Ballyhaunis Community School

Attendance Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signature:

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(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Commenced:	October 2024
Next review due:	October 2027

Introduction

This policy adheres to Ballyhaunis Community Schools Mission Statement which aims to foster the holistic development of each individual and to give each person the opportunity to reach his/her full potential in partnership with the school and parents/guardians.

In accordance with The Education Welfare Act 2000 this policy has as its purpose the promotion of maximum attendance by each student. The importance of regular attendance cannot be over emphasised as poor attendance affects all aspects of school life. By law the school is obliged to report any student who has accumulated 20 days absences in a school calendar year, regardless of circumstances to the national authority, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Objectives

- To maintain and keep an accurate register of student attendance.
- To encourage regular, consistent and punctual attendance.
- To encourage parents/guardians to send students to school in all but exceptional circumstances.
- To notify the relevant Education Welfare Officer of particular problems in relation to attendance.
- To record all absences.
- To record all reasons for absences.

Role of the student

- To attend school every day
- To be on time and ready for class at 9:00a.m. and be punctual for all subsequent classes. It is expected that all students are on the premises at 8:50a.m.
- In the event of late arrival, Students must sign in at the office. An explanation for lateness must be submitted by parents/ guardians via VSware App.
- To ensure parents/guardians submit a reason for absence on the VSware App (and medical certificate where applicable) to their Year Head on the first day of absence and for the duration of absence.
- To make every effort to catch up on the schoolwork missed, in particular compulsory course work and exam projects, during their absence.

Role of the Teacher

- To accurately record the class roll for each class on VSware.
- To encourage and promote good attendance.
- To discuss students attendance records with parents/guardians at Parent Teacher meetings.
- To encourage students to catch up on work missed during their absence.
- To provide support and intervention where necessary to promote regular attendance.

Role of the Year Head

- To maintain a roll for their year head group.
- To monitor individual student attendance regularly.
- To receive and approve requests for student absences on VSware from parents/guardians.
- To note trends in absence records of individual students and bring these to the attention of parents/guardians of students concerned also to the Senior Management team/Home School Community Liaison person.
- To contact parents where unauthorised absences occur or are suspected and to notify the Principal/Deputy Principals/HSCL officer of same.

Role of the Deputy Principal

- To encourage regular attendance by students.
- To receive reports from year heads on issues relating to attendance.
- To monitor and investigate unauthorised absences of students from the school or from class.
- To contact parents/guardians where unauthorised absences are suspected.

Role of the Principal

- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendances and absences of students.
- To monitor attendance records regularly.
- To make reports to the Education Welfare Officer as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To inform parents/guardians and students of procedures for the notification of absences/withdrawal of student from the school.
- To remind students and parents/guardians of the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of frequent absences on student progress.

Role of Home School Community Liaison Officer

- To assist parents in identifying causes of and solutions to attendance issues.
- To identify and support parents to engage with in school and out of school supports to address attendance issues.
- To promote positive engagement between the home and school.
- To contribute to ensuring a whole school approach to improving attendance.

Role of administrative staff

- To maintain a record of students late for school on VSware.
- To sign and date the student journal for each late student.
- To maintain a record of students withdrawn from school during the day and their return to school if doing so.

Role of parents/guardians

- To ensure that students attend school daily and avoid unwarranted absences.
- To submit an absence request to the school using VSware for all absences. This should be done prior to the absence or on the first day of the student absence.
- To adhere to the procedures set out in this policy for the withdrawal of students from school during the school day.

The following structures are in place to monitor and encourage attendance:

1. A roll call is taken in every class and recorded on the school's communication package VS Ware.

2. Students who are late to school in the morning must report to the office to sign in and to ensure they are marked present. An explanation for lateness must be submitted by parents/guardians via the VSware App. Interventions apply for persistent lateness. These include verbal warnings, communication with home and detention.

3. Parents should submit an absence request to the school on the first day of an absence.

4. Parent/guardians of students who have to leave school during the school day, must submit a partial absence request to the relevant Year Head by 8:30 a.m. The student must be collected in person by parent/guardian and co-signed out of the school at the main office.

