

## School Attendance Policy

Boherbue Comprehensive School

### **Introduction**

Regular attendance is a priority in Boherbue Comprehensive School. The relevant stakeholders work collaboratively to secure better educational outcomes for the students entrusted to their care. This ethos is reflected in the school's mission statement.

*“Boherbue Comprehensive School, conscious of its position in the community, endeavours to give the best education and service to its pupils and community, based on Christian values that will help all who come in contact with the school to reach their full potential.”*

**Scope:** This policy is a whole school policy and applies to students, parents/guardians and school staff.

### **Rationale**

The legislative requirement for School Attendance Policy arises especially from the Education (Welfare) Act of 2000.

The Education Welfare Act, 2000 provides a comprehensive framework for promoting regular school attendance. Under the Act, every child must attend school regularly up to 16 years of age or complete at least 3 years education in a post primary school, whichever comes later. Educational Welfare Services supports school attendance and follows up children who are not attending school regularly. (Appendix 1 provides excerpts from the relevant sections of The Education Welfare Act 2000)

### **School Attendance Strategies**

The school recognises that good attendance is achieved when students feel happy, secure and part of the school community, within a safe and caring environment. Poor attendance at school disadvantages students. We aim to ensure that the students in our school attend regularly and on time and where this is not the case, we will apply the procedures which are designed to encourage consistent attendance.

The performance indicator, by which we judge the success of our efforts, is set each year by our average attendance figure. In the 2014/2015 academic year our

average attendance was 90.2%. We are seeking to improve that figure for this and subsequent years.

- Implement school procedures which promote good attendance and participation.
- Analysis of the rates of attendance and any identifiable trends.
  - While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, in many cases legitimate illness or other factors can prevent it.
  - We regard attendance which falls below 90% , where a student is known to be in reasonable health and there are no extenuating circumstances, to be “*poor*” and should give rise for concern.
- Analysis of the reasons for absences.
- Promotion of merit awards for attendance. Junior and senior merit house award – quarterly draw for those with full attendance – one prize of €10.00 voucher for both Junior and Senior students.
- Letter home to parents at the beginning of the school year stressing the importance of full attendance.
- Attendance and participation to be addressed on induction night for first year parents at the end of September.
- Random spot checks on student’s attendance.
- Early intervention for the poor attendees, including the engagement of pastoral and counselling services, both within and outside the school, to address the underlying causes of persistent absences.
- Engage with students and parents to suggest strategies to promote good attendance.

## **School Procedures**

- Daily Basis
  - All subject teachers take a roll call at 9.00am and give a list of absent students to the person designated to collect the absences.
  - School secretary then sends a text message to parent/guardian whose son/daughter was recorded as absent at the morning roll call.
  - All subject teachers to call a roll at the beginning of each class.
  - If a student arrives late to school am or pm, the subject teacher should check that the student has reported to the office and signed in.

- Ongoing Basis
  - Where a pattern of absence emerges, Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal liaises with parents/guardians to address these concerns.
  - Where there is a cumulative absence of 15 days, Parents/guardians of these students will be informed, in writing, by the Year Head.
  - Students with a cumulative absence of more than 20 days will be referred to the Educational Welfare Services (EWS).
  - School secretary completes reports for the Educational Welfare Services (EWS) as mandated.
  
- Transfer from Primary to Post Primary school.

In the event of an enrolled student failing to attend at the beginning of the school year the following procedures will be followed:

- Communication with the parents/guardians.
- Communication with alternative school choice, if necessary.
- Communication with the students Primary School, where relevant.
- Communication with EWS, as required.

### **School Register**

Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) act 2000 provides that *“the Principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after the commencement of this section, cause to be established and maintained a register of all students attending that school.”*

- The school makes every effort to promote full attendance among the student body. In so doing it has adopted procedures for the maintenance of an up to date register of all its pupils and of their daily attendance regardless of age.
- If a student is transferring from a second level school into Boherbue Comprehensive School, the Principal will then inform in writing the Principal of the afore-mentioned school that the student has transferred and request that the transfer be recorded on the P-pod system. If a student is transferring from Boherbue Comprehensive School to another second level school then the above procedure is done in reverse order.

- A student's name may only be removed from the Register where:
  - (a) A student has been expelled and all appeal processes have been exhausted.
  - (b) A school has received written confirmation that the student has transferred to another school.
  - (c) A student has been registered with EWS as in receipt of an education in a place other than a recognised school.

### **School Attendance Records**

The school maintains an accurate and up-to-date register of all of its pupils and of their daily attendance through the following procedures:

- (a) the recording of daily attendance and absence of pupils
- (b) the recording of notes of explanation and reasons for absences
- (c) the regular reporting to parents of their children's record of attendance/absence
- (d) the recording of partial attendance/absence during a given day e.g. pupil arrives late; pupil is excused during the course of the school day; pupil is absent on an approved school activity.

