

Ballyclare Secondary School



Attendance Policy

"The community of Ballyclare Secondary School strive to provide an inclusive learning and teaching environment in which all can reach their full potential. We aim to do this by fostering the core values of respect, kindness, compassion and joy."

Contents

<i>Item</i>	<i>Page</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Aims</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Role of the School</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Form Teacher</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Continuous absence</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Periodical absence</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Truancy</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Reward</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Monitoring</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Role of parents/carers</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Role of pupils</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Family holidays</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Family holidays during term time</i>	<i>7</i>

Introduction:

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. Ballyclare Secondary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure.

Our vision for the pupils of Ballyclare Secondary School is to develop independent learners who are prepared, motivated and resilient. They will be active citizens, equipped with the core values which will enable them to thrive.

At Ballyclare Secondary School, **our mission** is to: -

- Encourage every member of the school community to be ready, responsible and respectful in all of our actions
- Build positive relationships characterised by kindness, joy and compassion
- Provide access to high quality learning and teaching responsive to the needs of each learner
- Know our pupils and encourage their diverse talents and interests
- Foster a climate of high expectations for all pupils
- Support a positive home/school partnership which encourages parental involvement and recognises the importance of working together.
- Instil in our young people, through the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, a knowledge and understanding of their role and the impact they can make.

Aims:

Ballyclare Secondary School aims to maintain and build upon its present and past successes. Each year a whole school target is set, commensurate with MACRO tracking, negotiated class / year group targets, societal observations, and advice from EWS. The message that we communicate to our pupils is that they should aim to be at school 100% of the time and if they are absent for any reason that they should aim for 100% of the remaining time left in that school year. 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 Form Teachers, involve partnership with parents and the support of the school's Educational Welfare Officer.

Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. Staff, in accordance with the school's procedures should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to their attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item (as appropriate).

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions. To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, we will adhere to the guidance provided in the **Department of Education Circular 2024/13**, which can be found Attendance Policy 08/2024

at the following link: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools>

Form Teacher

- The Form Teacher has a very important role in the promotion of good attendance. Often, they will be the first to notice a pattern of absence within a class.
- The Form Teacher will encourage good attendance and highlight its importance during class assembly time. Form Teachers will begin registration at 8:40am; any pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late using an L code. If a pupil arrives after 9:30am a U code should be used for the morning session.
- Minor absences will be dealt with by the Form Teacher confirming reasons and checking that notes have been received. The Form Teacher will make contact by phone with parents/carers on the third day of pupil absence. The Form Teacher is responsible for accurately recording attendance for their respective class on SIMS, including but not limited to, regularly checking, and reflecting on their classes' attendance trends and coding. Form Teachers should check on a weekly basis the attendance of their class, by way of running of SIMS reports and liaise accordingly with their Heads of Year.
- If an unexplained absence continues beyond three days, the Form Teacher will request written explanations from parents / carers.
- Form Teachers should liaise with their Heads of Year when no reason is being given for persistent unexplained absences. The Head of Year will begin a more formal process, should the exercising of correspondence steps (in the form of further calls / request(s) for meeting(s) be unsuccessful (**Letter 1**).
- Form Teachers are responsible for organising pupils into scheduled lateness detention(s), that are held on a Friday afternoon, supervised by members of the Senior Leadership Team, chiefly the Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting). Form Teachers are responsible for following up on a Monday morning RE: any non-attendance at lateness detention.
- Form Teachers are responsible for negotiating an attendance target for their class, communicating said target to their Heads of Year.

