



St. Brendan's NS Attendance Policy

This policy was updated on 13/10/2022.

St. Brendan's NS was granted DEIS status commencing Sept. 2022. Attendance is a major pillar of DEIS and this policy forms part of our whole-school DEIS policy.

Prior to Covid, the school's Attendance Policy had been reviewed in November 2019 and procedures communicated to all staff members.

Baseline Figures:

2017/2018: 32 pupils missed over 20 days; overall attendance 91.13 %

2018/2019: 33 pupils missed more than 20 days; overall attendance rate 92.17% (total enrolment increased significantly)

2019-2020- year was incomplete due to school closure from March 13th due to Covid 19 crisis. Attendance up to that point was 92.3% overall, a rise on the previous year despite heavy numbers of absences due to flu season in Dec and January. 17 pupils missed more than 20 days, but the year was incomplete.

2020-2021- 29 pupils missed over 20 days. 89.9% overall attendance.

2021-2022- 63 pupils missed over 20 days. 88.0% overall attendance

Aim/Target: Improve overall attendance to 91.5% by end of 2022 (return to pre-covid attendance rates)

Responsibilities and Procedures:

School attendance is a statutory issue. Parents, Class/SEN teachers, the school's Attendance Officer, SCP project worker, the Principal and BOM have all important roles to play.

School Completion Programme has been working in St. Brendan's for over 20 years. A shared HSCL service is available for St. Brendan's NS but a teacher has not been appointed to the role as yet.

The following are our current agreed attendance routines:

Class Teachers:

- Absences are currently recorded on the Aladdin database system
- In accordance with Rule 55 (4) of the National School Rules and Circular 0033/2015, roll call shall be completed not later than 40 minutes after the time fixed for the commencement of formal instruction. It also states that the roll should be called at the same time each day. - School starts at 9.20. Assembly is from 9.20.- 9.30. Formal instruction commences at 9.30 and therefore the roll should be called at 10.10 each morning. - A child must be present at roll call to be marked present. If a child is not present in the school at 10.10 then they are marked absent. There will be no provision for adjusting the Roll Book where a pupil subsequently does not complete

the full school day or arrives after the roll call. - If a pupil arrives later they remain marked absent, but their arrival is recorded on Aladdin for the purpose of attendance awards etc.

- The Aladdin system records the last time and date that attendance for each class has been entered and gives a summary each day of how many classes have completed the rolla. The secretary will contact the teacher to complete if this has not been done.
- Reason for absence is very important, as this is the information that is uploaded to TUSLA/NEWB each term and for the annual statistics. Each teacher has been furnished with the TUSLA absence codes for recording reason for absence (see below).
- Parents MUST COMPLETE THE PUPIL ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE/APP when their child is absent. A form must be filled for each child and indicate the length and reason for absence. This form is automatically recorded by the secretary via automatic email.
- RECORDS OF ABSENCES CANNOT BE ALTERED ON THE ALADDIN DATABASE UNLESS THERE IS SIGNIFICANT PROOF THAT THE SCHOOL HAS MADE AN ERROR. The Aladdin system record when an absence record is altered and by whom.
- The Secretary/Principal will inform teachers when notes, phone calls or emails come into the school office to explain an absence.
- If no reason for absence has been given, the secretary will phone home on the morning of the third day of absence or sooner if there is a particular reason for concern which has been discussed with the Attendance Officer or Principal.

