



BALLYCASTLE HIGH SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

- *Approval by the Board of Governors: **June 2016***
- *The implementation of this policy will be monitored by: Senior Management Team*
- *This policy will be reviewed every two years*





Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential.

Ballycastle High School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

(a) AIMS AND ETHOS

The school aims to ensure that every child will want to attend school. This will be achieved by creating an ethos in which staff and pupils can work together in an atmosphere of enjoyment, endeavour and mutual respect. Regular attendance at school is essential if an individual is to maximise his/her progress.

(b) MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and Responsibilities of the School

The Principal at Ballycastle High School has overall responsibility for school attendance; designated staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Teaching staff regular monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

www.deni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201502-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools

Ballycastle High School recognises that pupil attendance and educational achievement are inextricably linked. It is, therefore, important that the School do all that they can to ensure that our pupils attend school regularly. Ballycastle High School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents

Parents have a legal duty¹ to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability, aptitude and to an special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

¹le 45(1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986



When through illness or other cause, a pupil is absent for one day or more an explanatory note should be brought on the day of return, signed by the parent or guardian stating the reason for absence.

The pupil's class should be noted on such letters. A note is required for each separate period of absence. In the event of infectious or contagious diseases, the Principal must be informed immediately and the pupil must not return to school until a doctor's consent has been obtained.

Parents should make every effort not to take pupils on holidays during term time bearing in mind that absence from school will hinder academic progress, send the wrong message to the young person and will have a detrimental effect on internal and external examination results. Teachers will not prepare work for pupils who go on holiday during term time, however, they will prepare work for pupils absent on long term illness. Family holidays during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school please discuss the matter promptly with the relevant Head of Year.

Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils

Each pupil at Ballycastle High School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent / guardian must be provided to your form teacher when you return.

Roles and Responsibilities of Form Teachers

It is a statutory requirement that rolls are marked twice daily at the beginning of the morning and during afternoon sessions. Morning registration will take place between 9.00am and 9.10am. Pupils are 'late' if they are not in registration by 9am. Afternoon registration will occur during period 5.

The form teacher will;

- Mark the register electronically using SIMS Lesson Monitor
- Write a registration slip and leave to the Office.
- Collect absence notes for all absences
- Monitor the pattern of absence and if absentee notes are not forthcoming pass the information to the Head of Year.

In the afternoon, the class teacher will take the roll of their period 5 class using SIMS Lesson Monitor, this is a statutory requirement that a roll is marked in the afternoon, as well as the morning.

In addition, the class teacher will take a register on SIMS at the beginning of every lesson.



Roles and Responsibilities of Class Teachers

At the beginning of every lesson, the class teacher should call a roll and mark attendance on SIMS Lesson Monitor. Class teachers are only permitted to state if a pupil is present or absent. Office staff will determine if other codes are to be used.

Roles and Responsibilities of Office Staff

The office staff will;

- maintain a 'late book' in which pupils sign their names if they enter the school after the 9.00am deadline. Record this information into SIMS.
- take phone messages from parents when pupils are absent from school
- compile lists of latecomers and display the list on the staff room notice board

Roles and Responsibilities of the Attendance Secretary

- Run a report on SIMs daily and contact parents on second day of non-explained absence. Record this on SIMS interventions.
- Monitor lateness, and inform Heads of Year on a weekly basis of pupils who are late to school.
- Print a monthly attendance summary for each class and give it to the appropriate Head of Year.
- Monitor individual attendances and give a detailed print out to the Head of Year of every pupil whose overall attendance is under 90%.
- Phone home on the second day of non-explained absence.
- Attend and provide attendance figures for Attendance Meetings with Head of Pastoral Care and EWO.
- Print attendance letters for parents to be signed by the Head of Year.
- Contact the EWO if necessary.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Head of Pastoral Care

- Designated member of senior staff with responsibility for pupil attendance.
- Chairs Attendance Meetings – approximately one per every six weeks. Attendance Secretary and EWO are also in attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but this is delegated on a day to day basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors will monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's attendance policy and practice

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

While the Principal has overall responsibility for attendance this is delegated on a daily basis to Heads of Year. The Head of Year will scrutinise attendance registers for each registration class on a regular basis. The information will be used to identify pupils with irregular patterns of attendance.



