

Brannoxtown CNS

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Brannoxtown Community National School (CNS) is a primary school under Patronage of the Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (KWETB). Brannoxtown CNS opened in September 2018 with Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal. Brannoxtown CNS operates within the regulations laid down by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and follows the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) which may be amended from time to time, in accordance with the Education Act (1998, Sections 9 and 30). The Board of Management, Principal and staff fully subscribe to the principles of partnership, accountability, inclusion, respect for diversity, parental choice and equality in developing and implementing all school policies.

1. Introduction

At Brannoxtown CNS, we believe that children's wellbeing is key to their learning. We value learning experiences which are engaging and joyful and through which children achieve planned learning outcomes. Children at our school are challenged and supported to be and become their *best self*. Children themselves have created our school crest and chosen our four school values: Respect, Effort, Teamwork and Ambition. These underpin our school ethos and all we do at Brannoxtown CNS. Our goal is always to support children to grow as competent, confident, caring individuals who have strong relationships with their peers and teachers and who, ultimately, enjoy coming to school. This policy aims to promote, support and celebrate strong school attendance and punctuality among all families of the school.

2. Recording and reporting: Requirements

The introduction of the Primary Online Database (POD) by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) in 2015 updated and simplified the ways schools record and report enrolment and attendance information (DES, [Circular Letter 33/2015](#)). From the 2015/2016 school year, POD replaced the requirement on schools to record attendance using the traditional Clárleabhar (Register). At the same time, the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil (Daily Attendance Book) were replaced with electronic records. At Brannoxtown CNS, the school management software, Aladdin¹, meets the DES requirements for recording and reporting attendance and is used to maintain our attendance records.

3. Aims

From the outset, our expectation is that families establish good habits which translate into strong attendance from the very beginning of each new school year. Teachers at our school plan for continuity and progression within and across classes. Sustained absences from school interrupt this progress, and disadvantage students who are regularly absent from class. The general aims of this policy are to clarify our expectations regarding school attendance and punctuality for all children, to explicate the rationale for why strong attendance matters for children, and to specify the supports and procedures for families concerning their child(ren)'s attendance at Brannoxtown CNS. Ultimately, our policy should promote strong and punctual attendance and a love of learning in school, among children.

¹ Aladdin is an alternative to the Department's excel version of the Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil available on the Department website.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure admissions procedures are followed and enrolment records are accurate
- Ensure that children's punctuality and attendance are recorded daily
- Encourage and support full and punctual attendance
- Promote a positive learning environment
- Enable rich and rewarding learning opportunities
- Foster an appreciation of learning
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Support compliance with requirements of the relevant legislation
- Identify pupils at risk (of poor attendance/dropout)
- Develop links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identify and remove, in as much as possible, obstacles to school attendance.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

All staff contributed to the development of this policy in March and April 2020 and all are responsible for its implementation. The policy will be the focus of engagement with parents and children in May, 2020. Specific roles and responsibilities have also been identified:

- In each class, children have an opportunity at the beginning of the year to discuss the school's expectations regarding punctuality and attendance and to identify strategies (for home and school) to support strong attendance.
- Parents use the messaging service on the ClassDojo app to explain their child's absence and to give prior notice to the class teacher for planned absences.
- Parents notify the school, in writing to the class teacher, through the messaging service on the ClassDojo app or by [email to the school](#), if a child is to leave school early during the school day.
- Each Class Teacher records daily attendance noting the cause of any absences using one of the following reasons: *illness, urgent family reason, holiday, suspended, unexplained* or *other*.
- Each Class Teacher dates and initials parents' absence notes (including notes regarding late arrival and early departure) and gives these to the School Secretary to be filed in the relevant Student File in the School Office.
- Each Class Teacher examines patterns of attendance and contacts the families of students who are absent for 15 days by letter to note the absence. Ideally, the teacher and parent(s) meet to discuss the causes and any measures the school can take to support the family. The teacher also flags this and any other potential attendance issues with the Principal.
- The Assistant Principal is responsible for monitoring completion of attendance daily. She regularly checks to ensure that attendance at Brannoxtown CNS has been recorded fully for each class and reminds teachers to complete any missing records within a two-week period.
- The Principal and School Secretary discuss and complete the annual attendance returns for Brannoxtown CNS each year.

