



Belfast Model
School for Girls
ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

APPROVED BY BOARD OF GOVERNORS: SEPTEMBER 2025

TO BE REVIEWED BY BOARD OF GOVERNORS: SEPTEMBER 2027

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. Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. 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 and 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). In the Belfast Model School for Girls, we believe that excellent attendance to school correlates to excellent achievement. Therefore, we promote "Attend today. Achieve tomorrow".

Purpose

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 - #miss school, miss out
- Encourage and develop the good habit of regular attendance.
- Celebrate the success of pupils in achieving good attendance through SIMs points and the distribution of Attendance Certificates and badges 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. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
4. Setting attendance targets for the school, specific year groups, form classes and individual pupils.
5. Contacting parents the same week when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised.
6. To regularly monitor attendance and punctuality through a framework that defines our intervention points and roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
7. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
8. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
9. Regularly reporting school attendance statistics to parents.
10. Analysing attendance data to check our progress against measurable outcomes.

There are 185 days in a school year



ATTEND
TODAY,
**ACHIEVE
TOMORROW.**

Assistant Leaders of Learning (Pastoral) set appropriate form-level targets and year group targets. The Pastoral Vice Principal will then set whole school attendance target.

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 2025/09, 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

The Pastoral Vice Principal of 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.

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

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 Pastoral Vice Principal, 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
- Offers opportunities for Parent Voice through an attendance survey.

Form Tutor Responsibilities

Form Tutors will:

- Agree with the Assistant Leader of Learning (ALOL) the attendance target for their form class
- Regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of students by ensuring that attendance is accurately recorded during form class each morning
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance/punctuality in form classes on a regular basis
- Record and 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, and action a letter of concern if necessary
- 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 (Pastoral) 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 Form Tutors (FT) and parents
- Liaise with the parents of those whose attendance is declining to ascertain the 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 regard to attendance at pastoral meetings
- Deliver an Attendance 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 if a reason has not already been provided via Truancy Call. 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 encourage good attendance and ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually; this is a legal duty
- To inform the school of the reason for a student's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the student returns to school or via Truancy Call
- If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with independent learning tasks or any other necessary arrangements which may be required
- 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
- Make sure their child understands that the parents do not approve of absence from school
- 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 a child's attendance record
- If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with your daughter's Leader of Learning (Pastoral) 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 them aware. Students should be picked up by contact 1 or 2 in reception and should 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 (Post-16 Learning Mentor), and she will issue an exeat. At the 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 be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Truancy

If a student truants school, either internally or externally, parents will be informed and she will be given time to reflect (according to the Behaviour for Learning Policy), and will be supported and guided to make more positive choices.

Attendance Monitoring and Communication Procedures

The school adopts a rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring attendance and promoting regular school attendance across all year groups.

Daily absence monitoring will be conducted by the school office. Where a pupil is absent without authorisation, parents or carers will be contacted via School Comms text message on the day of absence. In cases of extreme lateness, text communication may also be issued to pupils to reinforce expectations regarding punctuality.

All teaching staff will receive a monthly attendance report for all pupils, presented in a RAG-rated format. Form tutors are responsible for reviewing these figures and discussing attendance patterns and expectations with their form classes as part of their pastoral role.

Attendance data will be used by Assistant Leaders of Learning (ALOLs) to monitor and evaluate attendance trends within their year groups. On a weekly basis, ALOLs and Senior Leaders of Learning (SLOs) will receive a list of pupils whose attendance falls between 85% and 93%. These pupils will be discussed during weekly meetings between ALOLs and the Vice Principal (Pastoral), with appropriate interventions agreed.

Where a pupil's attendance falls below 94.9%, ALOLs will instruct the school office to issue the relevant attendance letter. The ALOL will specify which letter is to be sent. All correspondence will be emailed to parents or carers, and an electronic copy will be retained on the pupil's SIMS record.

ALOLs will continue to monitor any improvements or declines in attendance and take further action where necessary. Relevant updates and concerns will be shared with the appropriate SLO to ensure consistent oversight and support.

Regular meetings will take place between ALOLs and the Education Welfare Officers (EWOs). Outcomes from these meetings will be reported back to the SLO. Where a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, the ALOL may make a formal referral to the EWO in line with agreed procedures.

The importance of good attendance will be consistently reinforced with pupils throughout the academic year through assemblies. This will include the presentation of weekly attendance slides for each year group, prepared by the Attendance Officer.

Attendance targets for the whole school and for individual year groups will be established at the start of each academic year and reviewed regularly.

The Attendance Officer will provide Pastoral and Senior Leaders with detailed monthly attendance reports for the whole school and broken down by year group, FSM status, gender, SEN and newcomer status. In addition, a Monthly Absence Tier Report will be distributed to ALOLs to support ongoing monitoring and intervention planning.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school is committed to promoting positive attendance and punctuality and recognises the importance of a consistent, whole-school approach. A range of proactive strategies are used to encourage regular attendance and to celebrate pupils' commitment to learning.

Attendance is visibly promoted across the school through year-group attendance noticeboards located in each corridor. In addition, each form class maintains an attendance monitoring display to support regular discussion and reflection on attendance within the pastoral setting.

An achievement points system is used to incentivise and reward good attendance. Pupils are awarded achievement points as follows:

- 91%–92.9% attendance: 1 point
- 93%–94.9% attendance: 2 points
- 95%–100% attendance: 3 points

Attendance achievements are formally recognised through attendance ceremonies. Certificates and badges are awarded to pupils in recognition of sustained good or improved attendance.

Targeted interventions are implemented where appropriate to support both individual pupils and classes. This may include engagement with external agencies, such as Streetbeat, to address barriers to attendance and promote positive engagement with school.

Pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their attendance through a designated section in their school planner, where monthly attendance figures are recorded. Pupils' views on school life and attendance are gathered regularly through structured surveys, enabling the school to evaluate attitudes and identify areas for development. Parent and carer perceptions are also sought through surveys, ensuring that family perspectives inform attendance practices.

All parents and carers have access to the School Comms application, which allows them to view their child's attendance. The importance of attendance and punctuality is further reinforced through regular assemblies delivered throughout the academic year.

In line with safeguarding and statutory requirements, the school uses School Comms daily to contact parents or carers when a pupil is recorded as having an unauthorised absence. In addition, all parents and carers receive a monthly email communication outlining their child's cumulative attendance, including a breakdown of authorised and unauthorised absences.

Through these measures, the school aims to promote a shared understanding of the importance of regular attendance and to foster a culture where excellent attendance is expected, supported and recognised.

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 student arriving late after 8.50am 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.
- All above information is recorded on the SIMs Attendance Register.
- It is the responsibility of Form Tutors in collaboration with Assistant Leaders of Learning (Pastoral) to monitor lateness and act swiftly to reduce persistent lateness.

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
- EA programme

Attendance Awards

Monthly

Achievement Points

Attendance is rewarded monthly:

- **91%–92.9%** = 1 point
- **93%–94.9%** = 2 points
- **95%–100%** = 3 points

ALOLs lead Attendance Celebration Assemblies each term. 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).
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- Additionally, only students with 92% attendance or above in Post-16 will be eligible to apply for Senior Student Leadership responsibilities

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. 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 PROCEDURE

- Note written in planner from parent (preferably day before)
- FT to contact home to verify if concerned or inform ALOL if unable
- To email Office reception who will keep a daily list of appointments
- FT records on SIMs the time and reason why student is leaving
- Student to report to reception at the 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 records on SIMs the time and reason why student is leaving
- Student to report to reception at the time they are to leave
- Reception to ensure parent collects