

BALLYCLARE SECONDARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Rationale

To investigate different ways of improving attendance and to develop a reward scheme for attendance.

An effective attendance policy should be two pronged:

- (i) Procedures and sanctions which are clear for all staff in the area of dealing with poor attendance;
- (ii) Strategies and initiatives to promote, encourage and reward full attendance, which are relevant and ongoing.

Being more proactive in celebration and reward should lead to an increased 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.

Ballyclare Secondary School believes that good attendance is central to the learning process. For a child to succeed in the school environment it is essential that a high level of attendance is maintained. It has been proved that there is a strong correlation between success and attendance.

“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.” Department of Education 2015

Ballyclare Secondary School aims to maintain and build upon its present and past successes. The target of 94 % is set for the whole school this year. The target for pupils to aim for is 100%. In order to achieve this a clear, workable policy to monitor, improve and maintain attendance needs to be in place. This policy will build upon the work of the Pastoral Team and Class Teachers, involve partnership with parents and the support of the school’s Educational Welfare Officer.

Class Teacher

- The class teacher has a very important role in the promotion of good attendance. Often he or she will be the first to notice a pattern of absence within a class.
- The class teacher will encourage good attendance and highlight its importance during class assembly time. Class teachers will begin registration at 8:40am; any pupils arriving after 8:45am will be marked as late.
- Minor absences will be dealt with by the class teacher confirming reasons and checking that notes have been received. The class teacher will make contact by phone with parents/carers on the third day of pupil absence.

- If an unexplained absence continues beyond three days the class teacher will request written explanations via a *Yellow Card*.
- Class teachers should liaise with Year Teachers when no reason is being given for persistent unexplained absences. The Year Teacher will begin a more formal process (**Letter 1**).

1. Continuous Absence

- 1.1 If unexplained absence continues for five days or more and the Year Teacher has received no correspondence via (**Letter 1**) they will pass this information to the Mr D Beggs (Boys' Tutor) / Mrs S Flanagan (Girls' Tutor), who will contact home. This will also be the case for periodical absence in any given month. Tutors will discuss each case with Mr A Nicholl – Head of Pastoral Care and the EWO at Liaison Meetings.
- 1.2 Letter of warning of referral to EWS will be sent to parents when pupil absence drops to 90%. (**Letter 2**) by Mr A Nicholl.
- 1.3 Once attendance falls to 85% or below referral will be made to EWS by Mr A Nicholl – Head of Pastoral Care. (**Letter 3**)

2. Periodical Absence

- 2.1 If the absences are covered by a parental note this should be followed up by a phone call home by the Year Teacher to voice the school's concern about the number of absences. (This call to parents should be of a supportive nature.)
- 2.2 If there is a pattern of absence e.g. every Friday, the class teacher should pass this on the Year Teacher who shall contact parents to ask for an explanation.
- 2.3 If periodic absence becomes chronic Year Heads should discuss the information with Mr D Beggs (Boys' Tutor) / Mrs S Flanagan (Girls' Tutor), who will invite parents into school to discuss the problem. This may lead to a referral to the EWO.

3. Truancy

- 3.1 If any pupil absents themselves from the school without permission then parents shall be contacted by phone and the pupil detained by the Year Teacher, after appropriate notification.
- 3.2 If truancy happens more than once, then the parents/carers shall be invited to the school by the Year Teacher to discuss the problem and information will be passed to Mr A Nicholl who will take further action.
- 3.3 If truancy becomes so chronic that attendance level falls to 85% a referral shall be made to EWS.
- 3.4 The school shall commit itself to monitoring the attendance of a pupil who has been involved in regular truancy by placing him/her on attendance report.
- 3.5 Period truancy shall be dealt with by the Year Teacher who shall detain any pupil who absents themselves from classes. A continuing problem shall be referred through the discipline structure aforementioned. The subject teacher will ensure that the pupil catches up on work missed because of truancy.

4. Reward

- 4.1 Each month an attendance trophy shall be presented to the class with the best attendance. There shall be a trophy for each year group.
 - 4.2 Every term those pupils with 100% attendance will be given a small reward e.g. reward certificate, book token. This should be given during class assembly time or in Year Assembly by Class Teacher or Year Teacher.
 - 4.3 If a pupil has a full year's attendance he/she shall be given a reward in an end of year assembly. This will be in the form of an Honours Badge. Pupils with one year's full attendance will receive a bronze badge. Pupils with three full year's attendance will receive a silver badge. Pupils with five year's full attendance will receive a gold badge. Those with 5/7 year's full attendance shall be included with prize winners on *Presentation Evening*. If a pupil has achieved full attendance for 12 or 14 years this will be acknowledged at *Presentation Evening* and EANI will be informed.
 - 4.4 Parents/Carers of pupils who have full attendance, or perhaps have missed only 1 or 2 days, shall be written to by Mr A Nicholl congratulating the pupils on their achievement.
- The monitoring of attendance shall be a major role of the Class Teacher and Year Teacher. The Class Teacher has a unique knowledge of the form class and after a period of time can identify those pupils whose attendance record is suspect. Pupils who are potentially poor attenders can be targeted by Class Teachers and through counselling and support be encouraged to attend school.
 - The Year Teacher, although in a more management role, has a 'whole year' view and can compass the patterns of attendance between classes. It is the Year Teacher's role to implement the policy as it has been laid down. It is often the Year Teacher who will have first formal contact with the parents when problems arise. It is also the role of the Year Teacher to set targets for form classes and for the whole year. Attainable, realistic targets will be necessary to reach the overall school attendance target. Monitoring each class is important as it is often one class that can bring down the set target for the whole year group.
 - Strategies for improvement should be discussed in the Year Team Meetings. It is a role of the Year Team to discuss attendance and share ideas. These ideas can be transformed into good practice and this good practice can be shared between Year Groups. The Year Team will decide on suitable rewards for good attendance for each Year Group.
 - The attendance policy must relate to the whole school and this includes the senior school, Year 13 and Year 14. Even though the return to school is a matter of choice, once they have enrolled senior pupils will have committed themselves to the rules and regulations of the school. All senior pupils will be expected to attend every day; in fact their regular attendance is essential for success as the level of work undertaken is much higher. Senior pupils will be expected to set an example to the rest of the school.

Reviewed August 2016

To be reviewed in August 2018