5. Punctuality

School begins at 8:50am at Brannoxtown CNS and staff provide supervision for children from the school drop-off time of 8:40am. Staff and students are expected to

arrive on-time. The school will contact parents¹ if a student is late by a minimum of 10 minutes on 5 different days within a 15 day period (3 weeks). The school will explore with the parent the reasons why the pupil is persistently late and if there is any support the school can offer to support the family. The principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act (2000), to report children who are persistently late, to the [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#).

6. Recording and Reporting Attendance

Recording attendance and responding to notifications

Each child's attendance at Brannoxtown CNS is recorded at 10am daily, for their class, using Aladdin management software. This data-analysis features within Aladdin enables individual teachers to identify attendance trends for individual children and class groups. Potential issues can be flagged on Aladdin by setting automatic notifications for late arrival and absence from school, including:

- a) Lateness (minimum of 10 minutes) on 5 days within a 15 day period.
- b) Absence, *without* a note of explanation from parents, on 5 days or more within a 15 day period².
- c) Absence, with/without a note of explanation from parents, for 15 days from the beginning of the school year.
- d) Absence, with/without a note of explanation from parents, for 20 days from the beginning of the school year.

For all four scenarios above (lateness and absence), the school responds with a letter (based on the templates in Appendix items 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d). A record of attendance and punctuality is reported to all parents in their child's mid-year and end-of-year reports (typically November and May/June).

Attendance returns to Tusla

All recognised schools are required to inform Education Welfare Services (EWS) within Tusla, the National Child and Family Agency, if a child's attendance is irregular and a cause of concern, if a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, or if a child is suspended or expelled from the school for 6 days or more. The annual attendance returns for Brannoxtown CNS are submitted online via [Tusla's online portal](#) each year and include submission of Student Absence Reports and Annual Attendance Reports:

- **Student Absence Reports:** All students who miss twenty or more days cumulatively (including suspensions) must be included in our school's Student Absence Reports. These reports must be submitted twice annually in January and at the end of the school year. The Principal and Class Teacher will use discretion in determining whether the student's attendance warrants a referral to Education Welfare Services, within Tusla, as a student's absence may be satisfactorily explained by certified illness, bereavement or other valid reasons.
- **Annual Attendance Report:** Our school also reports the total number of days lost through absence by submitting an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of the academic year which details the levels of attendance for that year. Schools are required to provide the following data:

¹ The word, *parent*, refers both to parents and legal guardians of children enrolled at Brannoxtown CNS.

² This level of absence signals a potential risk. As such, the school responds to seek a meeting

- 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.

7. Promoting Attendance

School staff

It is important that children are happy to come to school and we work hard to achieve this. At Brannoxtown CNS, teaching staff collaborate in planning for and implementing the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) so that children's learning experiences are rich and rewarding, appropriately challenging and engaging and enjoyable. So far, attendance is strong at our school. Staff are vigilant to identify potential issues regarding attendance as early as possible in order to intervene and to support families in as much as we can. At Brannoxtown CNS, we support families and children to have strong attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment and providing a range of learning experiences and opportunities across the school thus ensuring children are happy and as well as they can be.
- modelling our ethos and school values—respect, effort, teamwork and ambition in all we do and say, e.g., by displaying kindness, compassion and understanding.
- using attendance data for children in our school to look for potential risks to good attendance and identify the root causes as early as possible, such as disadvantage, bullying, etc.
- encouraging and rewarding good attendance in ways that focus primarily on intrinsic motivation and appreciation while also including rewards which are meaningful and fair for children, e.g., positive language about attendance, *Homeroom* for children in senior classes, specific roles and responsibilities for children to ensure they have a voice in school activities and initiatives such as *Active Schools* and *Green Schools*, half-term *Certificates of Attendance*, etc.
- sharing this policy with all new families to the school to clarify expectations and discuss any questions and suggestions parents may have in relation to promoting strong attendance at our school.
- publishing the calendar for the following school year in March on [the school website](#) and circulating reminders in the school's newsletters and social media. It is hoped that by sharing the school calendar six months before the new school year, we can help parents to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

