



## **Bandonbridge National School**

### **Policy and Statement of Strategy for School Attendance**

**Date ratified by Board of Management: 02/09/2017**

**Date policy reviewed and updated: 31/01/2024**

**New policy ratified by the Board of Management: 13/02/2024**

**Date of next review:**

## **Introductory Statement**

This Statement of Strategy was formulated initially in consultation with the staff, parents/guardians, and Board of Management of Bandonbridge N.S. following Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, guidelines. These Guidelines for Schools is provided under statutory instrument of Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Section 22(1) of the Act, states:

*'the board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students recognised at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board of Tusla a statement of strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students'*

This policy was reviewed during 2023/24 under the National School Attendance Campaign. While it is no longer a requirement that the Board of Management submit a statement of strategy to Tusla, it is still a requirement that a statement of strategy be drafted annually.

## **Rationale**

In Bandonbridge N.S. we endeavour to foster good school attendance through promoting a positive image of school and education, by highlighting the work of TUSLA and making parents/guardians aware of the changes to the law in relation to school attendance, as they arise. The wellbeing of all pupils is central to our school motto, our mission statement, values and ethos. Monitoring pupil attendance and punctuality is conducted daily so we can identify at risk pupils, work with their parents/guardians and comply with legislation regarding child protection as outlined in our Child Safeguarding Statement and the annual risk assessment.

## **Aims**

- To ensure the wellbeing of all pupils in our school community
- To foster an appreciation of learning, regular attendance in school is vital in order to maintain momentum and consistency
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning, both in the children and also their parents/guardians
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early and to intervene positively to prevent that occurrence
- To support the learning of High-Risk pupils during pandemics or other such events during which pupils who have been medically certified as High Risk need to access distance learning
- To comply with the requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000 and to make parents aware of their statutory duties outlined in this Act ("Don't Let Your Child Miss Out" - leaflet for parents NEWB 2004)

## What is good attendance?

Category	Definition	Absent
Satisfactory/ Regular Attendance	In school more than 95% of the time	No more than 9 days
At Risk of Chronic Attendance	In school more than 90% of the time but less than 95% of the time	10 – 18 days
Chronic Attendance	In school less than 90% of the time	More than 18 days

We want everyone to be an Attendance Hero:

**H**ere  
**E**very day  
**R**eady  
**O**n time

## Guidelines

The Guidelines for Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance form the basis for this policy and the annual strategies and target used in Bandonbridge N.S.

[FINAL SAS strategy eng 2jun.pdf \(tusla.ie\)](#)

- As stated in the Bandonbridge N.S. Code of Behaviour and in accordance with Section 23 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, when a child is absent from school, parents/guardians are expected to communicate promptly with the school. On the morning of an absence, parent/guardians may phone, text, email or use Aladdin, our school administration system, to inform the school of pupil absences.
- Subsequently, all absences and the reason for them must be completed by parents/guardians using Aladdin. In the instance of illness, parents/guardians should outline the nature of the illness. Where possible, the school should be informed in advance of the child being absent from school for an upcoming family event e.g. a wedding, funeral etc.
- Time in School: Junior and Senior Infants 8:45 – 1:25; all other classes 8:45 – 2:25 daily. Late arrivals and early leaving are recorded on Aladdin. Absences of more than half a day (2 hours and 50 minutes) are recorded as full day absences.
- Absences for family holidays should not be taken during term time. This is not a valid reason for absence from school. Permission to remove children from school for family holidays must be sought from the school Principal. Under no circumstances will teachers provide school work for pupils who will be absent from school due to a holiday.
- Other than HSE appointments, parents/guardians should make other appointments for their children outside school hours.
- Pupils who have been absent for 20 consecutive days will be removed from the school roll and this information will be communicated to Tusla.
- Reduced School Days are used in a manner that is limited, appropriate and absolutely necessary, in line with the Department of Education's guidelines. Referrals are submitted to Tusla and the Special Educational Needs Organiser where a pupil is accessing a reduced school day for a short period of time (6 weeks). [gov - Guidelines for the use of Reduced School Days in Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

