



Victoria College Attendance Policy

August 2023

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Agreed by Governors – 11.09.23

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Drafted by – F Cromie

VICTORIA COLLEGE BELFAST

Attendance Policy

(In the policy documents of Victoria College the term “parents” is inclusive of guardians, carers and anyone who has legal responsibility for a pupil while they are attending the College.)

Rationale:

Victoria College is committed to promoting a positive ethos where pupils are encouraged to attend school regularly so that they have every opportunity to achieve their full academic potential. The College will work with parents, pupils and outside agencies to secure this aim. Parents of pupils of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their children receive efficient, full-time education at school. The College is responsible for supporting the attendance of pupils and for responding to difficulties and issues which might lead to non-attendance. The College believes that schools which adopt a positive and proactive approach towards achieving high levels of attendance and encourage parents to take an active role in the schooling of their children, are more likely to maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality and reduce absenteeism. This policy is designed to create a structure by which this can be achieved

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Victoria College.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents and pupils.
4. To promote good working relationships with the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. Teachers/designated staff) should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal's attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets at each Board meeting.

The Vice-Principal (VP) will:

1. ensure that Heads of Year, Form Teachers and Class Teachers implement the agreed procedures.
2. authorise referrals to the EWS.

Heads of Year (HoY) will:

1. in collaboration with Form Teachers support pupils with poor attendance.
2. monitor the recording of pupil absence and receipt of absence notes by the Form Teacher.
3. make regular checks on the efficiency of registration.
4. contact parents about pupil absences where appropriate .
5. ensure all suspected truancy is followed up and addressed.

Form Teachers (FT) will:

1. ensure that pupils are registered accurately.
2. ensure that reasons for absence are received from a parent.
3. support pupils who are in Tier 1b ' At risk attendance'.
4. follow up cases of unaccounted for absence or unacceptable notes.
5. keep the Head of Year informed of any signs of suspected truancy.
6. inform the Head of Year of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.

Subject Teachers will:

1. complete a register on SIMS for all lessons.
2. inform the Form Teacher and Head of Year of the names of pupils who are absent without explanation.

All members of staff involved will record and monitor attendance in a consistent way by adhering to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2022/07, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>

Parents:

Parents have a legal duty¹ to ensure their child/children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and appropriate to address any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence via

1. the use of the absence reporting proforma online or
2. a telephone call to the College Office

Parents are expected to contact the College again after three days of absence. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided as soon as possible.

1 Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.40am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that 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 the Form Teacher or Head of Year to ensure that College can provide maximum support as appropriate.

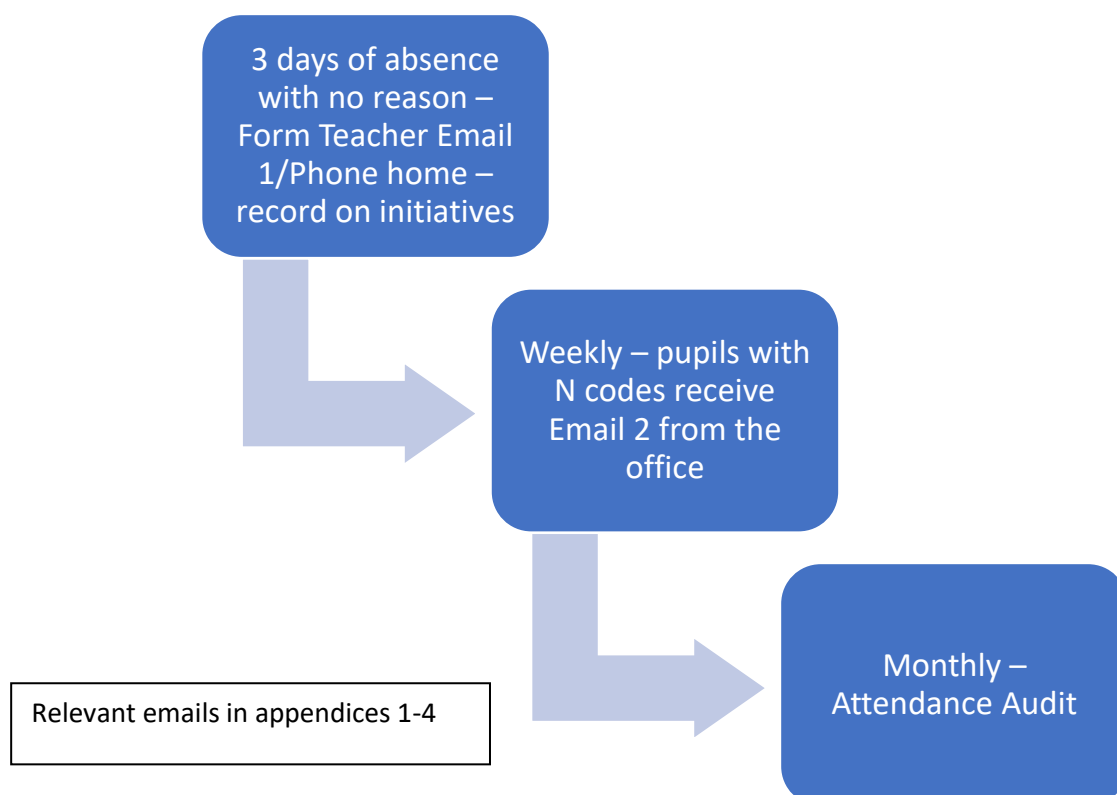
Pupils are required to:

