



ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES (PUPILS)

JANUARY 2017

Title	Attendance Policy and Procedures (Pupils)
Summary	Guidance for members of staff regarding: Procedures for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing attendance in school.
Purpose	To ensure that all staff recognise the importance of attendance, and that the correct protocols are implemented.
Operational Date	February 2017
Next Review Date	January 2018
Version Number	3
Supersedes previous	Yes
Author	Vice Principal (MTW)
Frequency of Review by Author	Annually in January
Frequency of Review by Education Committee	Annually in February
Date last Reviewed and Approved by Education Committee	February 2017
Frequency of Review by Board of Governors	Annually in March
Date last Reviewed and Approved by Board of Governors	February 2017
To be posted on School website	Yes
Date and version posted	24/ 2/17 v3

Rationale

Belfast Royal Academy is committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full potential, both academically, and through involvement in the extra-curricular life of the school. Regular school attendance is essential in raising standards, allowing every child to have full access to the school curriculum. As a school, we acknowledge the correlation between good attendance and high academic achievement, and place great importance on attendance and punctuality.

Although the school recognises that perfect attendance is not always possible and that absence may be the result of circumstances beyond the control of the pupil, there is an expectation that pupils and their parents will try to keep absence to a minimum. Attendance percentages can be misleading as although an attendance of 90% may seem to be acceptable, it equates to 19 days of absence throughout the year, and it is deemed to be poor by the Department of Education as indicated below:

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

Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide (DENI)

The procedures in relation to punctuality and attendance aim to be pro-active in identifying and resolving any problems in which punctuality and attendance are potentially a factor. The school also recognises that unsatisfactory patterns in relation to punctuality or low levels of attendance may give additional cause for concern in relation to the overall wellbeing of the child¹.

¹refer to Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Wellbeing Policy and Anti-bullying Policy.

Attendance Target

The target rate of attendance for this academic year is above 95%.

Engagement with other Schools

We continue to work with other schools in our Area Learning Community, discussing and sharing best practice in order to sustain improvement in relation to attendance. This is achieved through formal and informal meetings.

Rewards

We recognise the importance of rewarding pupils who have achieved 100% attendance within an academic year. This is achieved in conjunction with the Positive Behaviour Policy and may involve:

- Verbal Praise from the Class Tutor
- Merit points
- Head of Year/Head of School Commendation
- Attendance Certificates

Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Authority, through the Education Welfare Officer, has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, the Education Welfare Officer will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

The Role of the School

The Headmaster has overall responsibility for school attendance. The Vice Principal, via the Heads of School, should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention. The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets.

The Role of the Parent

Belfast Royal Academy is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. The school discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on a pupil's learning. Holidays taken during term time may be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and that their child arrives to school on time.
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term time.
- Notify the school by telephone, using the attendance line, before 10.00 a.m. on the first day of a pupil's absence from school, and on subsequent days of absence if an initial time frame is unclear.
- For a planned absence, provide a letter to the Class Tutor seeking permission for a pupil to leave school during the day.
- Fully cooperate with the school in seeking to overcome problems of attendance and/or punctuality.

If a child is going to be absent for a prolonged period of time, the specific circumstances surrounding the absence will determine how it is coded. Absences will be coded in advance as much as possible but if a pupil makes a speedier recovery the "I" will be changed. If it is not possible to determine a definite date of return, parents should telephone the school every morning (attendance line) before 10.00am to prevent a text message being sent.

The Role of the Pupil

It is the responsibility of the pupil to ensure that they attend school regularly and punctually.

Pupils should:

- Arrive to school by 8.40 a.m. in time for morning registration.
- Arrive to every timetabled class before the second (passing) bell.
- Bring a letter from their parent seeking permission in advance to leave school during the day.
- Show their planned absence (chit) to those teachers whose classes they will miss, and to a member of the General Office before they sign out.
- Sign in on arrival, if late, at the General Office.
- Never leave the school premises at any time during the school day without permission, and without signing out at the General Office.
- Fully cooperate with staff (teaching and non-teaching) to overcome problems in relation to punctuality and/or attendance.