5. If a student returns to school following a partial absence, they must report to the main office to sign in before attending classes.

6. When students leave school without permission this is considered a serious breach of the disciplinary system and code of behaviour.

7. Where a student is absent for the morning roll call, the school will contact home by sending a absent text and a reminder to send in an absent request on VS ware.

8. A daily list of absent students is available to teachers on the VSware system.

9. The Year Head will contact the parents/guardians of students whose attendance displays worrying trends. This may include a phone call/email/letter to the parents/guardians requesting a response or meeting to discuss absence.

10. The School Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, HSCL Officer, and the school Care Team monitor school attendance.

11. Parents of students who are showing signs of absenteeism issues are referred to the HSCL Officer.

12. Arrangements may be made to meet parents in the school or the HSCL Officer may visit the home to offer advice and support.

13. Where appropriate, in school measures may be put in place for individual students to encourage better attendance.

14. After 10 days of absence, the parents/guardians will receive written notice that their students has been absent for 10 days (or more).

15. In the case of 20 days of absence, the parents/guardians will receive written notice that their students has been absent for 20 days (or more), and may be asked to meet with a member (or members) of the Care team in the school with a view to seeking ways to address the issue.

16. Attendance reports are sent to Tusla at the assigned times during the school year. The NEWB have access to our attendance records and a visit from the NEWB attendance officer may follow. The NEWB may refer cases to other support agencies.

17. Referrals to the NEWB by the HSCL Officer/Principal/Deputy Principal may occur at any time of the year, if there are concerns regarding attendance of a student.

18. Supports for parents/guardians: If parents/guardians have difficulty in getting their student to attend school they should make contact with the relevant Year Head. Parents and students will be supported through the school Pastoral Care System. This may take the form of a meeting or meetings with one or more of the following – Guidance Counsellors, Chaplain, HSCL Officer, Year Head, Deputy Principals or Principal.

19. It is strongly emphasised at the First Year Parent Induction and at subsequent meetings such as parent teacher meetings that full attendance is promoted and encouraged.

Recording and Monitoring of Attendance

At the end of each academic year the school makes a return to TUSLA reporting the names of students under the age of sixteen who have been absent twenty days or more. The names of students who have been suspended for six days or more are also reported.

The number of days that each student has been absent is entered under the following categories:-

A. Illness

B. Urgent family reasons (i.e. bereavement)

C. Holiday

D. Suspended

E. Other

F. Unexplained

At the end of the school year, the Annual Attendance Report (AAR) is filled in. This report identifies:-

• The total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school.

• The total number of students who were absent for twenty days or more in the entire school.

• The total number of students expelled during the school year.

• The total number of students suspended during the school year.

Attendance data collected by the school is used for the following purposes:

• To monitor overall attendance and punctuality levels.

• To identify trends and patterns in attendance.

• To monitor the attendance of vulnerable groups or individuals and to direct early

  intervention with groups and individuals.

• To set DEIS targets for improvement in attendance and reduction of absence.

• To trigger early interventions at whole-school, class or group level and individual level.

• To identify individuals with poor attendance and intervene accordingly.

DEIS Improvement Plan

Key elements in achieving educational equality is based on good attendance. As part of our DEIS Improvement plan we aim to promote regular attendance among our students in order that they can benefit fully from their education. Participation in school encourages regular attendance by ensuring that the experience of students is both engaging and beneficial. The promotion of good attendance enhances educational outcomes for all students. Various attendance initiatives are used to improve student attendance: e.g. 'Drive for Five', 'Nice to See You'.

Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

This Attendance Policy has been made available to school personnel, the parent's association and members of the school community. The implementation of the policy shall be monitored by the Principal and updates reported to the Board of Management when necessary. The Attendance Policy forms part of the Whole School Plan; it is an active document and will be fully reviewed every three years. The next date for a full review is during the academic year 2027/2028.