.
- If the Principal has a serious concern about a student he may arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies.

Communication with Teachers

- All Teachers have access to attendance records through the use of the VSWare system.
- Teachers can access the attendance record for each of their teaching groups using VSWare.
- If information is received from parents in relation to a student's absence, teachers are notified of this through the noticeboard in the staff room.
- In the case of a student's prolonged absence, and if requested by parents, teachers are encouraged to forward classwork and/or notes to the absent student.

Truancy

Truancy is considered a serious violation of the School Code of Behaviour and incurs immediate suspension.

Sanctions for Breaches of School Attendance Policy:

- The sanctions are as set out in the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Absences will be notified to the E.W.B. as per the Education Welfare Act 2002.

Additional Information



The school opens at 8:15 a.m. and closes at 4:20 p.m. The school does not accept liability for students arriving at the school grounds before the school opens or remaining on the grounds after the school closes unless such students are participating in an official school activity.