The Attendance Officer

- The Attendance Officer will regularly check absences on the Aladdin School Database System. When a child reaches 15 days accumulated absence in a school year, a letter will be sent to the parents from the school informing of the number of absences and the guidelines in relation to missing 20 days in a school year. The TUSLA leaflet for parents (see below) will be forwarded also.
- If a child arrives regularly late for school, the class teacher will discuss this with the parent. If lateness persists, the Attendance Officer will meet the parents with the class teacher. A plan including supports and incentives will be put in place and the possible involvement of SCP will be discussed. However if lateness does not improve, the Principal will then meet the parents. Sanctions will be put in place and TUSLA/NEWB contacted if deemed necessary.
- If a child misses 20 days or more OR a teacher has serious concerns about a child's attendance, the Attendance Officer, in consultation with Principal, will contact NEWB/TUSLA (see procedure below)
- Incentive to improve attendance-Acknowledgement at end of term assembly for pupils who missed no days/significantly improved attendance. Certificates and prizes will be awarded at year/term end for excellent attendance

Develop Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance:

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment.
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding so that children are happy.
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc. are identified early.
- Rewarding good or improved attendance.

- Reminding parents of the link between attendance and academic achievement.

Principal

- Oversee the day-to-day implementation of the Attendance Policy
- Ensure parents are informed of the Attendance Policy annually.
- Ensure all staff are aware of their obligations in relation to school Attendance.
- Delegate the role of the Attendance Officer
- Facilitates policy formation and review
- Ensures that the curriculum and timetable facilitate good attendance
- Contacts Parents/Guardians re: poor attendance/punctuality
- Liaises with relevant school personnel eg Attendance Officer, SCP and SEN team re: at risk students
- Upload and analyse the Annual Attendance figures
- Report to the BOM on Attendance issues
- Be familiar with current legislation
- Maintains regular contact with the Education Welfare Officer.

Role of BOM:

- Submit Statement of Strategy of Attendance
- Appoint an Attendance Officer
- Implement and review the school's Attendance Policy
- Request and review attendance statistics via Principal's Report
- Report all suspensions/ expulsions/ reduced timetables
- Provide funding for attendance initiatives
- Oversight of the school roll
- Comply with all circulars and directives from DES and Tusla EWS in relation to attendance
- Upload Annual Attendance Statistics to TUSLA/NEWB

Role of Parents/guardians to promote good school attendance:

- 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 they, as parents, support consistent school attendance
- discussing planned absences with the school
- 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 their children 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 through the Pupil Absence Notification Form of the reasons for absence from school
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.) 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

Role of the Pupil

- Children have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Children should inform staff if there is a problem, worry or concern that may lead to their absence.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.20 a.m. All pupils 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 National Education Welfare Board.

Role of SCP - School Completion Programme

SCP has an important role to play in supporting attendance of pupils in ST. Brendan's NS

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is a targeted programme of support for primary and post primary children and young people who have been identified as potentially at risk of early school leaving or who are out of school and have not successfully transferred to an alternative learning site (i.e. Youthreach, Community Training Centre etc.) or employment. It is a support under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) Programme, funded by Tusla Education Support Services (tess). SCP aims to retain a young person to completion of the leaving certificate, equivalent qualification or suitable level of educational attainment which enables them to transition into further education, training or employment.

The SCP is one of three strands of Tusla Education Support Service (tess) including the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme and the Educational Welfare Service. All three strands share the same national outcomes:

- Improved Attendance
- Improved Participation
- Improved Retention

The Sligo School Completion Programme allocates a project worker to St. Brendan's NS each year. Mary McHugh is our current SSCP project worker. She supports a targeted group of children for 1.5 days per week. The target list is put together in conjunction with the Principal 2/3 times per year. An application form is filled out by the school and parents. The parents agree that the information can be shared with the independent referral committee, drawn from several schools and local organisations that work with at-risk young people. The committee assess each referral and decide which pupils meet the stringent criteria to be included on the school's target list. Once on the list the children are followed throughout their Primary and Secondary education, with access to a broad range of supports provided directly by SCP personnel or by services engaged by the school and funded by SCP.

The service targets the reasons why children may have poor attendance and poor engagement eg family problems such as poverty, separation, sick family members, death of parents, alcoholism etc; or personal issues eg low self-esteem, mental health difficulties, learning difficulties, bullying, poor social skills etc. Programmes are put in place to address these issues.