1. Continuous Absence

- 1.1 If unexplained absence(s) continues for five days or more and the Head of Year has received no response from parents / carers, including an appropriate response to letter correspondence, they will liaise with their respective Head of Key Stage. This will also be the case for periodical absence in any given month. Heads of Key Stage will attempt to contact parents / carers, organising a meeting (where appropriate) to discuss the matter face-to-face. Heads of Key Stage (where appropriate) will discuss each case with their SLT link person.
- 1.2 Letter of warning of referral to EWS will be sent to parents when pupil absence drops to 90%. (**Letter 2**) by the Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting).
- 1.3 Once attendance falls to 85% or below a referral will be made to EWS by the Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting) (**Letter 3**). Cases will be examined, and suitability of referral will be determined by the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care – Acting).
- 1.4 The above (1.1-1.3) are subject to a case-by-case analysis. Where appropriate, the Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting) will seek council from EWS and may delay in writing to parents / actioning an EWS referral. Moreover, where appropriate (as

deemed by the Vice Principal – Pastoral Care (Acting) and/or another member of the Senior Leadership Team) an EWS referral may be completed to support a young person with attendance higher than 85% for solid pastoral reasons; in these instances, said referral will be communicated to parents/carers.

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 Head of Year 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 Form Teacher should pass this on to the Head of Year who shall contact parents to ask for an explanation.
- 2.3 Heads of Year will make every professional effort to support good attendance, including but not limited to: contact with home, positive engagement with pupils, implementing interventions and ensuring that appropriate staff are made aware of concerns and supports therein.
- 2.4 Heads of Year should discuss cases with their respective Head of Key Stage, appraising them of actions taken and concerns that may remain. Heads of Year should encourage our team approach to addressing attendance concerns, in these cases (in instances of escalation) do not necessarily remain with said Middle or Senior Leader, more so that requests may be made of other staff in supporting positive attendance moving forward.

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 Head of Year, after appropriate notification. In some instances, Heads of Year may require the support of Form Teachers in pupil supervision, when managing multiple cases across the year group. Heads of Year should adopt a restorative approach when addressing concerns, alongside the teaching of consequences.
- 3.2 If truancy happens more than once, then the parents/carers shall be invited to the school by the Head of Year to discuss the matter.
- 3.3 If truancy becomes so chronic that attendance level falls to 85% a referral shall be made to EWS.
- 3.4 Pastoral staff reserve the right to implement an attendance report to monitor and help improve a pupil's attendance. Form Teachers should discuss the appropriateness of a report with their Head of Year before intervening themselves.
- 3.5 Members of the Senior Leadership Team can impose strict supervision protocols for pupils who truant from school and who give members of this team concern.
- 3.6 For safeguarding reasons, pupils are not permitted to leave the school grounds to attend shops in the local town. It is at the discretion of the Senior Leadership Team, whether or not a lunch pass system operates for KS3 and KS4 pupils.

4. **Reward**

- 4.1 Positive attendance will be linked to our school House System and our school reward system(s).
- 4.2 If a pupil has a full year's attendance, they shall be given a reward in an end of year assembly. This will be in the form of an achievement badge. Pupils with one year's full attendance will receive a bronze badge. Pupils with two full year's attendance will receive a silver badge. Pupils with three year's full attendance will receive a gold badge. Those with 5/7 year's full attendance shall be included with prize winners on *Celebration Afternoon*, for special recognition. If a pupil has achieved full attendance for 12 or 14 years this will also be acknowledged at *the Celebration Afternoon*.
- 4.3 Pastoral staff are encouraged to develop and implement their own discreet reward systems for positive attendance that compliment that of our whole school system(s).

5. **Monitoring**

- The monitoring of attendance shall be a major role of the Form Teacher, supported by their Heads of Year. The Form 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 Form Teachers and through counselling and support be encouraged to attend school.
- The Heads of Year, although in a leadership role, have a 'whole year' view and can compass the patterns of attendance between classes. It is the Head of Year's role to implement the policy as it has been laid down. It is often the HOY who will have first formal contact (face-to-face meeting) with the parents when problems arise. It is also the role of the HOY to gather, discuss and agree 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 pastoral meetings. It is the 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, pursuant to a sixth form contract. 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. Interventions will be actioned where necessary to support positive attendance at school.

Role of Parents / Carers

Ballyclare Secondary is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability, and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

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

It is a parent's/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 8:40am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with their Form Teacher to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil must attend school punctually and regularly. If you (the pupil) have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/carer must be provided to your Form Teacher when you return. All parents/carers are required to complete the absence notification slips/notes which provides a clear reason for any absence.

Family Holidays During Term Time

Ballyclare Secondary School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised. Subjectivity on this matter rests with the Principal.