Parents and families

Parents can promote strong school attendance by taking an interest in their children's learning and expressing support for the school's values, i.e.:

- helping children to plan and manage their time in the mornings.
- ensuring their children understand that parents support good school attendance.
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements.

- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.

Parents can also promote strong attendance in how they plan holidays, events or appointments and communicate planned and unplanned absences to the school, i.e.:

- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- notifying the school if their child(ren) cannot attend, or will be delayed, or need(s) to leave early, for any reason.
- consulting the school calendar on the school's website and refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- discussing planned absences with the school.
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- notifying the school in writing if their child(ren), particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- working with the school to discuss any challenges regarding attendance and to agree actions to resolve attendance issues.

8. Transfer to Another School

The principal of a child's current school must notify the principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school (Education [Welfare] Act, 2000, Section 20). When a principal receives notification that a child has been enrolled 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.

- When a child transfers into Brannoxtown CNS **from another school**, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- When a child transfers from Brannoxtown CNS **to another school**, the school's records on attendance and academic progress will be forwarded to the child's new school, on receipt of written notification of the transfer from the Principal of the child's new school.
- Sixth class children transferring from Brannoxtown CNS **to post-primary school** will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment, in line with requirements of the Education Passport. The child's Education Passport consists of:
 - a) 6th class end of year report card (completed by the class teacher)
 - b) My Profile sheet (completed by the child)
 - c) My Child's Profile sheet (completed by parents)
 - d) NEPS Student Transfer Form (completed by the SET for children in receipt of additional support such as Special Needs Assistants, assistive technology or school transport).

The information contained in the Education Passport is intended to provide a rounded picture of children's progress and achievement at primary school, to help children to continue to make progress, and for children

receiving SET support, to signal to post-primary schools where additional support(s) may be needed.

9. BCNS Attendance Policy: Monitoring and Reviewing

All staff were consulted in the preparation of this policy. It was shared with parents in May 2020. This policy was reviewed by all staff and the Board of Management in April 2021.

a. Success Criteria

Practical indicators of the success of this policy will be evident in a high level of understanding of the purpose of the policy and knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of staff, parents and children in promoting, supporting and also monitoring and reporting children's daily attendance at Brannoxtown CNS. Ultimately, the success of this *Attendance and Punctuality Policy* for Brannoxtown CNS will be measured through strong and punctual attendance evident in attendance data from the e-Rolla and Aladdin. The effectiveness of this policy will also be evident in happy children who enjoy coming to school, parents who feel supported in ensuring their children have strong attendance, and teachers who are tuned-in to trends in attendance data and who take appropriate and prompt action when needed.

b. Implementation and Timetable for Review

The policy became effective from the beginning of the 2020/2021 school year. Staff will review and discuss attendance across the school in December and May, each year, in line with the schedule for return of Student Absence Reports (in January and June). Attendance data/trends will periodically be shared with member of the Board of Management at their scheduled meetings, as part of the Principal's Report.

c. Ratification and Communication

Following feedback and input from staff, parents and members of the school's Board of Management, this policy was finalised and posted on the school's website in May 2020.

This policy has been reviewed and updated by staff and the Board of Management on 20th April, 2021.

Signed: 
Ms. Deirdre O'Donovan
Chairperson

Date: 20th April, 2021

Signed: 
Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick
Principal

Date: 20th April, 2021

Appendix 1a.