Attendance and participation is tracked and monitored closely. SCP also support transition from school to school and from Primary to Secondary School.

SCP liaise with parents, school personnel and other agencies that may have an important role to play in supporting the child.

Public health Emergency procedures:

If there is another outbreak of Covid or another infectious disease requiring public health intervention some of our covid absence procedures may have to re-initiated:

- Parents will be advised on the school website and text-a-parent communications of the Public Health Advice in relation to when to keep a child at home from school, when to restrict movements; when to isolate.

- Before a child returns to school following a period of absence, parents may be required to complete a Pupil Back to School Declaration Form which will be easily accessible on the school website
- Parents have been encouraged to call the school in the event of a child being unwell. The school sticks strictly to the up to date advice for parents from the HSA. All teachers have been notified of this policy.
- Parents have been asked not to send in notes but to contact via phone or email while public health procedures are in play.
- A log will be kept in the office when absence is related to Covid 19 or other infectious disease.
- Absences related to public health protocols will be noted on the Aladdin system.
- A sign-in/out system has been developed to record the times and reasons for partial daily absences.

Aladdin Roll books

St. Brendan's NS has changed over entirely from hand-written Roll and registers to electronic data-based system. We ceased to keep manual roll books and registers in Sept 2016. From then until September 2019, our rolla was kept daily on the SalesPulse Database system, with annual hard copies of daily attendance, NEWB statistics and monthly and annual totals printed and stored securely in the Principal's Office. Electronic files of this information are also stored under password protection on the Principal's laptop and external hard drive.

In September 2019 ST. Brendan's started using the Aladdin Database System for all school records. Hard copies and electronic files will continue to maintained in the Principal's Office and on the Principal's external hard drive which is password protected.

Attendance procedures on the Aladdin System: Appendix 2

TUSLA Reporting Absenteeism

Since the inception of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 schools are obliged to report on school attendance.

Poor school attendance needs to be responded to early; otherwise, as research has shown, it can lead to poorer exam results, early school leaving (some children do not transfer from primary to post primary school each year), and poorer life chances for children.

Schools report individual student absences and expulsions by submitting Student Absence Reports twice each year. Schools also report the total number of days lost through absence by submitting an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of the academic year. Both Reports can be submitted online.

Student Absence Reports

Schools are required to submit Student Absence Reports twice each year on those students with serious attendance issues that have been identified during the current academic year i.e. students that have been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more falling within the following categories:

- Illness
- Urgent Family Reason
- Holiday
- Suspended
- Other
- Unexplained

Schools should not submit children with less than 20 days absence. Only children over the age of 6 years and children who have not reached the age of 16 years, or have not completed 3 years of post-primary education, whichever occurs later should be reported.

Annual Attendance Report (AAR)

Each recognised school in the State is obliged to submit a report to the Educational Welfare Services, Child and Family Agency, on the levels of attendance at the end of each academic year. Schools are required to provide the following data in the AAR:

- Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year.
- Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.
- Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.
- Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.

EWS Referrals

All referrals from schools to the EWS related to a student's attendance must be made via the Referral Form (available online).

All students who miss twenty or more days cumulatively (including suspensions) must be included in the school student absence reports. These reports must be submitted twice annually in January and at the end of the school year.

School should use discretion in determining whether the student's attendance warrants a referral to EWS as a student's absence may be satisfactorily explained by certified illness, bereavement or other valid reasons.

All referrals received are screened and prioritised based on need.

Parents Information About Attendance Reporting: Appendix 3

Transfer to Another School

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal 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.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was updated in October 2022. It will be reviewed again in Oct 2023 and as part of our DEIS planning process.

Signed:

Noel Rooney

Fr. Noel Rooney, Chairperson on behalf of BOM

Marie Hurley

Marie Hurley Principal/Secretary BOM

Date:

13/10/2022

Appendix 1 Attendance Notice for School Office/Classrooms- Sept 2022

School Attendance must be recorded every day.

