

## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the schools attendance policy.

### Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarized as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the NEWB
- Levels of disadvantage
- Changing attitudes to education.

### Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- identifying pupils at risk
- promoting a positive learning environment
- enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

### Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount. W

### Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the relevant post- holder Mary Mc Nea make returns to NEWB. Class teachers have the responsibility to record absences and explanations on Aladdin to comply with the having the relevant information necessary for NEWB returns. It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

### Punctuality

School begins at 9.00 am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

## **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin (computer software data management system for schools) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded and saved on Aladdin.

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin. The roll call is taken at 10.00 am each morning. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must communicate by note to the teacher if child departs early during the school day and sign out at the front office where they will collect their child.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern to class teachers are invited to meet with the class teacher initially to discuss the concerns and monitor progress. If unresolved the parent is asked by the class teacher to meet with the Principal /relevant post-holder. Our approach will be encouragement and understanding.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, 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.

## **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment through many Deis curricular and extra-curricular initiatives.
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- rewarding good attendance at the end of term/year.

## **TUSLA**

The Child and Family Agency is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

TUSLA is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is on-line.

## **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

Breaffy NS 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.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. Year on year standards are relayed to BOM by Principal. Notwithstanding that, our staff remain vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorized as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the class teacher /Principal may be set up if deemed necessary by the class teacher or failing supply of a reasonable explanation. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the TUSLA Education Welfare Officer.

Class teachers will focus and encourage 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 June and a reminder is published 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. The school calendar is also published on the school website [www.breaffyns.ie](http://www.breaffyns.ie) and in the school homework journals from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 6<sup>th</sup> class.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.

## **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 recognized school on each school day'.

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 the EWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

## **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.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

## **Communication**

The school has developed a good relationship with the local National Education Welfare Board/ Tusla (NEWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk. Our Postholder Mary Mc Nea maintains regular contact with the relevant families and the relevant officer of the NEWB .

Our school maintains communication with local second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible. We have a number of strategies to ease that transition.

## **Transition to Secondary School Strategies.**

- In 5<sup>th</sup> &/ 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils are brought to the local secondary schools for school performances/musicals, science exhibitions and other events as they arise to familiarise our pupils with the next stage of their education.
- We facilitate local secondary school programmes such as Spike Ball., Peer to Peer where they see past pupils returning to us from their relevant secondary schools.
- The 'Peer for Peer' Programme is a vital influential element in 6<sup>th</sup> class for pupils making the transition.
- We facilitate and welcome school principal's from local secondary schools who visit our school to promote enrolment and transition to their chosen secondary school.
- On an annual basis as part of our Deis Strategy we hold workshops for parents at night and for pupils during the day on the challenges of transitioning to and preparing for secondary school. This is called ' Student Enrichment Programme'.

## **Communication with other Schools**

- When a child transfers from Breaffy Ns to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into Breaffy NS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Breaffy Ns to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

## **Communication with Parents**

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- 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 and 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.
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments 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.

## Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin school records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback and teacher encouragement and vigilance.
- Improvements in attendance following introduction of Attendance Certs and awards for unbroken attendance over their eight years in our school.

## References

Education Welfare Act 2000, Education Act 1998 and Section 29 Education Act

Signed on Behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairperson: Tom Canavan

Date: 19/12/2018

Principal : Seoirse O Morain

Date: 19/12/2018