

# **Belfast High School**

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

*March 2012*

## Planned Absence

- Parents / guardians should inform the school **at least three 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**. A dedicated telephone/answering machine has been installed for the purpose of pupil absence. The telephone number is **028 90 867126**. Please continue to use the main school telephone number for all other calls;
- 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 to school following either planned or unplanned absence;
- The absence note should go directly to the Form Teacher/Tutor 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 2 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**

- If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 10 days**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- An afternoon appointment made before 14:30 will count as a half-day absence, and a morning appointment whereby the pupil does not return to school before 11:00 will also count as a half-day absence. Pupils are expected to bring notes and get them signed by the Year Teacher if they are going to be out of school for part of a day;
- Subject teachers will take a register of all classes at the beginning of every lesson to record absence and lateness.
- If parents wish work to be collated for their child during a period of absence, please note that this will only be done after an absence of 3 days. Parents should contact the School if they wish work to be sent home.

**School Target Attendance 2011-2012:            96%**



## LATE ABSENCE NOTE

Dear Parent / Guardian

**RE: School Attendance Policy (point 4.2)**

Your son / daughter was absent on \_\_\_\_\_ 2011-12. No note has yet been provided explaining this absence. Belfast High School's Attendance Policy stipulates that a note must be brought by your child to his / her Form Teacher on their return to school. Your child has previously been given a verbal warning to bring in a note.

If no note is received tomorrow, your child will be placed in a Year Teacher detention and you will be contacted again. A blank explanation slip has been made available on the back of this note for you to use.

**Form Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## REASON FOR ABSENCE

Dear Parent / Guardian

**Please indicate below the reason for your child's absence:**

Pupil name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_