Pupils Leaving School during the School Day

- When a pupil leaves school, they should show the chit to their subject teacher and go to the General Office to sign the **sign-out book**. (They will only be allowed to sign this book when they show their chit to the office.)

- The Matron should also give pupils a chit and send them via the General Office to sign the “Sign-Out” book. The Matron should send a notification email to the relevant Head of Year and the General Office if a pupil has been sent home.
- Staff taking pupils out of school at any time during the school day should do so using the Master Link Document on Google docs.

The Role of the Class Tutor

Class Tutors are expected to monitor absences and/or punctuality in the first instance. The Class Tutor will receive an unexplained absence report every morning showing the pupils whose parents have failed to contact the school about their son/daughter’s absence.

Class Tutors should:

- Complete SIMS registration daily. **It is important that it is completed accurately and only by a member of staff.**
- Record pupils as present up to 8.45 a.m. and Late thereafter. Pupils who have been issued with a Late Pass should be marked present up to 8.55 a.m.
- Inform the Head of Year immediately if they are concerned about a pupil’s attendance and/or punctuality.
- Issue chits to pupils for all planned absences.
- Forward all “annotated” absence notes to the General Office either during or after Registration – see section on planned absences.
- Endeavour to clear their daily unexplained absence list by asking pupils to bring in notes for unexplained absences.
- Commend pupils for their attendance.
- Contact the Head of Year if a pupil is absent for more than two days.

Guidance for Class Tutors

- The first bell rings at 8.40 a.m. Be in your room and expect pupils to be there on time.
- A second bell will ring at 8.45 a.m. At this point the register should be called and marked using lesson monitor – it is recommended that staff keep a personal register in addition to this electronic register.
- To mark the register for your class each morning, open **Sims.net**, select **Focus/Lesson Monitor/Take Register**.
- Your registration class will be displayed in the box before your first timetabled class; double click on this box. The register for this selected group will now be displayed in the **Register Panel**.

- Click on the name of the first student to whom you wish to give a mark and enter the required mark using the keyboard. (/ for **present**, N for **absent**)
- The cursor automatically moves to the next pupil. Continue entering marks until the register is complete.
- Pupils in your class who have a **Late Pass/Yorkgate Pass** should be marked **present** up to 8.55am and **not** late i.e. the N code should be changed to a present code (/). A pupil who arrives in school after 8.45am without a Late pass/Yorkgate pass should be coded late (L) on lesson monitor i.e. the N code should be changed to a late code (L).

DO NOT CHANGE ANY EXISTING CODES - ONLY MARK AS PRESENT (/), LATE (L) OR ABSENT (N).

- Pupils who arrive between 8.45 a.m. and 8.55 a.m. should find their Class Tutor (or designated Registration Prefects).
- Click **SAVE** to retain your marks. **All registers should be saved as soon as possible and certainly no later than 9.45 a.m.**
- If a pupil arrives after the save button has been clicked, you must click the **Preserve** button. This will allow you to change your marks and then click **SAVE**.

PUPILS WHO ARRIVE TO SCHOOL AFTER 8.55 A.M. SHOULD REPORT TO THE GENERAL OFFICE AND SIGN THE LATE BOOK.

- The Late Book will be removed at 10.00 a.m. and any pupil who arrives after this time should report firstly to the General Office and secondly to their Head of Year.

Planned Absences

- If a pupil presents you with a letter from a parent/guardian **in advance**, asking for their son/daughter to be released for an appointment, for example, for part of the day, the letter is sent to the General Office as before and a **chit** is issued.
- **All notes should be forwarded to the General Office either during (Registration Prefects) or shortly after registration for coding.**
- The notes should be annotated to include pupil's full name, registration class, date received and your initials.
- If the note says "appointment" members of staff should seek further clarification i.e. dentist, hospital, doctor, physio etc. This should also be written on the note for coding purposes.

