



St. Brigid's B.N.S.
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Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy document was drawn up as a collaborative process between the staff and Board of Management of St. Brigid's BNS as our existing policy was due for review due to legislative changes. The Board acknowledges the high level of school attendance but wishes to raise awareness in the whole school community of the importance of school attendance and the correlation between high levels of attendance and success in school. It also wishes to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 the Board of Management of each school must prepare and submit to TÚSLA Child and Family Agency a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (**See Appendix 1**)
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- The role of the Education Welfare Services, the Child and Family Agency TUSLA
- Child Protection Issues

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Brigid's B.N.S. endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. We also strive to create a caring environment that promotes good attendance and ensures the best possible outcomes for children and their families. 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 through the school year.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- To ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- To ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- To encourage full attendance where possible

- To promote a positive learning environment
- To enable learning opportunities to be availed of
- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- To identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Content

Punctuality:

School begins at 8.50. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Parents are required to sign their son in at the school reception in the event of late arrival to the school (after 9.10am). They are also required to write down the reason for their son's lack of punctuality. Early departures are also recorded in the book at reception.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded through Aladdin's e-Roll Book for each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily on Aladdin and also in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) on Aladdin. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded on Aladdin and may be viewed by parents in the Student Attendance Report on Aladdin.

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken before 10.10am each morning. Any pupil arriving later than this time will be marked 'present but late' for that day. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day.

Parents will be informed of their responsibilities in relation to school attendance and will be requested to provide written explanations for all absences from school, regardless of the length or nature of the absence. These explanations may be submitted through Aladdin.

Parents/Guardians are made aware of the requirements of TÚSLA, Education Welfare Services, particularly the legislation relating to absences of 20 days or more during the school year. They are informed in writing of their child's attendance and punctuality during the school year on the end of year report.

A standard letter is also sent to parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern following a period of absence totalling 15 days. This letter emphasises the legal requirement of the school to inform TÚSLA following the absence of a child for 20 days or more and it also reminds parents that they must inform the school in writing each time their child is absent.

The school must inform TÚSLA by means of the school returns, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

- St. Brigid's B.N.S. endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils
- It is the policy of St Brigid's B.N.S. to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents in their role as the primary educators of their

children. Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance and are made aware of the Education Welfare Act at a pre-enrolment meeting.

- New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September. 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.
- Pupils who are at risk of poor attendance are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems are put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem. Early dialogue with parents is prioritised in St. Brigid's BNS to ensure the non-attendance does not persist.
Here in St Brigid's BNS, we will always strive to do our very best to provide parents with whatever supports they need to ensure that their child can continue to attend school. It is our aim to ensure that the greatest engagement with the school will lead to improved attendance.
- Good attendance is rewarded by the presentation of certificates at the end of the school year.
- The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equality of Access and Participation.

Communication

The school makes contact with the local Education Welfare Services (TUSLA) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other schools

- When a child transfers from St. Brigid's BNS to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into St. Brigid's BNS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is communicated through close collaboration with the Parents' Association and through school newsletters. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance

- working with the school and Education Welfare Service 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 in writing of the reasons for absence from school on child's return
- 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, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

When a child reaches 15 days absence, a letter is sent to parents informing them of this and the responsibility of the school to report to Tusla should the child reach 20 days absence.

Section 21 of the act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Túsła's Education Welfare Services twice during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted at the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

This policy complements the school ethos of encouraging and supporting children in living their lives to the full, in a caring environment, where the welfare and interests of the children are paramount.

Transfer to Another School

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 that the child is now registered in their school.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Improved attendance records as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns
- Board of Management, staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Positive parental feedback
- Happy, confident, well-adjusted pupils

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on 19th May 2021.

This policy will be reviewed in 2024 or earlier if necessary.

Signed:

S. Moran

Chairperson
Board of Management

Date: 19th May 2021