



BELFAST HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Planned Absence:

- Parents / guardians should inform the school **at least 3 days in advance in writing** if a child is going to be off;
- If the absence is deemed by the school to be unacceptable, such as a holiday during term-time, a standard letter will be sent home from the Principal outlining the school's disapproval and stating that it will be the pupil's responsibility to catch up on work. **The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school;**
- Pupils should bring a follow-up absence note on the day they return to school.

Unplanned Absence:

- Parents / guardians should inform the school immediately if a child is going to be absent by ringing the school **on the first morning of absence using the School Absence Line – 90 867126;**
- Pupils should bring a follow-up absence note on the day they return to school;
- If 3 days pass without contact from the parent/guardian, a phone call will be made to determine the reason for absence and to remind parents / guardians that they are meant to ring the school on the first day of absence;
- If a child remains absent after 5 days (and no contact has been possible with home or the reason for absence is not deemed to be satisfactory), a formal letter will be sent from the school outlining the school's concern about the absence and the impact on studies.

Communication:

A letter will be sent out from school to parents / guardians at the start of the year outlining the arrangements for informing the school regarding planned or unplanned absence.

Sanctions:

- A child must bring an absence note with them on their return from school following either planned or unplanned absence;
- The absence note should go directly to the form teacher (year teacher at Sixth form), and **not** in the first instance to the office;
- If a pupil fails to bring in an absence note the following will occur:
 1. On the first day a verbal warning will be given by the form teacher;
 2. On the second day another verbal warning will be given and a slip will be sent home with the pupil indicating that the absence note is now two days late;
 3. On the third day a Year Teacher detention will be issued and the parents / guardians contacted.

First-day calling

Parents / guardians are expected to telephone on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence.

Meetings with parents/guardians

Where there is an emerging pattern to a pupil's absence over a term (or sooner if staff are particularly concerned), with or without explanation, the school will invite parents / guardians to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans should be put in place with the parents / guardians and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit – usually no more than 6 weeks. It will be explained to parents / guardians that any future absences may be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them.

Referral to the Education Attendance Service

If there continue to be concerns over attendance of a pupil, the matter may be referred to the Education Attendance Service. Such cases of referral may include:

- When a pupil's attendance falls below a certain level without acceptable reason. The current nominal figure for this at Belfast High School is 80%;
- When a certain number of unauthorised absences are registered on the system for a pupil. The current nominal number of unauthorised absences is 3.

Further Information

- Subject teachers will take a register of all classes at the beginning of every lesson to record absence and lateness.
- If advance medical notice* is given for an absence in a session, a pupil must return in the session to be marked present otherwise it will count as a half-day absence for medical reasons.
- A pupil will be marked as late up to 11 am and after this time it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless an absence note is provided.
- If a pupil attends a morning medical appointment without providing advanced medical notice* and returns to school before 11am with a note explaining their absence they will be marked present for the morning session.
- A pupil registered in the morning who leaves school before 13:50 for an appointment will have a half-day absence noted on their attendance record if the pupil does not return to school in the afternoon session.
- Pupils are expected to bring notes and get them signed by the Year Teacher or a member of the Senior Management Team if they are going to be out of school for part of a day.

* Advanced medical notice is considered to be notifying the school of absence due to medical reasons before 9.10 am on the day of absence