**NOTES REQUESTING FAMILY HOLIDAYS SHOULD BE SENT TO THE GENERAL OFFICE
VIA THE HEAD OF YEAR.
THE GENERAL OFFICE WILL SEND A COPY OF THIS REQUEST TO THE HEADMASTER
FOR APPROVAL.**

Parents are expected to demonstrate their commitment to their child's education by not taking holidays during term time. Any child or young person who is absent from school due to a holiday will miss out on important learning. Holidays taken during term time may be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

The Role of the Class Teacher

Class Teachers should:

- Mark their register every Period using SIMS, taking care not to overcode an existing SIMS code.
- Pupils who arrive to class after the second (passing) bell should be marked late, unless they have a note (or an email is received) from a teacher which explains their lateness.
- Check and sign the chit for any planned absence.
- Speak to the Head of Year if they have a concern regarding a pupil's level of absenteeism and/or punctuality.

Lesson Monitor and the PM Register

- The official online school register is taken twice every day, firstly in the morning by the Class Tutor and secondly during **Period 4 by the particular subject teacher.**
- To mark a roll for a **timetabled class including the official register during Period 4** from your Sims.net homepage, locate the required class from the **My Classes Today** panel and double click on this. If you have been allocated cover, this will also appear in yellow on the **My Classes Today** panel and should be double clicked.
- Members of the P.E. Department and all staff who are timetabled for Games will take a register on Google docs which is transferred to SIMS.net by the staff in the General Office.
- The register for the selected class is displayed in the Register Panel and may be completed as follows –
 - Click on the name of the first student to whom you wish to give a mark and enter the required mark using the keyboard. (**/** for **present**, **N** for **absent**)
 - The cursor automatically moves to the next pupil. Continue entering marks until the register is complete.

DO NOT OVERWRITE ANY EXISTING MARKS WHICH MAY ALREADY APPEAR IN THE PM REGISTER COLUMN. IF A CODE ALREADY EXISTS IN THE PM COLUMN IT SHOULD BE COPIED INTO THE PERIOD 4 COLUMN AS YOU MARK THE REGISTER

- Click **SAVE** to retain your marks.
- The official Period 4 register should be marked and saved as soon as possible and certainly **no later than 2.30 p.m.**
- Staff covering a class during Period 4 should mark the register using lesson monitor. If this is not possible, a list of absentees should be sent to the General Office.

MEMBERS OF STAFF SHOULD MARK THE REGISTER OF CLASSES EVERY PERIOD USING SIMS. GOOGLE DOCS WILL BE USED FOR ALL P.E./GAMES REGISTERS AND FOR REGISTERS IN FORMS V TO MVI DURING WEDNESDAY PERIOD 4.

The Role of the Head of Year

- Heads of Year should stress the importance of attendance/punctuality regularly through their Form Assemblies.
- Heads of Year should check the Late Book at the office regularly. Pupils who have a total of twelve late marks in a term should be issued with a Friday Detention.
- Heads of Year should telephone the parents of pupils who do not respond to Schoolcomms within three days of an absence, or those pupils who have an unexplained attendance record of less than 95%.
- Any pupil who returns to school and still has not cleared their absence should be given the pro-forma (Appendix 2). If a Friday Detention has been issued and there is still no parental response, the parents should be telephoned.
- Heads of Year should also make use of their Form Prefects to chase any unexplained absence notes.
- The Head of Year will receive:
 - 1) A late report showing cumulative lates for the term (generated by the General Office)
 - 2) An unexplained absence report once a week
 - 3) Percentage Attendance Report
 - 4) Pupil with Chosen Code Report

Generated
by the Head
of School

The Role of the Heads of School

The Head of School will generate and scrutinise the reports before they are forwarded to the Head of Year. Pupils, who have an unsatisfactory record, will be identified, and the

Head of School will liaise with the Head of Year and, in some cases the Vice Principals, in order to establish the most effective intervention strategy.

The Head of School should:

- Stress the importance of attendance/punctuality regularly through their Year Assemblies.
- Telephone the parents of pupils who have an unexplained attendance record of less than 90%.
- Arrange parental interviews with the parents of pupils whose attendance does not improve without a valid reason.
- Contact parents via letter (copy in school file) if attendance remains a concern.

The Role of the Vice Principal

The Vice Principal should ask the Heads of School for regular/weekly updates on attendance/punctuality in order to allow for further action to be taken, such as EWO. They should meet with the EWO to discuss the attendance of pupils in Forms I to V regularly, and monitor the attendance of the pupils in the Sixth Form. The Headmaster should be kept fully informed of all pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern.

