

S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe



Polasaí Tinrimh



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Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement

The Attendance policy was drafted by the staff of S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe in a process that involved consultation, discussion, collaboration and planning by the school staff, the Board of Management, the parents and the children of the school. This policy is closely linked to the Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour, SPHE Policy, Record Keeping Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Equality of Opportunity Policy, Special Education Policy and Enrolment Policy.

This policy outlines the procedures followed in S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe to promote and monitor attendance. This policy is reviewed regularly and complies with the Education Welfare Act 2000 and Guidelines issued by the National Educational Welfare Board.

Rationale

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 provides a legal framework for addressing the needs of children who are not attending school regularly. Specifically, the Act provides for the entitlement of every child to receive an education. The Board of Management, staff, parents/guardians, and the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) have a responsibility to assist and support children in this regard.

The importance of school attendance is acknowledged by the Board of Management and staff of S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe and every effort is made to promote and monitor attendance.

When a child attends school on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills.

Children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams.

The more time a child spends around other children, whether in the classroom or as part of a school team or club, the more chance they have of making friends and feeling included, developing social skills, confidence and self-esteem.

While the parent is primarily responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, when school attendance problems occur, the key to successfully resolving these problems is through collaborative working between the child, the parent, the school and the NEWB.

The purpose of our school attendance policy is to support a positive learning environment where children are physically safe and happy and where good relationships are fostered between pupils, teachers, parents/guardians and others involved in the running of the school. This is in line with our school ethos.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe is a Catholic School with a Christian group of pupils, parents, staff and management who share a similar vision. Children and families of other faiths and beliefs are also welcomed into our school and share this vision.

We, the staff in S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe aim to:

- * provide for the holistic development of each child - physically, intellectually, emotionally, creatively, spiritually and socially
- * enable each child to develop in an open, happy, safe, stimulating and mutually respectful environment
- * provide an active, enriched learning environment for children with the availability of appropriate, instructional materials, resources and classroom adaptations
- * develop a love of learning and an openness to lifelong learning
- * foster a sense of community between management, teachers, parents and children and an awareness of belonging to the whole community
- * develop in students an awareness and appreciation of our culture, heritage with particular emphasis on the Irish language
- * develop an appreciation of the environment and one's responsibility for its preservation
- * prepare each child for his/her future in education and in society

Mission Statement

The Board of Management, staff and parents of S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe are committed to the following mission:

S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe is a happy, safe and welcoming environment for all, a place where:

- * Catholic values are practised and valued and there is a shared commitment to the Catholic ethos of the school
- * everybody is respected, included and is treated fairly and equally
- * there are clear goals that are commonly agreed and shared
- * honest, open communication and consultation is fostered and decision making is a democratic process with input from all members of the school community
- * diversity is valued and evident and emphasis is on inclusion
- * the highest standards of learning and teaching are promoted and celebrated
- * emphasis is on the provision of a holistic education, enabling each student to achieve their full potential
- * effort and commitment is recognised, affirmed and encouraged
- * teachers and children are inspired to be lifelong learners in a vastly changing world
- * parents are appreciated as partners in education
- * a sense of community and pride in our local parish is fostered

- * all strive for school improvement from year to year and change is embraced in a positive way
- * a love of Irish culture is developed and use of Irish language is promoted

Aims of the Attendance Policy

This policy will help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of those involved with the school in relation to attendance.

- * That the Board of Management clearly understand their role in ensuring procedures required legally are adhered to.
- * That the school principal has a clear framework outlining obligations in relation to attendance.
- * That the staff of the school understand their obligations in relation to recording school attendance on a daily basis and completing and maintaining all records in the roll book.
- * That parents/guardians will clearly understand their obligations in relation to the attendance of the child and will be familiar with the roles and procedures of the National Education Welfare Board and the School Attendance Officer.
- * That children will understand how important it is to attend school every day.

This policy also outlines school attendance strategies in S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe which are required under the Education Welfare Act (2000) to encourage learning and regular attendance.

This policy is concerned with:

- * Protecting the right of a child to education.
- * Promoting and fostering in families an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education with respect to the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and moral development of children and of the social and economic advantage that flow there from.
- * Emphasising the importance of continuous, uninterrupted attendance at school.
- * Encouraging, recognising and rewarding school attendance of individuals and classes.
- * Monitoring school attendance.
- * Identifying poor or erratic or irregular attendance patterns of pupils.
- * Identifying at an early stage students at risk who may develop attendance problems.
- * Establishing partnership and collaboration between parents, pupils and teachers in promoting and encouraging children's attendance at school.
- * Ensuring that relevant agencies will be informed of the identity of erratic or irregular attendance patterns of pupils in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- * Working in collaboration with the Schools Attendance Officer and the NEWB/TUSLA.

