

BALLSALLY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Updated: July 2025

Review Date: June 2028

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential.

Ballysally Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Vision Statement

Ballysally Primary School is fully committed to providing a nurturing and inclusive school environment where well-being is central to growth and learning.

In our safe and caring school environment, children will be empowered to realise their potential and encouraged to pursue their ambitions as confident, resilient, lifelong learners.

Children will be prepared and equipped for the future with the knowledge, skills and attitude to positively contribute to society.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Ballysally Primary.
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 Ballysally Primary has overall responsibility for school attendance; (teachers/SENCo) should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention.

The SENCo monitors attendance regularly and liaises with parents /carers and Education Welfare Service when required.

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 daily and reflects morning and afternoon attendance.

To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circulars. The most recent Circular at the time of writing is 2023/11:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Circular%202023%2011%20for%202023%2024%20Academic%20Year%20-%20Attendance%20Guidance%20and%20Absence%20Recording%20By%20Schools.pdf>

Ballysally Primary is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Strategies to encourage attendance include:

- Positive school ethos;
- Nurturing environment;
- Class of the month attendance award;
- Achievement awards;
- Nurture Provision;
- Range of extra-curricular activities - before and after school;
- Breakfast, fruit and water provided daily and free of charge;
- Assembly talks;
- Circle time discussions;
- Strong parent / school links;
- Parent / Teacher pupil progress meetings;
- Communication and information on Seesaw, website, Social Media (Facebook);
- Parent workshops;
- Home visits;
- Strong community engagement;
- Communication with parents when attendance is a concern e.g. meeting, phone call, letter, meeting with Education Welfare Officer;
- School as a core member of the Ballysally Integrated Nurture Programme and
- Principal and staff welcome pupils and parents to school each morning.

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that, *'Every child of compulsory school age shall 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.'* (**Article 45 (1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986**)

Where a parent/guardian has registered their child in this school, parents/guardians have 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 phone call. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school or a message on Seesaw. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, parents/carers should inform the class teacher by phone or Seesaw ASAP to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

Early Risers Club commences at 8.00am for pupils enrolled for this activity. The main school gate opens at 8.50am. Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.55am for registration and the beginning of classes at 9.00am. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on a child's attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, parents/carers are encouraged to discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher, SENCo or Principal to ensure that both parent/carer and child receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

With parental support and care, each pupil at Ballysally Primary School should attend school punctually and regularly. Where a child has been absent the parent must notify the class teacher with a written note or Seesaw message stating the dates and the reason for the absence.

Absence Procedures

Parents / carers are encouraged to send a note or letter into school to tell the teacher of forthcoming medical appointments. To explain absences, parents / carers should either send a written note or Seesaw message explaining the reason for the absence and give it to the teacher upon their child's first day back to school. 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. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, the parent / carer must speak to the class teacher or Principal before removing their child from the school premises.

Family holidays during Term Time

Ballysally 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 an unauthorised absence. No work will be sent home on these occasions as the work is seldom completed and is not an efficient use of school resources. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

Each week the SENCo receives a copy of the attendance report where attendance is monitored. Parents / guardians of pupils with less than 85% are identified appropriate action will be taken depending on the time of school year. Pupils with less than 90% attendance are also monitored to ensure that attendance does not decrease further. Patterns of absence are also analysed. Where attendance is deemed to be concerning the school:

- will talk with the parent / carer to identify the reasons for absence.
- Where there is no improvement, school will write to the parent/carer stating that attendance is still a concern and requires improvement and that failure to improve attendance will result in school contacting the Educational Welfare Service.
- Should there be no further improvement, school will inform Education Welfare Service to ascertain the next steps.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Sanctions for failure to meet parental responsibilities may be taken instigated by EWS e.g. Applications to the Family Proceedings Court for an Education Supervision Order – Children (NI) Order 1995 and/or Parental prosecutions – Education and Libraries (NI) 1986, Article 45, Schedule 13).

Signature: _____ Principal

Signature: _____ Chairperson of the Board of Governors

Date: _____