

# **Ballykeel Primary School**



# **Attendance Policy**

**Updated 2017**

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## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### **Rationale:**

“The purpose of education for **ALL** children is the same. The goals are the same – but the help that pupils need to progress towards them will be different.” (The Warnock Report, 1978)

Underlying this policy is the assumption that regular attendance at school is important for the well-being and future prospects of each individual. We believe that there is a high correlation between attendance at school and engagement in learning process designed to enable individual's to achieve, with positive outcomes. Therefore, it is likely that pupils who do not attend school on a regular basis will suffer in examinations which may in turn impact negatively on their future prospects.

We believe that it is the responsibility of staff, parents and pupils, as well as outside agencies, to promote good attendance in order that education remains a positive experience for all children. Schools are accountable for the levels of attendance of their pupils, in order to ensure that their rights to education are upheld.

### **Mission Statement:**

Ballykeel Primary School wishes to provide an environment that promotes all abilities to learn together in a caring school community. In partnership with parents and pupils, we seek to offer opportunities in education to assist pupils to realise their full potential in all areas of school life.

### **Aims:**

Ballykeel Primary School aims to maintain and build upon its present and past successes. The school aims to achieve an attendance rate in line with Department of Education targets for each school year, and indeed to continue to try to improve it year upon year.

- To create a school ethos and environment where children feel happy, safe and secure
- To establish responsibility for, and maintain, good patterns of attendance and punctuality
- To encourage and foster good communication between the school and home
- To encourage the maximum possible attendance
- To be proactive in identifying and seeking early resolution to any problems that may prevent children from wanting to attend school

### **Purpose of Policy:**

- To outline roles and responsibilities of parents and staff in encouraging good attendance
- To take account of the Department of Education guidelines on attendance
- To outline procedures by which parents should communicate effectively about all absences
- To outline the role of Ballykeel Primary School and the Education Welfare Service

### **Guidelines:**

#### **Parental Responsibilities:**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are registered and appropriately educated.

They should:

- Ensure that their child attends school every day unless there is a very good reason for not doing so

- Try to ensure, where possible, that appointments with doctors and dentists etc. happen outside school time
- Maintain close contact with the school when their child is absent (This includes following up all absences with a note to confirm the same)
- Make sure children arrive on time (If after 9.15am report to the office) The office is open from 8.45 am – 5.00pm
- Ensure that children arrive ready to learn, following a good night's sleep
- Telephone to let school know if the child is going to be off, giving a reason for the absence
- If the child is just a little “unwell”, send him/her in. The school will make contact with you if necessary
- Ensure holidays are arranged outside school time
- Contact the school, as soon as possible, if their child becomes reluctant to attend so that the underlying cause can be investigated and resolved quickly( all parents can view reasons why good attendance is important in the Parent Attendance Booklet)

### **Pupil Responsibilities:**

They should:

- Help parents to make sure that they get to school on time by being organised
- If late, sign in at the office
- Come into school before or after any appointments, medical or other
- Come into school if they feel just a little unwell and tell their teacher ( Parents will be contacted if needed)
- Share any worries about coming into school with an adult so that help can be given
- Go to bed at a sensible time on school nights

### **School Responsibilities:**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance on a daily basis
- Actively encourage good attendance and punctuality
- Follow up and investigate any patterns of any non attendance
- Make contact with parents following any concerns, through phone calls, letters, meetings and visits by the family worker
- Inform parents three times per year about their child's attendance percentage e.g. interviews in October and February and on the written report in June
- Offer encouragement and support to individual children and families with poor attendance
- Continue to promote the importance of regular attendance through 'Class of the Month' award, the attendance cup, focus weeks, certificates, stickers and prizes.
- Meet with the Education Welfare Officer on a regular basis to discuss children with attendance concerns
- Seek advice and support from the Education Welfare Service when required
- Send a letter of warning home when a pupil's attendance is first a cause for concern, telling parents that their child will be referred if attendance does not improve
- Refer any children to the Education Welfare Service that fall below 85% for no valid reason (This is outlined in the information booklet)
- Take immediate action if any pupil absents themselves from school without permission. The parents shall be contacted by phone and the pupil detained after appropriate notification.

### **Reward System:**

Being more proactive in celebration and rewarding good school attendance should lead to an improved daily attendance.

“Reward schemes can be effective in reducing absence. The schemes are designed to tackle the particular problems of a school and they increase the profile of attendance” (Department of Education and Skills 2005 – 2006)

### **Rewards**

- At the end of each month percentage class attendance will be worked out and the top class will be awarded the ‘Class of the month’ accolade. This involves being presented with the Attendance Cup in assembly, enjoying a chill out day and photos of the winning class being displayed in prominent positions around the school, e.g. on the parent notice board and in the ‘Ballykeel Bugle.’
- Special events being held, such as Attendance Week, with competitions, raffles and visitors will be used as a positive method to promote good attendance.
- If a pupil has a full year’s attendance he/she shall be given a reward at the annual prize day with their photos displayed and celebrated. If a pupil has achieved more than one year’s full attendance, an additional reward will be given.
- At the end of the school year the percentage of each class is worked out and the class with the highest percentage attendance is awarded medals and given the class of the year title.
- Children who have improved their attendance will be praised and encouraged to continue improving this through certificates and incentives.

### **The Monitoring of Attendance**

The monitoring of attendance shall be undertaken by the Pastoral Care Coordinator and the Principal. They have a unique knowledge of the pupils, and after a period of time can identify those pupils whose attendance requires monitoring or further action. Pupils who are potentially poor attendees can be targeted, and with support, be encouraged to attend school. (The school attendance register is recorded both in the morning and the afternoon sessions)

It is often the class teacher who will have first knowledge when a problem may arise and staff can pass on their concerns, at any time, to the Pastoral Care Coordinator.

As daily monitoring is important, an assistant will check each class at 10.00am, with a list of children who have attendance concerns, and notify the Pastoral Care coordinator before break time of absentees. Appropriate action will then be taken if needed. This may involve contact with the E.W.O. or a phone call, letter, meeting or, at times, a home visit and offer of support from the school family worker.

Printouts of pupil percentage attendance will be given to class teachers before parent interviews in October and February, any concerns or excessive days off will be highlighted to the necessary parents.

The Parent Attendance Booklet and help sheet will be included in the P.1 induction pack every year and new parents will be directed to the most important points. The booklet will also be available with other policies.

The yearly target and previous year’s whole school percentage will be displayed prominently in the school foyer.

The Pastoral Care coordinator and family worker will meet, in September, with some of the parents of the worst attendees from the previous year. This will be to offer encouragement and any support to help improve their child’s attendance in the current year.

Strategies for improvement are continually sought in Ballykeel Primary School and will be discussed by the Senior Leadership Team. These ideas can be transformed into good practice and this good practice will be incorporated into school life.