



PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Belfast High School

Date: May 2023

Date Ratified: 27 September 2023

Ratified by: Board of Governors

Responsibility: Board of Governors

Author: Senior Leader

Review Date: September 2026

INTRODUCTION

Belfast High School recognises the importance of school attendance in raising standards and ensuring that every child can access the full curriculum and fulfil his or her potential. The School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure. This policy complies with DE Circular 2022/07:

[Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording By Schools – Circular 2022/07 | Department of Education](#)

AIMS

- To maintain / improve the overall attendance of pupils;
- To define roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- To provide advice and guidance to parents/carers;
- To develop strong links with the Education Welfare Service.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Pupils

- To maximise their learning potential by taking responsibility for achieving excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.
- To follow the School procedures for dealing with attendance and punctuality eg reminding parents/carers to communicate with the school about absences. .

Parents/Carers

- Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child regularly attends school. It is the parent/carer's duty to promptly inform the school if the child is absent via the School Gateway App (See Appendix 1).
- If your child appears reluctant to attend school please discuss the matter promptly with the relevant Head of Year to ensure support is given.
- Pupils are expected to be in school for registration by 09:10am. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is punctual.
- To be fully supportive of the School with regards to attendance and punctuality and any interventions that might be necessary.
- Further information and guidance for parents/carers from the Department of Education can be found on the link below:
<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/attendance-matters-a-parents-guide.pdf>

Administrative Staff

- To follow the procedures outlined in this policy in relation to following up on unexplained absences and acting on communication from parents/carers via School Gateway.
- To liaise with pastoral teams about any pupils causing concern in relation to attendance of punctuality.

Form Teachers

- To take the register at the beginning of every lesson/registration period in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy.
- To monitor attendance and punctuality in partnership with the HoY as detailed in this policy.
- To encourage their Form Group to take responsibility for their attendance and punctuality through monitoring and reinforcing the need for high levels of attendance and excellent punctuality.
- To use existing rewards systems, such as positive behaviour points and pupil of the month, to encourage good attendance and punctuality.
- To assist in reintegrating any pupils in their Form after a period of prolonged absence.

Heads of Year

- To raise the profile of good attendance through assemblies and monitor the attendance of pupils in their year group.
- To liaise with the Form Teachers and Head of Key Stage regarding poor attendance and punctuality. This involves regularly gathering data from SIMs and acting upon it in line with this policy.
- To liaise with parents/carers as appropriate in response to attendance, punctuality and truancy issues.
- To ensure that rewards in relation to attendance and punctuality are used effectively within their year group.

Senior Leadership Team

- To co-ordinate and monitor the policy and procedures for attendance and punctuality.
- To raise the profile and importance of attendance and punctuality, for example, during assemblies and events for parents/carers.
- To analyse and act swiftly in response to data reports on attendance and punctuality. This includes liaising with Heads of Year and parents/carers to ensure effective action is taken.
- To ensure that expectations with regards to this policy are communicated clearly to all stakeholders.

Governors

- To review and ratify the Attendance Policy.
- To review attendance figures regularly at Board of Governors meetings

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

There are two registrations taken each day. For AM registration, Form Teachers should be in their room, or relevant assembly venue, by 09.10 to commence registration promptly at 09.10. Pupils are expected to be in their Form Room by 09.10. Pupils who arrive after this time should be marked Late. (L). Pupils who arrive between 09.10-09.20 should go to their Form Room or Assembly to be registered. Pupils who arrive after 09.20 should sign in Late at Reception. PM Registration takes place at the beginning of the Period 4 lesson.

LESSON REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

It is essential that a lesson register is taken on SIMS and this should be taken within 15 minutes of the start of the lesson. This will help to monitor and reduce truancy from lessons.

PUNCTUALITY

Pupils who arrive at Registration after 09.10 are to be marked Late. It is the responsibility of the Form Tutor and Head of Year to monitor the frequency of lateness of their pupils. The following procedures should be applied in the event of persistent lateness. The Pastoral Team will carefully consider the context of individual circumstances before applying the below.

