



Belfast Model
School for Girls
ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS: NOVEMBER 2024

TO BE REVIEWED: 2026

Introduction

A school year is very short. It has only 185 days for students. This leaves 180 days for holidays and activities at home. A school week is also very short. Most students spend 6-7 hours at school on each of the five days they attend during term time. This means only approximately one third of a school day is spent in school. Most of the day and the week is spent at home. Time in school is precious. Absence from school and late coming to school has a negative effect on a student’s educational progress, achievement and employment prospects. Therefore daily attendance and excellent punctuality is our goal for all students, in line with our aim, ‘Achievement for All’.

Belfast Model School for Girls will strive to promote a positive and proactive ethos that places high value on attendance and punctuality. Our culture will encourage good attendance and will endeavour to ensure each student feels valued and secure. Belfast Model School for Girls also values the partnership with parents/carers to promote good attendance.

Rationale

In line with our aim ‘Achievement for All’ we strive to improve the overall attendance of the students by proactively encouraging rewarding good attendance whilst exploring and identifying the reasons for absence and devising and implementing strategies to improve the attendance of students who have fallen below the required threshold. (It is recognised that good attendance patterns established at school continue into the world of work and employers increasingly wish attendance to be quantified when seeking references for interviews).

Purposes

In monitoring school attendance we aim to:

- Raise the students’ awareness of the importance of regular attendance.
- Develop a culture of wanting to attend school
- Encourage and develop the good habit of regular attendance.
- Celebrate the success of pupils in achieving good attendance through the Rewards System and the distribution of Attendance Certificates at the Attendance Award Ceremony.
- Celebrate the success of good attendance through celebratory assemblies each term.
- Consider possible and realistic support as a means of encouraging an improvement in attendance.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of students at Belfast Model School for Girls.
2. To encourage all pupils to reach their true potential.
3. Setting attendance targets for the school, specific year groups, form classes and individual pupils.
4. Contacting parents the same week when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised.
5. To regularly monitor attendance and punctuality through a framework that defines our intervention points and roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
6. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
7. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
8. Regularly reporting school attendance statistics to parents.
9. Analysing data about attendance to check our progress against measurable outcomes.

Targets

The schools’ targets for attendance are:

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
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BMSG	91.1%	91.1%	91.5%	92%	92.5%	92.5%	93.5%	92%	91%	91%
NI average non grammar	92%	92.3%	91.8%	No statistical bulletin published	Statistical bulletin expected Jan 2021	93.4	89%	No bulletin published		

Leaders of Learning set appropriate form level targets to achieve this overall goal.

We expect all students to have a minimum of 95% attendance. We encourage our students to strive to have attendance better than the agreed minimum requirement, teaching them that they should all aspire to have 100% attendance.

Recording Attendance

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to latest guidance provided in the Department of Education. At present this is Circular 2024/13, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools>

If this guidance changes the policy will be updated.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The School's Responsibilities

The Assistant Principal for Character, Culture and Care for Learning at Belfast Model School for Girls (reporting to the Principal) has overall responsibility for school attendance; school systems will bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the VP's attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Along with The AP for CCC for Learning, the Assistant Leaders of Learning Pastoral take responsibility for attendance in their year group. Together the team:

- Develops and implements strategies to promote and encourage good attendance/punctuality
- Ensures all staff promote and implement agreed attendance/punctuality management strategies.
- Actively promotes the attendance and punctuality targets at whole school, year team, tutor group and individual level
- Promotes whole school attendance and punctuality targets amongst parents as well as students
- Provides additional support for students who are deemed 'priority students'

- Provides attendance and punctuality rewards for students who meet the attendance and punctuality targets or exceed them.
- Ensures all staff share responsibility for whole school attendance and punctuality.
- Monitors attendance data and allocates actions following the school's attendance strategy.