The Head of Year will then follow the procedures outlined in 'Management of Absence' at the end of this policy.

The Principal will present information on school attendance to the Board of Governors on a regular basis.

RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE

The Department of Education has issued guidelines, Department of Education Circular 2015/02 - February 2015 regarding the recording of attendance. Attendance is recorded twice in each day, at the commencement of the morning and afternoon sessions. Each pupil is recorded on the SIMS system using the codes set out in DE circular 2015/02. The school's position on categorising absence follows guidance in the above circular, hence:

Authorised absence will be recorded for the following;

- Artistic Endeavour
- Bereavement – death of close relative
- Suspension from school
- Family Holiday (agreed)
- Illness – for prolonged absence the school may ask for medical verification
- Medical/Dental appointments – parents and pupil are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours
- Religious Observance
- Other exceptional circumstances e.g. the pupil is taking part in a public performance/ in a crisis a child can care for a relative until other arrangements can be made/ pupil unable to travel due to heavy snow.
- Approved sporting activity
- Study leave
- Educational visit
- Work experience
- School open only for staff training
- Exceptional Closure
- School Holidays

Unauthorised absence will be recorded in the following circumstances;

- Family holidays taken without the agreement of the school – only in very exceptional circumstances will family holidays be considered as authorised absence
- Late to school without a valid reason
- Feign illness
- Shopping
- Having hair cut
- Pupil's/parent's/ sibling's birthday
- Failure to produce a reason for absence

Parents wishing to absent their children during the school week should write to the Principal stating the reasons for the absence.



Daily Registration Procedures

Pupils know that on their first day back to school after a period of absence they must bring a note signed by a parent or carer. This note should contain the reason for the absence. Failure to submit a written reason within a reasonable time, one week, results in the pupil's name being passed to the relevant Head of Year for further investigation. If appropriate, the positive behaviour policy can be invoked for failure to bring an absentee note. All absentee notes are retained in the school office.

Lateness

Pupils who are late into school sign a 'late book' which is kept in the school office. Registration slips are amended in the light of this information. Children coming to school after 10.00am, without a valid reason for lateness, will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence.

Sanctions are applied for habitual lateness to school. Registration class commences at 9.00am. Pupils entering the school after this time are viewed as being late. If more than three late days are recorded this will trigger detention at lunchtime. This will be controlled by the Head of Year.

Continual and persistence lateness may be due to factors outside a pupil's control. Should this be the case, parents will be contacted by letter and invited to explore the matter with the Head of Year. Issues discussed at the meeting will be recorded and if suitable arrangements cannot be made to get a pupil to school on time advice will be sought from the Education and Welfare Service as to the best way in which to progress the case.

MANAGEMENT OF ABSENCE

The minimum acceptable attendance level for any pupil is 90%. Should attendance drop below an acceptable level, the following procedure will apply:

Stage 1

Attendance is monitored by attendance secretary and form teacher. Attendance secretary makes a phonecall home on the second day of non-explained absence.

Stage 2

Names of pupils whose absence pattern fits stated criteria are passed to Head of Year. These pupils are interviewed by their Head of Year to ascertain reasons for absence. This is marked on SIMS under 'interventions'.

Stage 3

If, after one month, a pupil's absence pattern is still giving cause for concern a letter is sent home making parents/carers aware of their child's poor attendance. This letter will offer support to parents and invite them to telephone the school each morning of an absence

Stage 4

If, after a further month, attendance does not improve the carers/parents are invited for a meeting with the Head of Year and Head of Pastoral Care / Vice Principal. Further letters may also be sent.

Stage 5

Failure to impact positively on a poor attendance pattern will result in the case being directed to the Education and Welfare Service.

Stage 6

In the absence of improvement or where there is a failure by parents to cooperate with the school it is the school's view that failure to send children for education constitutes neglect, and the matter will then be referred to Social Services.

Absence criteria

Four broken weeks in any term

or

Overall attendance below 90%

or

Persistent habit of lateness to school in the morning

In addition to this, an Attendance Meeting will be held approximately every six weeks, whereby those under 90% attendance will be discussed. The Head of Pastoral Care, the EWO and the School Attendance Secretary are all invited to this meeting. If it is agreed at this meeting, other interventions might circumvent procedures set out above.