The number of lates will revert to 0 at the start of each term

3 lates	Conversation with Form Teacher and negative behaviour point on SIMS
6 lates	Conversation with HoY and phone call home with a lates detention
9 lates	Parent Meeting with HoY and lates detention
12 lates	HoKS contact with parents and After School Detention

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Parents/carers are informed about the arrangements for informing the school regarding planned or unplanned absence at the start of each academic year in a variety of ways, including through the Parent Information Booklet. All absences, whether planned or unplanned, should be reported through the School Gateway App. Guidance on how to do this is included in Appendix 1 of this document and in the Parent Information Booklet.

a. Planned Absence

Parents/carers must inform the school **at least 3 days in advance** if a child is going to be absent;. Parents/carers should communicate the reason for absence by using the 'Attendance' tab on School Gateway (Appendix 1). Parents/carers must use the School Gateway App exclusively, rather than using handwritten notes, phone calls or emails. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

b. Unplanned Absence

It is a parent's/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. Parents/carers must communicate the reason for absence by using the 'Attendance' tab on the School Gateway App (Appendix 1). Parents/carers must use the School Gateway App exclusively, rather than using handwritten notes, phone calls or emails. Parents/carers should send this message before 09.10 on the first day of absence. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

c. Planned early departure or late arrival to school

Where parents/carers know that a pupil will be absent from school for part of the school day, eg for a medical appointment, parents/carers must use the 'Attendance' tab on the School Gateway App to inform the school of the details of the absence. Parents/carers must do this **before** the time that the pupil needs to leave the site. Pupils who have been given permission to leave school during the day must sign out at the office at their allocated time.

d. Unplanned Early Departure From School

Where a pupil becomes ill or has an injury during the course of the school day, parents/carers will be contacted by phone and, if necessary, will be encouraged to make arrangements for the collection of the pupil

Family Holidays During Term Time

Belfast High 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, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Record Keeping

Should no reason be provided for a pupil's absence via School Gateway, the school will contact the parents/carers of those pupils on the day of the absence via School Gateway requesting a reason for the absence. Should no response be forthcoming, the school will continue to request a response until one is received.

Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance

School absence should be avoided wherever possible. Every missed day of school could have a negative impact on a pupil's progress and sometimes attendance statistics can be misleading. While 90% in a test might be considered an excellent score, when it comes to attendance 90% would mean that, over the course of the year a pupil would miss almost 4 weeks of school. If 90% continued over 5 years of schooling, a pupil would miss half a year of school. The table below helps illustrate this.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

In line with the DE Guidance for 'Schools Monitoring and Reporting Pupil Attendance Using Absence Tiers' document, Belfast High School will monitor pupil attendance using the Absence Tier system.

The Absence Tier report will be run by SLT Attendance Officer on the first Monday of each month and shared at the subsequent SLT meeting. Pastoral Teams will act on the data from this report in accordance with the procedures outlined in Appendix 2.

The Pastoral Team will carefully consider the context of the individual absences when applying the procedures outlined in Appendix 2.