Those responsible for carrying out these procedures are identified in the next section.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Role of Parent/Guardian**

- To ensure that school days are only missed due to illness or unavoidable circumstances.
- To make Medical/Dental appointments outside of school hours where possible.
- In the event of a student leaving school early Parents/Guardians must write a note of explanation in the student's diary stating the date, time and reason for leaving early.
- When collecting a student under 18 years of age, Parents/Guardians or their designee, in loco parentis, must report to the office to sign out the student.

- Parents/Guardians of an absent student are obliged to complete and sign an “explanation for absence” slip in the student diary. This should be completed before the student returns to school.
- In exceptional circumstances a parent/guardian may ring the school to arrange to collect their son/daughter. Normal signing out procedures will apply.
- Where a parent/guardian is aware of an expected prolonged student absence they should inform the school authorities.
- Parents/Guardians should ensure that their son/daughter arrive to school punctually. In exceptional circumstances the school will adopt a flexible approach.

### Role of Student

- To come to school on time every day unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- A student, who arrives late in the morning or after lunch, should report to the school office to sign in. Failure to do so is a serious breach of the schools code of behaviour.
- Students who need to leave school early for an appointment, must present the parent/guardian’s note of explanation in their diary, to the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal. When leaving class, the student must also present the signed note to the class teacher.
- Students, 18 or over who have not been signed out by a parent/guardian must report to the office to sign themselves out. There must be a note from parent/guardian in the student diary.
- If a student needs to go home early, due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, he/she must get his/her diary signed by the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal before ringing home from the office.
- To provide absence notes to the designated teacher, on return to school.
- To make every effort to catch up on missed work.

### Role of Subject Teacher

- To encourage and promote good attendance among all students.
- All subject teachers to take a roll call at 9.00am and give a list of absent students to the person designated to collect the absences.
- All subject teachers to call a roll at the beginning of each class.

- Subject teachers should highlight any concerns they may have about a student's attendance to the Year Head.
- If a student arrives late to school a.m. or p.m., the subject teacher should check that the student has reported to the office and signed in.
- If a student is leaving class early, to be collected by parent/guardian, the subject teacher should check that a permission note in their diary, from parent/guardian has been countersigned by the Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Subject teachers may be designated to collect absence notes from a specific class group.

### Role of Year Head

- Year Head monitors patterns of attendance with the support of designated subject teachers.
- Year Head will liaise with parents/guardians where a pattern of absences emerges.
- Year Head will address any concerns communicated about a student's attendance. In some instances this may require a referral to Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Year Head, if available, will sign/initial and date any notes from parents requesting that the student leave school early.
- If a student needs to go home early unexpectedly, the Year Head, if available, will give them written permission in the diary to make contact with home.
- Year Head plays a role in supporting students overcome difficulties relating to attendance. This may involve liaising with staff/pastoral support.
- Prior to the school submission of a referral form to the Educational Welfare Services (EWS), the year head will complete a pre referral checklist as required.

### Role of Administrative Staff

- Students arriving late to school, must report to the school office, where the lateness is recorded on the computerised registration system and the student is also issued with a late stamp.

- Students leaving school early, must be signed out by their parent/guardian or designee in the school office, where the time and reason for departure is noted.
- The administrative staff will ensure that students, who need to make contact with home with a view to leaving school early, have secured written permission (note in diary) from Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal.
- The administrative staff monitors the completion of the morning roll call. Any incomplete roll calls are followed up to ensure accurate records of attendance and punctuality are maintained. These records are then completed in the computerised registration system.
- Each week the administrative staff provides the list of absent students to teachers designated to collect absence notes.
- In the event of a student being absent for more than 15 days, the administrative staff will inform the Year Head.
- Administrative staff conveys student absences- via text- on a daily basis to the relevant parents/guardians.

#### Role of Principal/Deputy Principal

- Responsible for the effective implementation of the school attendance policy.
- Responsible for making the appropriate attendance returns to the EWS.
- Will be proactive about encouraging attendance and focus on preventative strategies.
- In liaison with the Year Heads, Principal/Deputy Principal will monitor attendance and ensure early intervention if a problem is identified.
- Will oversee the schools registration system.
- Will liaise with Year Heads, other staff members and EWS personnel regarding student attendance.
- Principal will submit a report to the Board of Management annually outlining the following:
  - A review of Rates of Attendance
  - Number of students who have a 100% attendance rate.
  - Number of students reported for absences exceeding 20 days.
  - Number of students suspended.
  - Number of students expelled.

### **Monitoring and Review.**

Boherbue Comprehensive School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures, on an ongoing basis, to ensure legal compliance and maintenance of best practice.