Form Tutor Responsibilities

Form Tutors will:

- Agree with the ALoL the attendance target for their form class
- Regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of students by ensuring that attendance is recorded during form class each morning
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance/ punctuality in form classes on a regular basis
- Record, monitor progress towards form class targets for attendance/punctuality
- Set individual targets for attendance/punctuality and monitor progress
- Monitor attendance and punctuality at individual and tutor group level on a daily basis
- Identify patterns of absence for individual students in order to provide on-going support – requesting a letter of concern
- Lead the form's attendance Traffic Lights when data is available on a monthly basis
- Monitor Planners and the attendance Traffic Lights and discuss percentages with each individual student
- Place pupils on report to monitor their attendance/punctuality.
- Lead the form's attendance traffic light system in the week required by the attendance calendar
- Make phone calls home during communication time
- Keep ALoL updated with information concerning pupils attendance.

Assistant Leader of Learning Responsibilities

Assistant Leaders of Learning will:

- Set the overall target for attendance for their year group

- Promote the importance of student attendance to school within the year group
- Distribute attendance/punctuality data to Form Tutors on a regular basis
- Organise attendance/punctuality incentives as well as monitor attendance and punctuality at individual, tutor group and year team level on a weekly basis
- Co-ordinate the creation and distribution of attendance rewards for their year group (Appendix A)
- Sample Student Planners to monitor Traffic Lights information is up to date and signed by FTs and parents
- Liaise with the parents of those whose attendance is declining to ascertain reason for absence
- Implement necessary interventions to support students whose attendance is falling rapidly (Appendix A)
- Request support from the Education Welfare Officer if a student's attendance is likely to fall below 85% (Years 8- 12) by completing the relevant paperwork.
- Provide, update and give direction to the year team in regards to attendance at pastoral meetings
- Deliver an Attendance Celebration Assembly on a termly basis and through their assembly programmes.
- Support students who are being reintegrated after long term absences.
- Provide pupils' attendance and punctuality records to employers and other agencies upon request.
- To work with the attendance ambassadors in promoting excellent attendance in their year group.
- To keep the pastoral noticeboard updated with relevant attendance.
- To organise relevant letters to be sent home through the office.

Students' Responsibilities

Each student at Belfast Model School for Girls is expected to attend school punctually and regularly.

- To value school and education.
- Students should all understand that only illness can be a reason for absence.
- To meet or exceed the whole school attendance target
- To be in school each day and on time - 8.50am
- To sign in at Reception if arriving to school after 9.00am

- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence, e.g. bullying, etc.
- To not leave school during the day without permission.
- To keep a record of their attendance in their Planner
- To ensure that a reason for absence is given in writing in their Planner on their return to school or through a note from their parents which FTs place in the form folder. Reasons for absence can also be reported to the office via the attendance phone line.
- To have their planner signed by a parent weekly
- To catch up on any work missed during their absence
- To attend all classes required by their timetable
- To be respectful to anyone who has reason to discuss attendance or punctuality with them

Belfast Model School for Girls is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Parents' Responsibilities

- To ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually, this is a legal duty;
- To notify the School if their child cannot attend for any reason – this is for the child's security as well as administrative reasons;
- To work with the School and its Attendance Team to resolve/alleviate any attendance problems or protracted absence;
- To attend meetings as required in relation of their child's attendance;
- Encourage good attendance making sure that their child goes to school regularly and arrives on time;
- Make sure their child understands that the parents do not approve of absence from school;
- Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance or respond to our truancy call system/phone calls;
- Discuss planned absences with the school and apply for permission well in advance, e.g. a wedding or other special occasions;
- Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.50am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record;

- If your child appears reluctant to attend school please discuss the matter promptly with your daughter's Leader of Learning to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

PUPILS LEAVING SCHOOL DURING SCHOOL HOURS FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

All appointments during the school day are to be discouraged. All appointments should be recorded on Sims and recorded. If a pattern of leaving for appointments emerges, FT should contact home and also make the ALOL aware. Students should be picked up by contact 1 or 2 in reception and return to school after their appointment if able. (SEE APPENDIX B FOR FULL DETAILS)

Post 16

Post 16 students will bring a letter into Mrs Roberts and she will issue an exeat. At time to leave the student will go to the reception with the exeat and sign out. The reception will retain the exeat and return it to Mrs Roberts. Mrs Roberts will keep record of all exeats and track weekly.

Family Holidays during Term Time

Belfast Model School for Girls discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on students' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will not be authorised, unless there are exceptional circumstances that apply to the request.