Attendance Procedures

- * As required under Sections 20 and 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, a school register and school attendance records are established and maintained.
- * All children enrolled in S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe, are registered in the Schools Register/Clárleabhar.
- * Parents/guardians are advised that their child's attendance is monitored and of the obligation of the school under the Education Welfare Act 2000, to notify the National Educational Welfare Board of pupils who have been absent from school for 20 days in any school year. This advice is communicated via newsletter at the beginning of each school year and at the school Enrolment Meeting for new parent/guardians.
- * Parents/guardians of new children receive a copy of the school Code of Behaviour and the school attendance policy as part of the enrolment process. Parents/guardians are requested to confirm in writing that the code is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance. Parents/guardians also receive a guidance booklet advising them of the importance of school attendance for the wellbeing of the child.
- * Parents/guardians are reminded of the school rules at the beginning of each year via letter. At the beginning of each term, children are reminded of the school rules and the importance of attendance is discussed.
- * Teachers remind children of school rules on a regular basis during the school week.
- * One of the rules clearly states that if a child is absent from school, parents/guardians must communicate to the school, reasons for absence, via a letter or note. Parents/guardians are reminded of this requirement regularly in school newsletters.
- * Class teachers call the roll daily at ten o'clock. A roll-call reminder bell rings to ensure that a record is taken of attendance in the roll book each morning.
- * The school secretary contacts each classroom and records the attendance for the day. This attendance is recorded on the schools attendance database.
- * The daily attendance is recorded by the school principal in the Leabhar Tinrimh.
- * Class teachers are responsible for maintaining individual attendance in the classroom roll book. Totals at the end of each term and at the year-end are recorded by the teacher. All roll books must be kept up to date, totalled by term/year and forwarded to the principal's office on the last day of the school year. Accurate recording is essential in order to meet legal requirements and promote the safety of all pupils.
- * The secretary asks the class teacher to send those children who have been absent the previous day or earlier that week to come to the office with absence notes. All absence notes are filed by class and kept with other attendance records.
- * Children who have not brought in absence notes will be reminded by the class teacher (when secretary phones the classroom each morning). The principal will follow through on reminders if there continues to be unexplained absences.
- * If there is no response to this letter, the child's absence will remain recorded in the school attendance database for the NEWB as 'unexplained'. This information is presented to the Education Welfare Officer.
- * If a child has been absent from school without any explanation, teacher will request child to bring a note in writing the following day, from his or her parents. If the child fails to bring in a note, a letter will be sent to his/her parents. This school letter will request a reason for absence from school.
- * The necessity for constant, regular attendance at school will be impressed on parents through newsletters, formal and informal parent-teacher meetings.
- * A school-attendance strategy booklet is given to each family on enrolment to S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe and to parents/guardians of children whose attendance is causing concern.
- * Attendance of pupils is reviewed by the principal on a weekly basis. Individual and class attendance statistics are reviewed and poor/irregular attendance of individual pupils or classes are identified.
- * Particular attention will be paid to regular short term absences, e.g., one or more days each week, frequent absences on Mondays or Fridays...

- * At the end of each school year, parents/guardians receive a school report regarding their child. Children's attendance during the year is noted on this report.
- * Children are rewarded for good attendance with school certificates at various times during the school year e.g. end of term, end of year...
- * Classes are rewarded for good attendance at the end of each month. The Mr. Coen trophy for 'Best Attendance' is presented to the class with the highest percentage of attendance and this class is rewarded.
- * When a child reaches 15 days in absence, the principal notifies the parent/guardian and invites the parent/guardian to a meeting to discuss attendance and to support the family in improving the child's attendance.
- * If a child exceeds the 20 days, the principal communicates with the parent/guardian regarding the 20 days absence. The parent/guardian is invited to a meeting to discuss the child's continued absence before the attached form is completed and forwarded to the Education Welfare Officer of the National Educational Welfare Board.
- * Before a referral is made for a casework service from NEWB, a pre-referral checklist is completed outlining all the attempts made by the school to resolve the attendance issue (see Appendix 1).
- * A record is kept by each class teacher of children who leave the school during the school day and their reason for doing so. The principal is informed when a child is leaving the school – if the parent/guardian arrives unannounced on the premises or if a note has been sent in with the child. The principal monitors the early-leaver lists on a regular basis. These lists are copied and kept with attendance records.
- * End of year reports are issued for all pupils. Attendance is noted and recorded on the school report.
- * The school principal and/or class teacher may have to communicate with other agencies, e.g. NEWB, the Health Board regarding the attendance of children at risk.
- * At the end of each school year, the Principal reports to Board of Management regarding the general attendance of pupils during the school year.