Schoolcomms* Attendance System

- The “N” codes will be collated and after break a text message is sent to parents of all pupils who have failed to register
- Parents are asked to respond by either replying to the text or by ringing the Attendance Line number. These absences can be coded directly to SIMS.net.

School Attendance Line – 028 9075 4761

- If no contact is made the Head of Year should telephone home after three days (a text message will be sent each day.) This unexplained absence will be highlighted in the unexplained absence report which is given to the Class Tutor everyday and to the Head of Year on a weekly basis.
- If a pupil arrives in school and no contact regarding the absence has been made an N code will still appear. The Class Tutor should chase the absence in the first instance, and then refer it to the Head of Year after 3 days .The parents in this instance can respond with a note or a telephone call to the Attendance Line.
- The pupil’s full name, registration class, date received and your initials should be printed clearly at the top of any letter before it is forwarded to the General Office.

*Parents are informed of the Schoolcomms system by letter (Appendix 1)

Appendix 1



Belfast Royal Academy

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Dear Parent/Guardian

In order to provide the best possible service to our pupils and their parents, we are continually looking for ways in which to improve our links with you and keep everyone up-to-date and well informed. To enable you to receive information from school more quickly and reliably, we use Schoolcomms, an electronic school communication system. This system will allow the school to send you letters by email to your inbox and short messages directly to your mobile phone as a text message. In this way we hope to keep you better informed regarding school events, news and organisation.

An additional benefit will be managing attendance. As you are aware, if your child is absent from school without prior explanation, we would ask you to phone the school immediately to let us know using the Attendance Line.

ATTENDANCE LINE NUMBER: 028 9075 4761

Telephone calls about absences will not be dealt with through the main school number.

If we have not received information regarding your child's absence by 10.00 a.m., we will let you know by text.

- The school text number is 028 25 022026 and should be saved on your mobile telephone. **This number cannot be used for anything other than replying to a text message.**
- You may reply to the text message, giving the reason for the absence; this will replace the need for a note.
- **Please endeavour to pre-empt this text by ringing the school on the Attendance Line before 10am each morning of your child's absence. The telephone facility is in operation from 8.15 a.m.**

Absence notes will still be required for an absence about which you know in advance, such as a medical appointment.

The school will use the email address and mobile number that we hold for the Priority 1 contact in our database. Please complete the attached reply slip and return it to the Class Tutor of your son or daughter. We would also ask you to let us know immediately if your details change during the school year.

Your details will not be used for any purpose other than school business. You will **not** receive any spam or marketing material. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely

M T Wilson
Vice Principal



PARENTAL REPLY SLIP

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN IMMEDIATELY

To Class Tutor

Pupil's name: _____

Form: _____ Registration Class: _____

PRIORITY 1 CONTACT DETAILS

Please print clearly

Parent Name: _____

Email address: _____

Mobile telephone number: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2



To: Mr/Mrs _____

Date: _____

UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES

Your son/daughter _____ has failed to produce an explanation for the following absences, despite being asked to do so –

As you know, we have to provide information about attendance for the Education Welfare Service and, on occasion, for potential employers. It is important, therefore, that our records are accurate and up to date. If the school does not receive an explanation tomorrow, your son/daughter will be placed in detention for one hour on Friday afternoon.

I should be grateful, therefore, if you could confirm that your son/daughter was absent on these dates with your knowledge, giving the reason(s) for the absence(s). Please contact the school on the attendance line 028 9075 4761, reply to the text message or provide a written explanation for the absence(s).

Head of Year

Attendance Protocol - Summary

1. Email to parents/guardians at start of term – **Head of School.**



2. Importance of attendance stressed at Form and Year Assembly –
Head of Year/Head of School.



3. Attendance (after September) < 95% (without valid/known reason) –
Head of Year telephones home.



4. < 90% attendance – **Head of School** telephones home.



5. No improvement without valid reason – parental interview with
Head of Year/Head of School.



6. Letter sent home – **Head of School.**



7. Referral to Education Welfare Officer – **Vice Principal**