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|  | **BALLYNURE PRIMARY SCHOOL**  **ATTENDANCE POLICY** |

**Introduction**

From September 2014 the Department of Education (DE) made it statutory for all schools have an Attendance Policy. Our Attendance Policy is based on the Department of Education guidance. Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education, ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. Pupil attendance and educational achievement are inextricably linked. Ballynure Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. Ballynure Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

**Mission Statement**

We aim to create a warm, welcoming school where each child feels happy, safe, self-confident and valued; and strives, with the help of caring, committed staff, to fulfil his or her potential. Ballynure Primary School is a rural, child-centred school with a family atmosphere. High standards of pastoral and academic provision are both important and integral parts of the school’s daily routines, curriculum and extra-curricular activities and provide each child with a holistic education, by developing their social, spiritual, moral and personal values alongside their academic and physical development.

**Aims**

1. To improve/maintain the overall high attendance of pupils at Ballynure Primary School.

2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.

3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.

4. To promote good relationships with Education Welfare Service.

**Role of the School**

The Principal at Ballynure Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention. Ballynure Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. We celebrate good attendance monthly in assembly and remind parents/carers of their responsibility for ensuring their children’s regular and punctual attendance periodically in the school newsletter. The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis. Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration. To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in DE Circular 2019/14; and Miss School=Miss Out – A Strategy to Improve Pupil Attendance, DE 2016.

**Role of Parent/Guardian**

Ballynure Primary School is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise. If a child is registered in school, then the parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend school.

It is a parent/guardian’s responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil’s absence on the first day of absence by telephone or email. 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 school work or any other necessary arrangements which may be required. Pupils are expected to be in school at Ballynure Primary School at 8.50 a.m. for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on their child’s electronic attendance record. Class teachers commence spellings and tables first thing each morning. When children miss the start of these tests they often become upset. If a child appears reluctant to attend school parents should contact the school to discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure you receive the maximum support.

**Role of Pupils**

Each pupil at Ballynure Primary School has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school a written note from a parent/guardian must be given to the teacher when he/she returns. Pupils should understand that good attendance and punctuality are important and they are essential attitudes required for future employment and life in general.

**Absence Procedures**

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for good educational results. Missing school at any time is detrimental to a child’s education, therefore family holidays or other appointments e.g. doctor or dentist should be arranged, where possible, outside school hours. Absence during term time can have a significant impact on a pupil’s learning.

Pupil absences are recorded by class teachers on the official class register each morning when the pupils come into class and immediately after lunch and coded according to the reason provided. Pupils arriving after registration are marked as ‘L’ – ‘late before registration has closed’, or ‘U’ – ‘late after registration has closed’. Pupils should bring a note on the first day of their return to school following their absence. If an absence has been planned a note may be sent prior to the absence. It is important that a reason or explanation is provided for absence in order that school can allocate the correct code for the absence. When these are received promptly, our task is easy. In instances where no communication is received we will telephone or send a note requesting an explanation. When failing to receive a response, a reminder letter will be sent. (Appendix 1) If no response is received to the letter after a week, the absence will be coded as ‘D’ which means ‘No reason provided for absence’. If attendance falls below 85% a ‘School Attendance Below 85%’ (Appendix 2) will be sent. The D coding will be amended should an explanation be given before the end of the school year. Any D codes will be picked up by the DE’s monitoring system. Thereafter a visit from the EWO may follow. Schools may temporarily reduce pupils’ attendance and exempt them from the statutory curriculum and assessment for reasons such as emotional, behaviour or welfare reasons under SEN or phased return after a prolonged illness.

Attendances and absences are recorded weekly on the SIMs programme for attendance. A monthly printout of all pupil attendance is generated from SIMs and is checked by the Principal. Through our computer system the attendance statistics are available to EA Officers and the DE. The Education Inspectorate (ETI) monitors attendance in every school during inspections. The data accumulated for absences is monitored by the DE whose duty it is to ensure that parents fulfil their responsibility in sending their children to school. The local Education and Welfare Officer (EWO) also has direct access to attendance data held on the computerised recording system in school. Copies of attendance registers must be retained by law in school for 10 years.

**Extended Leave**

Extended leave applications must be agreed and in advance with the school and the appropriate Extended Leave Application completed before leave commences e.g. for short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK or a specific complex family need such as death of a relative, care of a sick relative, sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI or to attend to immigration matters.

**Family holidays during Term Time**

Ballynure Primary 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 unauthorised absence. Teachers will not provide work for pupils who are taken on holidays during term time.

**Procedures for Managing Non-attendance**

When a pupil’s attendance falls below 85% attendance, without an exceptional reason for absence e.g. personal tragedy, trauma or illness or displays an unusual pattern of attendance e.g. absence every Friday, parents will be informed and a referral made to the EWO.

**Education Welfare Service**

Ballynure Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. The Education Authority (EA) through the Education Welfare Service has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children’s education. If a pupil’s absence level/pattern causes concern he/she will be referred to the EWO. The Education and Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address and improve school attendance.

Appendix 1

**Ballynure Primary School**

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION

Name of Pupil \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Class / Teacher Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Absence \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The reason for absence was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix 2

**Ballynure Primary School**

**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BELOW 85%**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian

Our pupil attendance statistics are carefully maintained in school and are monitored on a regular basis by EA’s Education Welfare Officer and any attendances which fall below 85% must be reported to the parents of the pupil concerned.

At this point in time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ attendance is \_\_\_\_\_\_% and you have/have not given information to explain the absences.

In cases where we have no explanation we must report the statistics to the Education Welfare Officer in the form of a referral. This will result in a home visit.

It is also the Education Welfare Officer’s prerogative to decide upon a home visit particularly where there appears to be a pattern of short, frequent absences on a pupil’s statistics.

This information is given to you at this time so that you are aware of the present statistics and so that you can concentrate on full attendance if possible to bring your child’s record to above 85% by the end of the school year.

I will be happy to discuss this matter if you wish further explanation.

Yours sincerely,

E Doherty

Principal