Truancy

If a student truants school, either internally or externally, she will be given time to reflect in Wellbeing and will also be supported and guided to make more positive choices.

Punctuality and Lateness

The School actively promotes the importance of developing good time keeping habits amongst students, by monitoring student punctuality to school. The school monitors and acts upon persistent lateness of students.

For students the school day begins promptly with Registration at 8.50am and Registers must be completed electronically by Form Tutors at the start of Registration on the SIMs Attendance Register.

Student arrival to registration after 8.50am is claimed as 'late' unless due to extenuating circumstances.

- Any pupil arriving late (after 8.50am until 9.00am) reports to their Form Tutor and the Form Tutor records minutes late and reasons on the SIMs Attendance Register.
- Any student arriving late after 9.00am is to enter school through the reception doors and complete the year group late book before entering school. The office staff will update the am registration. On arrival to class the subject teacher will record Late on SIMs. They will record the minutes late and the reason for lateness.
- All above information is recorded on the SIMs Attendance Register.

- It is the responsibility of Form Tutors in collaboration with Assistant Leaders of Learning to monitor lateness and act swiftly to reduce persistent lateness. (Appendix C)

Education Welfare Service

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

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

Appendix A

Interventions

Our intervention strategies include:

- Identifying pupils who are vulnerable to becoming persistent absentees or latecomers and having individual action plans in place for each pupil.
- Offering a Personalised timetable
- Employing effective counselling systems
- Providing additional study support
- Supporting the reintegration process following long term absence
- Using attendance incentive schemes which recognise and reward good attendance
- Offering activities before and after school as an incentive for pupils to come to school
- Organising attendance and punctuality theme days/week and associated project presentations
- Attendance Monitoring Card
- Promoting excellent attendance through social media

Attendance Awards

Each Term

- ALoLs lead Attendance Celebration Assemblies. Gold, silver and bronze certificates are distributed for full attendance, 1 day absence and 2 days absence in the term, consecutively.

Annual attendance Awards Ceremony/ Prizegiving – students receive the following

- Bronze Certificate – Students > 98% attendance during the year.
- Silver Certificate – Students > 99% attendance during the year.
- Gold Certificate – Students 100% attendance during the year.
- 1 years Full Attendance Certificate + badge.
- 2 years Full Attendance Certificate + badge.
- 3 to 7 years Full Attendance Certificate + badge + book token (value of book token increases according to number of years full attendance).

APPENDIX B

Girls leaving school during the school day

All appointments during the school day are to be discouraged. All appointments should be recorded on SIMs and in the FTs blue register. If a pattern of leaving for appointments emerges, FT should contact home and also make the ALOL aware. Students should return to school after their appointment.

PLANNED APPOINTMENTS

NOTE WRITTEN IN FROM PLANNER FROM PARENT (PREFERABLY DAY BEFORE)

FT TO CONTACT HOME TO VERIFY IF CONCERNED OR INFORM ALOL IF UNABLE TO

EMAILOFFICE RECEPTION WHO WILL KEEP A DAILY LIST OF APPOINTMENTS

FT RECORD ON SIMS THE TIME AND REASON WHY STUDENT IS LEAVING

STUDENT TO REPORT TO RECEPTION AT TIME THEY ARE TO LEAVE

RECEPTION TO ENSURE PARENT COLLECTS

UNPLANNED APPOINTMENTS

PHONE CALL TO OFFICE

OFFICE CALLS BACK ON SIMS NUMBER TO VERIFY

EMPHASISE PARENT TO COME INTO THE SCHOOL RECEPTION TO COLLECT

OFFICE EMAIL (A) SUBJECT TEACHER – TO INFORM THE STUDENT AND (B) THE FT & LOL FOR INFORMATION

OFFICE RECORD ON SIMS THE TIME AND REASON WHY STUDENT IS LEAVING

STUDENT TO REPORT TO RECEPTION AT TIME THEY ARE TO LEAVE (FOLLOW ONE WAY SYSTEM)

RECEPTION TO ENSURE PARENT COLLECTS

Appendix C

Lateness Procedures Information for Form Tutors