## **Whole school strategies to promote attendance**

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- The staff endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils by encouraging all children to do their best, to participate in all activities without fear of the consequences of failure, to feel valued as a member of the school and to be included in classroom activities and playground games.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, will be flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual children. We engage in extra-curricular activities which provide stimulating and exciting ways to engage with learning: VEX Robotics, Junior Entrepreneur, Cór Fhéile na Scol, carol singing, church services, concerts, Science Blast, field trips, fund-raising etc.
- All school staff will promote development of good self-esteem and self-worth in its pupils, in line with our Ethos Statement, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy
- Our school has a Wellbeing Committee which meets regularly to discuss wellbeing in our school community
- Teachers will promote good mental health through their S.P.H.E. programmes; engaging with mindfulness, Active School activities, movement breaks etc. which help pupils understand their emotions generally but can help break a pattern of non-attendance
- Our school has established close contacts between home and school through the work of our Parents Association, Parent-Teacher meetings and Support Teaching meetings, messages on the Aladdin noticeboard, newsletters, social occasions and informal conversations before or after school
- Our school website and blog highlight the activities of the school in a positive and life-affirming way
- We hold an annual Open Evening for prospective parents/guardians and their children, as well as an Induction Meeting for Junior Infants and/or their parents/guardians
- There is additional support for children with special education needs or EAL needs in accordance with DES and NCSE guidelines
- Classes or individual pupils with good attendance may be rewarded. Strategies and targets will be discussed annually. Good attendance will be emphasised year-round.
- The school holiday calendar is sent out to parents/guardians and is also available on the school website. Parents/guardians are alerted to any changes to the calendar by email, newsletter, text etc.
- Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians with non-attending pupils. Initially the teacher will speak with the parents/guardians to discuss the matter. An incentive scheme may be put in place, at the teacher's discretion.
- For repeated absences (especially for reasons other than illness) the Principal will invite the parents/guardians to a meeting to discuss the problem. Should the situation persist the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer at TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency, and notify parents/guardians of this by letter.
- Each child's attendance for the year will be written on end of year reports to parents/guardians. This will be listed as a proportion of the year as a whole. This information will be provided to Secondary Schools in the 6th class School Passport.
- The Principal will inform the Parent Association at their A.G.M. each autumn as to the levels of attendance during the immediately preceding school year.

- The school will endeavour to identify pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems, especially those which are unaccounted for, and will act on any concerns quickly before the situation becomes chronic; the school would view serious absence as missing at least 1 day a week.
- The school must inform the Educational Welfare Officer when a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year or where attendance is irregular or unexplained.
- The school will inform the Educational Welfare Officer where a child is suspended or expelled.
- This policy is available to view on our school website policy section.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

- Each teacher and Special Needs Assistant is responsible for endeavouring to create a welcoming, positive atmosphere in the classroom to encourage those who may be reluctant attendees. Class teachers should greet pupils individually as they arrive at school.
- Pupils who have been absent from school should be welcomed back. This is particularly important for the reluctant school attender or pupils with high levels of absence. Their arrival back to school should be positive and encouraging, rather than focussing on the absence.
- At the start of the school year, all staff will familiarise themselves with this policy and the strategies and targets for that year.
- Class teachers are responsible for roll call and recording absences on Aladdin and recording the reasons for absences on the system when they receive notes from parents/guardians or the office.
- They are also responsible for filing letters of absences and reporting concerns about individual cases to their parents/guardians and the principal. They will note any reasons why a child may be attending irregularly: e.g. test days, bullying, failing academically, exclusion by peers, absent on days when particular subjects are taught etc.
- Teachers will refer to school attendance during Parent-Teacher meetings and/or Support Teaching meetings. Pupils with consistently good school attendance will be commended and strategies to improve school attendance for those who are at risk discussed
- Consistently late arrivals should also be monitored. Is the first subject of the day a trigger?
- The school secretary will monitor the absences and upload any absence messages to Aladdin. She will record late arrivals and early leaving on Aladdin. She will check that all reasons for absences and the relating note have been received. She will follow up with parents/guardians where notes have not been received. She will monitor the attendance of any at risk pupils and communicate to the Principal when a pupil has reached 20 days of absence.
- The Support Teachers may also be involved in non-attendance situations concerning children in their care.
- Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school, to inform the school why their child might not be coming to school, to promote a love of learning and fostering positive building blocks for their future lives.
- The Board of Management is responsible for drafting the policy and reviewing the annual statement of strategy for school attendance. The BoM has oversight of school attendance and absenteeism.

- The Principal will submit absence reports to TUSLA where necessary. She will contact parents/guardians about serious cases of non-attendance and liaise with the Education Welfare Officer or other relevant agencies on non-attendance issues.
- The Principal can only remove a child's name from POD, the Primary On-line Database, when she has been informed, in writing by the Principal of the child's "new" school, that the child has been registered there or when TUSLA notifies her that the child has been registered by the Board as homeschooled. When a child is removed from Bandonbridge N.S. the Principal is obliged to notify the "new" school of any problems in relation to attendance and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as she considers appropriate. (The exception to this is where a pupil has been absent for 20 consecutive school days)
- The Education Welfare Officer/s for our area will endeavour to liaise between the parents/guardians, pupils, principal, class teacher and BOM in cases of non-attendance.
- Our school maintains contacts with a variety of agencies which also support the school in fostering good attendance: Tusla Social Services and EWOs, NEPS, SENO, Primary Care Services, Children's Disability Network Team (CDNT), CAMHS, local clergy, Community Garda, therapists and counselling services (emotional, social, behavioural, bereavement etc), relevant local interest and community groups
- The Board of Management is responsible for ratifying this policy and ensuring the whole school community is mindful of:
  - The identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum which may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of certain pupils
  - The identification of strategies for the removal of those aspects, insofar as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school, having regard, in particular, to the educational and well-being needs of pupils
  - The identification of strategies that will encourage more regular attendance at school by such students
  - The need to review this strategy in the future to accommodate the changing needs of the school and its population.