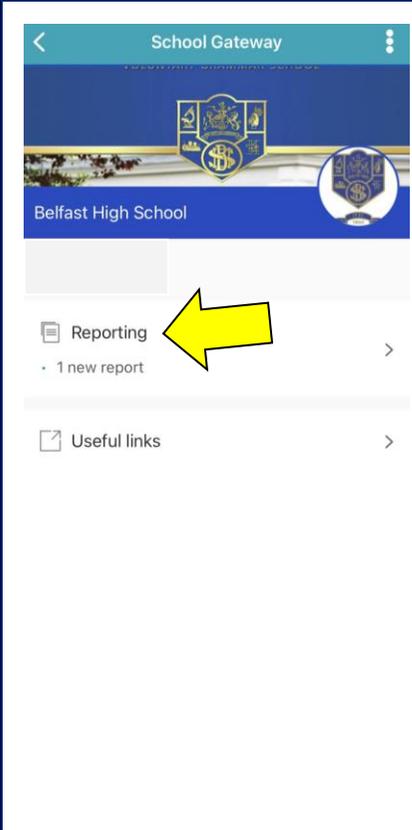
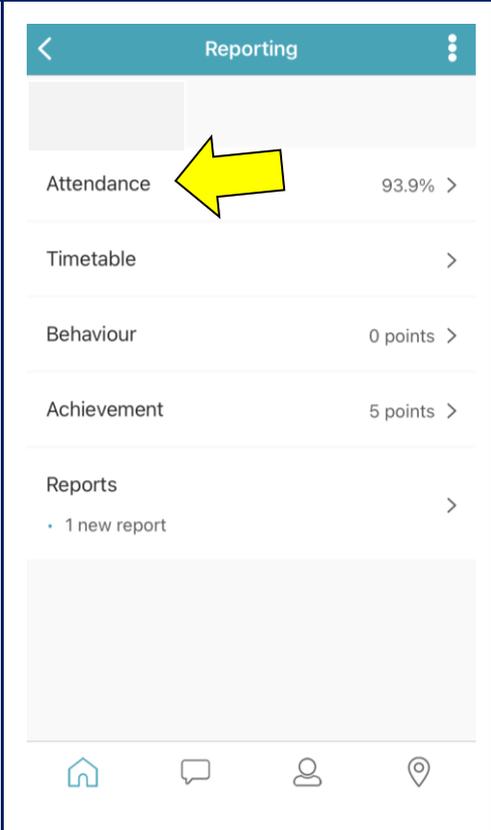
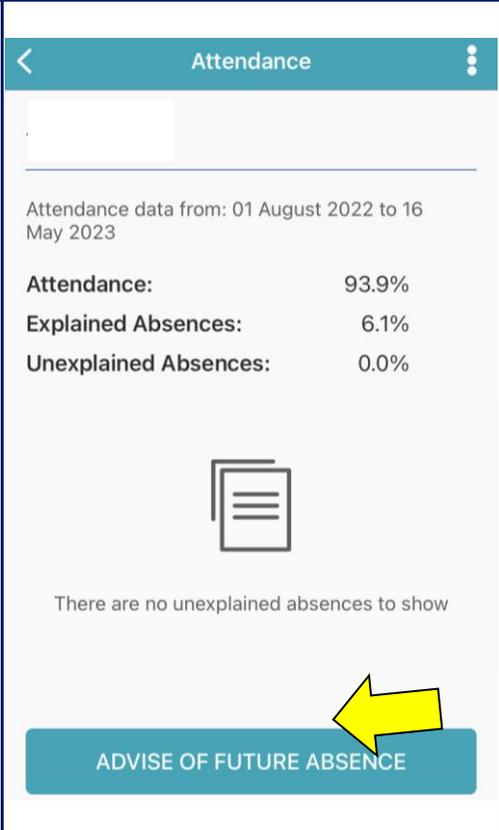
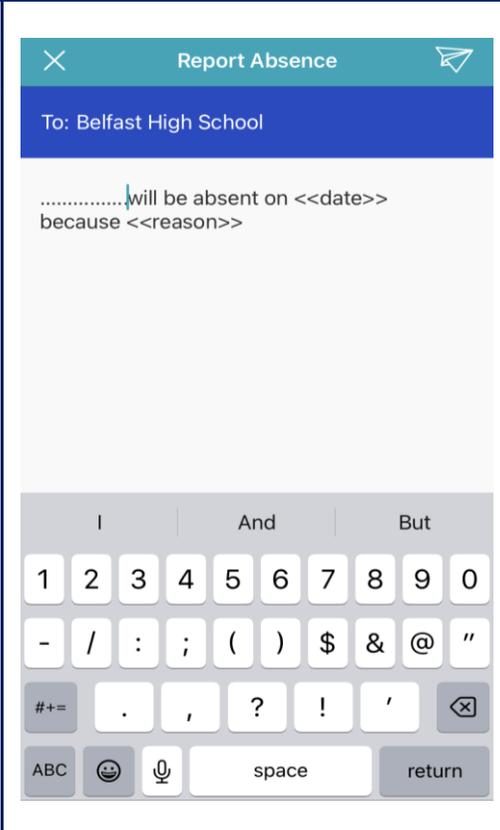
Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education. Belfast High School works in partnership with the EWS to support pupils who have chronic absence attendance. The EWO will make regular visits to the school to review attendance and identify pupils of concern who require support.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. Parents/carers will be informed when a referral is being made.

EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

REPORTING AN ABSENCE USING SCHOOL GATEWAY APP

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
<p>Selecting the 'Reporting' tab from the homepage</p>	<p>Select the 'Attendance' tab</p>	<p>Select the 'Advise of Future Absence' tab</p>	<p>Detail the name of the pupils, the date of the absence and the reason and press send.</p>
 <p>Screenshot of the School Gateway app homepage. The 'Reporting' tab is highlighted with a yellow arrow.</p>	 <p>Screenshot of the Reporting screen. The 'Attendance' tab is highlighted with a yellow arrow.</p>	 <p>Screenshot of the Attendance screen. The 'ADVISE OF FUTURE ABSENCE' button is highlighted with a yellow arrow.</p>	 <p>Screenshot of the Report Absence screen. The text input field is highlighted with a yellow arrow.</p>

MONITORING ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Category	% Absence	School Actions
Tier 1a: Regular Attendance	0-4.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form Teacher continues to monitor Live attendance data is shared with parents and carers via the Gateway App
Tier 1b: At Risk Attendance	5-9.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form Teacher to inform pupil they are in the 'At Risk' category. Discussion with pupil about reasons for absence. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>If attendance does not improve...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Year discussion with pupil about absence concerns
Tier 2: Chronic Attendance	10-19.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoY to inform pupil they are in the 'Chronic Attendance' category. Discussion with pupil about reasons for absence. HoY phone call with parents/carers to advise pupil is now in 'Chronic Attendance' category. HoY to send Tier 2 Chronic Attendance letter (Appendix 3) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>If attendance does not improve...</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoY/HoKS meeting with parents/carers to discuss strategies to improve attendance Potential referral to Educational Welfare Service
Tier 3: Severe Chronic Attendance	20%+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HoKS to send Tier 3 Severe Chronic Attendance letter (Appendix 4) to parents/carers Referral to Educational Welfare Service SLT meeting with parents/carers and EWO Possible engagement of other external agencies Potential court action

TIER 2 CHRONIC ATTENDANCE LETTER

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to advise you that _____ currently has an absence rate of _____ .

Absence rates of 10-20% or more are classed by the Education Authority as '**chronic absence**' and such absence is shared with the Education Welfare Service who can intervene to offer support.

We are therefore writing to inform you that we will continue to monitor _____ attendance over the coming weeks and we hope to see an improvement. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support you in trying to achieve this. Should we fail to see improvements in attendance then a referral to the Educational Welfare Service may be necessary so strategies can be put in place to encourage improved attendance.

We seek to work in partnership with parents and carers and if you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact the school and ask to speak to your child's Head of Year.

Yours sincerely

Head of Year
(printed and signed)

Head of Key Stage
(printed and signed)

TIER 3 SEVERE CHRONIC ATTENDANCE LETTER

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing to advise you that _____ currently has an absence rate of _____.
Absence rates of 20% or more are classed by the Education Authority as '**severe chronic absence**' and such absence is shared with the Education Welfare Service who can intervene to offer support.

We are therefore writing to inform you that we will continue to monitor _____ attendance over the coming weeks and we hope to see an improvement. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support you in trying to achieve this. Should we fail to see improvements in attendance then a referral to the Educational Welfare Service may be necessary so strategies can be put in place to encourage improved attendance.

We seek to work in partnership with parents and carers and if you wish to discuss this further please do not hesitate to contact the school and ask to speak to your child's Head of Year.

Yours sincerely

**Head of Year
(printed and signed)**

**Head of Key Stage
(printed and signed)**