Letter to Parents: Punctuality at Brannoxtown CNS

Address line 1

Address line 2

Address line 3

Date

Punctuality at Brannoxtown CNS

Dear P (Parents),

Our records show that your child, C, has been more than 10 minutes late to school on 5 days within a 15 day period (3 weeks) during the current school year. Please see the attached record of C's punctuality for the current school year.

When a child arrives late to school, he/she misses out on important discussions about the day's schedule of activities as well as notices and announcements for his/her class. Late arrivals disrupt the class while the teacher takes time to explain what has already been shared and agreed for the day with the child who has arrived late. Children themselves generally feel uncomfortable arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled and started on the day's schedule; they are at a disadvantage before they begin their school-day.

To minimise the disruption caused by late arrivals to school, C's Teacher and I would like to discuss C's punctuality with you as soon as possible. Please phone the School Secretary, Liz Kavanagh, to make an appointment at: 045-483729. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the reasons why C is late and any support the school can offer.

The school is required (under the Education Welfare Act, 2000) to report children who are persistently late to Education Welfare Services within the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS). However, we hope that challenges relating to C's punctuality can be overcome following our meeting and his/her punctuality records will no longer be a cause of concern.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal

Attach Punctuality Data from Aladdin

Appendix 1b.

Letter to Parents: Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (5 days/15 days, unexplained)

Address line 1

Address line 2

Address line 3

Date

Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (5 days/15 days, unexplained)

Dear P (Parents),

I am writing to you regarding your child, C's attendance at school. C has now been absent for 5 days within a three-week period during the current school year, without any note of explanation. Please see the attached record of attendance for C during the current school year.

We understand that absences can occur for many reasons. To enable us to best support children through unavoidable absence, we ask parents to use the absence notes at the back of the BCNS Homework Journal (for children from first class upwards) or written notes for children in Junior and Senior Infants to explain your child's absence when he/she returns to school and also to give prior notice of any planned absence, when possible.

Our school policy requires us to write to parents when a child's attendance records show 5 absences without explanation within a three-week period. If you can provide the reasons for C's absence on the dates below/attached when he/she was absent, we will update C's absence record accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal

Attach Attendance Data from Aladdin

Appendix 1c. Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (15 days)

Address line 1
Address line 2
Address line 3

Date

Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (15 days)

Dear P (Parents),

I am writing to you regarding your child, C's attendance at school. C has now been absent for 15 days from the beginning of the school year. Our school policy is to inform parents of your child's absence when your child misses 15 days of school. Please see the attached record of attendance for C during the current school year.

C's Teacher, T, and I would like to discuss C's attendance with you as soon as possible. Please phone the School Secretary, Liz Kavanagh, to make an appointment at: 045-483729. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the reasons for C's absence and any support the school can offer.

As C has been absent from our school for 15 days and we are concerned about his/her attendance, we are required to forward information about C's absence record to the [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#). The school is obliged to take this action in line with the Education Welfare Act (2000), as noted in our school policy on Attendance and Punctuality. A representative of Tusla may be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal

Attach Attendance Data from Aladdin

Appendix 1d. Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (20 days)

Address line 1
Address line 2
Address line 3

Date

Absence from Brannoxtown CNS (20 days)

Dear P (Parents),

I am writing to you regarding your child, C's attendance at school. C has now been absent for 20 days from the beginning of the school year. As you know, following our meeting on D (date) regarding C's absence from school for 15 days, our school policy is to inform parents in writing when your child has been absent for 20 days of school. Please see the attached record of attendance for C during the current school year.

C's Teacher, T, and I, would like to discuss C's attendance with you as soon as possible. Please phone the School Secretary, Liz Kavanagh, to make an appointment at: 045-483729. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the reasons for C's continued absence and any support the school can offer to support improved attendance at school.

As C has now been absent from our school for 20 days during the current school year and we are concerned about his/her attendance, information about C's absence record has been forwarded to the [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#). The school is required to do this, in line with the Education Welfare Act (2000) as noted in our school policy on Attendance and Punctuality. A representative of Tusla may be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal

Attach Attendance Data from Aladdin