If child missing a day, school must be informed by email/phone-call/ Google Classroom private message (no notes).

- 9.05 am assigned staff on duty outside school-junior pupils line up on yellow spots on footpath.
- 9.10-9.15 am allow entrance of senior pupils to playground/building (only if teacher or SNA supervising)
- 9.20 am bring pupils inside. Close entrance doors/gates for safety. Principal/Secretary will deal with late-comers at the main entrance door.
- 9.30 am class instruction formally commences.
- Rolla called at 10.10 am child must be present at that time to be marked present.
- If child arrives between 9.30 am and 10.10 am, note as a late on Aladdin but mark present. Calculate the minutes late from 9.20 am
- If child arrives after 10.10 am, mark absent but note late arrival on Aladdin. Calculate the number of minutes late from 9.20am
- Child leaving for appointment must be signed in/out by parent at Reception. Parents should not approach the classroom. Reason for leaving must be given.
- If 2 consecutive days missed & no explanation- phone-call home on morning of third day absent.
- 15 days missed-letter sent home and SCP informed- support plan
- 20 days missed TUSLA/NEWB informed.

Attendance and lates are automatically inserted into the end of year school reports. This needs to be recorded accurately.

Aladdin notes the date, time and person when alterations are made to the rolla.

Mick Maye- St. Brendan's NS' Attendance Officer

Joanne Morrissey- TUSLA EWO (Education Welfare Officer)

Appendix 2 Attendance procedures on the Aladdin System:

From the Attendance menu, choose the "Roll book" option. From here you can take the roll, view the classroom Roll book, who is absent today, days where there has been incomplete attendance taken, and also a list of students who have yet to explain their absence.

Today's Attendance

To take attendance for a class for today, just click on the Today button or on today's date on the calendar provided. (You can also click on the "This week" button to take attendance for the current week or the "Last week" button to backdate attendance.) All students will automatically be marked present, so you just need to enter those absent, and those who have arrived late if required.

Once you click "Save" you will be presented with an option to fill in the student's absence reason if known at that time.

There is a replica of your physical roll book in Aladdin called the visual roll book. This is very handy whenever you need to check codes or you can copy down the column totals at the end of a term. To view the visual roll book, from the Attendance menu, click on "Roll book". Then, in the "Show roll book for" section, choose the quarter you wish to view and press Go. The roll book will automatically update each time attendance is taken. You can change to order of the visual roll book to match your physical roll book by clicking on the "Edit Irish names and rollbook order" option on the top right hand corner of the screen within the visual roll book.

Early leaving and late arrivals can also be tracked through Aladdin.

Early leaving

The early leaving function in Aladdin is there to keep track of class time a student has missed due to leaving the school before class has ended. To enter in an early leaving entry, from the Quick add menu, click the Early leaving option. Type part of the student name and choose the correct entry that appears. Enter the date, the time the student left, the time class officially finished at on that date, a return time should the student have returned, and a note if needed. When you are finished, click on the "Save and add another" option. This entry will now appear under the student's profile page, under their Attendance tab. To edit this entry to put in e.g. a return time or to delete an entry, just click on the early leaving record, edit/delete and save. All these entries will be taken into account to calculate the total time missed per student due to leaving early or arriving late.

Late arrival option

The late arrival option is also available from the Quick add menu. If a student is late before attendance has been taken, then enter late as normal on the roll book. If child arrives in late after attendance has been taken, go to quick add, choose late arrival, enter time, date, reason etc., and save. Attendance will now change to a yellow x for absent but arrived late. Should you wish to change this to present but arrived late, click the change attendance option for that class and change as appropriate. If the quick add late option is entered before attendance has been taken for the class, e.g. if the secretary wishes to enter this before the teacher has taken the roll, then when the teacher goes to take attendance for the day, they will see the late option already filled in for that student. Entering the amount of minutes in the "Minutes late" field when recording a student who has arrived late will enable these entries to be taken into account to calculate total time missed per student due to leaving early or arriving late.