Strategies to Promote Attendance in S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe

- * The school has a comprehensive attendance policy which sets out its systems and procedures for ensuring regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance. This policy is reviewed regularly.
- * Roles and responsibilities of those working with the school are clearly defined in relation to attendance.
- * Attendance and its importance is emphasised at the enrolment evening and attendance booklets and information is given to all new families and to those whose attendance is being monitored
- * The principal and staff record and monitor attendance on a daily basis
- * Frequent meetings are held between the principal and the schools Education Welfare Officer.
- * Attendance is recorded electronically via the Aladdin system as well as on paper. This enables more effective and efficient monitoring of attendance on a daily basis as well as allowing the identification of longer-term trends in absence which can be used to inform school policy and practice.
- * There is continuous analysis of individual pupil attendance and of whole school attendance.
- * The school emphasises parents' prime responsibility for ensuring attendance by asking parents to inform them as soon as possible if their child will not be attending school on a particular day. If a pupil is absent without explanation, parents/guardians are contacted and requested to forward a written explanation regarding the child's absence. A declared and active policy of school contact makes clear to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up on.

- * Attendance is promoted through the use of parent-teacher meetings, school newsletters, posters, leaflets and strategy booklets.
- * When welcoming new parents/guardians and pupils, the principal raises awareness of the importance of punctuality and attendance.
- * As part of staff induction, new staff are briefed on the school's philosophy on attendance and they are introduced to their responsibilities for attendance management.
- * Rewards and incentives are used to encourage attendance and punctuality.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

- Ensures that a comprehensive attendance policy is in place in the school and that this policy is reviewed regularly.
- Ensures that all school records are established and maintained in accordance with the Education Act and the Education Welfare Act.

Under sections 20 and 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, recognised schools are required to:

- establish and maintain a school register and school attendance records
- monitor the attendance of all students enrolled

School Principal

Under Section 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the school Principal must maintain a 'record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school'.

The school attendance record should contain the following information for each student whose name is on the School Register:

- Attendance or non-attendance on each school day. A student is in attendance if he/she is present when attendance is checked under the school's normal procedures i.e. when the school roll is taken.
- If a student has been suspended for any number of days these should be recorded as absences in the normal way, and categorised appropriately.
- Reasons for failure to attend on each school day.
- Report on student attendance in certain circumstances

Under the Act, a school is obliged to report to the NEWB every time:

- a student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively
- a Principal is concerned about a student's attendance
- the Board of Management decides to expel a student
- a student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for whatever reason

All schools are asked to submit information about individual student absences **four** times a year on designated dates, and only if they have students in the categories stated above. Reporting dates are circulated at the beginning of each school year.

Class Teachers

- Class teachers register children in the class roll book at the beginning of the school year.
- Teachers take the class roll at ten o' clock each morning. Attendance is recorded immediately in the roll book.
- The school secretary is informed of all absences.
- Class teachers remind children to submit notes regarding absence using the prepared note templates in the child's homework diary.
- These notes are forwarded to the office on a daily basis.
- At the end of each term, individual totals of each child's attendance are recorded in the roll book. The class totals are also recorded and tally with the individual.
- Yearly totals are recorded in the roll book at the end of the school year and all roll books are forwarded to the principal's office on the last day of the school year.

Parents / Guardians

- Parents/guardians make every effort to ensure that the child attends school every day and is on time for school.
- The school will be informed in advance of planned absences.
- Parents/guardians will forward a signed note outlining the reason for absence immediately following the absence of the child.
- Parents/guardians will make every effort to schedule appointments and holidays outside of school time.
- The importance of school attendance should be communicated to the child by parents/guardians on receipt of newsletters, brochures and general information.
- Parents/guardians will make every effort to co-operate with the school in relation to all matters on school attendance.

Success Criteria

- Children, parents/guardians, the school staff, the principal and the Board of Management will be familiar with the school attendance policy and with procedures relating to attendance.
- Parents/guardians, class teachers and the school principal will comply with procedures as set out legally and documented in this attendance policy.
- Results of attendance of individuals and whole school will be positive.
- Meetings with the schools attendance officer will reflect the hard work dedicated to school attendance by the staff and parent body.
- There will be a reduction in the number of cases reported to the NEWB.

Ratification and Communication

The school attendance policy of S.N. Baile Clár na Gaillimhe was ratified by the Board of Management

Signed:

Anne Higgins

Chairperson of Board of Management

Review Date

April 2018

NEWB: Reducing the Barriers to School Attendance

NEWB: Guidelines for Reporting School Absences and Expulsions

NEWB: Everyday Counts

Pre-Referral Checklist

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Name of Pupil | |
| School | |
| Class | |
| Class Teacher | |

| Stages | Date |
|---|-------------|
| Principal discussed attendance with class teacher | |
| Principal phoned parent and invited parent to a meeting to discuss the child's attendance | |
| Meeting with parent re. child's attendance | |
| Concerns and agreements re. attendance in writing to parents / guardians | |
| Implementation of In-school measures to improve attendance: | |
| Use of appropriate strategies with pupil: | |
| Other approaches tried: | |