Appendix 3

School Attendance – what every parent needs to know

Under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 parents are responsible for making sure their child receives an education. The law also says that every child between the ages of 6 and 16 must attend school or otherwise receive an education. Most children attend recognised schools although some are educated at home or in non-recognised schools

The majority of children in Ireland start school at either 4 or 5 years of age. Your child must be at least 4 years of age at the start of the school year (September) to enrol in primary school. Here is what you need to know about your child's school attendance.

What should I do if my child cannot go to school?

You must tell the school that your child cannot attend and say why. Write a short note to the school to explain why your child was out of school and send it in with your child when they go back to school. Generally, there are good reasons why a child is missing school (e.g. illness).

Keep in regular contact with your child's school to explain why your child is absent and, where appropriate, provide medical certificates.

What will the school do if my child misses a lot of school?

The school must tell the statutory Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) if your child has missed 20 days or more in the school year, or if it is concerned that your child is missing too much school.

What we must do if your child misses a lot of school?

If a school tells us that your child is missing too much school, an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with the school and may visit you to see how we can help to make sure that your child attends school more often.

Can I take my child on holidays during term time?

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time. It will be difficult for them to catch up on work later on. As a result, they may fall behind with school work and lose confidence in their abilities. We strongly advise parents do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time.

Can I be taken to court if my child doesn't attend school?

If you are a parent or guardian of a child aged between 6 and 16 you have a central role to play in ensuring that your child does not miss out on his or her education. Under Irish law you must ensure that your child attends school or otherwise receives an education.

We will help parents in whatever way we can to ensure your child gets an education. However, parents who refuse to co-operate with the EWO regarding their child's school attendance (or fail to register with the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency if they are being home educated or in receipt of an education in a 'non-recognised school') can be taken to court and fined or imprisoned. Legal action of this kind only takes place in exceptional circumstances and forms a very small part of the Board's work.

At what age can my child leave school?

The minimum school leaving age is 16 or after three years of post-primary education, whichever is later.

My child is refusing to go to school. Where can I get help?

Sometimes young people refuse to attend school despite the best wishes of their parents. There are often underlying reasons behind the young person's decision not to attend school and parents often feel powerless to help their child.

If your child is refusing to attend school and you need support, contact us and an Educational Welfare Officer will get in touch with you.

A school has refused to enrol my child – what can I do?

If a school refuses to enrol a child, for whatever reason, you have the right to appeal the decision to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

You can do this by filling in an Appeals Form, which you can get from the school or from the Department of Education and Skills' website www.education.ie

My child has been suspended or expelled from school. What can I do?

If a school decides to suspend or expel your child and if you are not happy with the school's decision, you can appeal it to the Secretary General of the Department of Education and Skills under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

You can do this by filling in an Appeals Form, which you can get from the school or from the Department of Education and Skills' website www.education.ie

Other decisions taken by the school about your child

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 allows parents (and students who have reached the age of 18) to appeal certain decisions made by a school's Board of Management. Appeals may be made about a decision to:

- refuse to enrol a student
- suspend a student from the school for more than a certain number of school days in any one school year
- permanently exclude (expel) a student

You can get more information about appealing decisions on enrolment in Primary Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 and in the Appeal Procedures document. See the parents' section of the Department of Education and Skills' site www.education.ie for further information.

You can also contact us and an Educational Welfare Officer will offer you support and assistance.

Your appeal is heard by an appeals committee set up by the Department of Education and Skills. In most cases, appeals are dealt with within 30 days. The Department may give directions to the Board of Management of the school to resolve the matter. The appeals committee will issue a decision in all cases heard.

Further Information: Parents and schools can contact the EWOs directly if they have a concern about a child's education:

Educational Welfare Service
Child and Family Agency,
Unit 19 Sandfort Business Centre
Grealishtown,
Bohermore
Galway

091-385302