- attend regularly unless they are ill or have an authorised absence ('attending regularly' requires registration before the attendance register is closed for the session)
- discuss with their Head of Year any necessary planned absences well in advance.

Family holidays during Term Time

Victoria College Belfast *actively discourages* holidays from being taken during term time due to the impact the incurred absence has on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will absence for the purpose of holiday be authorised.

Procedures for managing non-attendance



Where there has been no reason for absence after 2 weeks, N codes will be changes to 'D' codes.

Monthly attendance Audit

Pupil attendance will be monitored monthly* as follows:

At Risk Attendance 95 – 90.1% Tier 1b

Form Teacher should review the attendance figures and pattern of attendance and discuss any concerns/issues arising with the Head of Year. The Form Teacher will discuss attendance with the pupil and if there is no improvement a follow up meeting will take place between the Head of Year and pupil.

Chronic Attendance 90-80.1% Tier 2

The Vice -Principal will review the pupil's attendance pattern and send a letter to the parents (Appendix 3) informing them of the current percentage of attendance of the pupil and indicating the potential impact this might have on the pupil if absence continues at this level or falls further. Parents will also be informed that if attendance continues to fall their child will be referred to the EWS

The Vice Principal may also contact the parent by phone and request a meeting to discuss the pupil's attendance, if appropriate.

The Vice Principal will meet with the pupil to establish reasons for absence and to ascertain if there is any support that can be provided to alleviate concerns identified and raise the pupil's attendance level. The Head of Year will also meet with the pupil as appropriate.

Further action will be identified by the Vice Principal and Head of Year, as appropriate, aimed at improving the pupil's attendance rate.

Severe Chronic Attendance 80% or less Tier 3

The Vice Principal will review the pupil's attendance pattern with the Head of Year and the parents will be contacted, as appropriate, to discuss their child's attendance.

If it is necessary, the Vice Principal will inform any other agencies involved with the pupil of the attendance concerns.

Further action will be identified as appropriate aimed at improving the pupil's attendance.

Pupils in Year 8-12 who have an attendance rate of less than 85% will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer who will advise if a referral is necessary. The parents will be informed if a referral is to be made (Appendix 4).

*-figures are cumulative over the academic year. The reviews take place monthly for monitoring purposes. In recognition that figures will be disproportionate in September, action will be modified as appropriate.

Links to other policies:

Pastoral Care Policy

Positive Behaviour Policy

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Policy

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Appendix 1

Email 1 – Form Teacher

Dear _____

Pupil Name was absent from school on the following dates:

- 1.
- 2.

Please contact the school asap with reasons for absence by one of the following methods:

- 1) replying to this email
- 2) completing the online absence proforma or
- 3) contacting the school office on 02890 661506

Kind regards

Victoria College Pastoral Team

Appendix 2

Email 2 – Office staff

Dear _____

The college has not yet received reasons for your child's absence.

Pupil Name was absent from school on the following dates:

- 1.
- 2.

Please contact the school asap with reasons for absence by one of the following methods:

- 1) replying to this email
- 2) completing the online absence proforma or
- 3) contacting the school office on 02890 661506

Kind regards

Victoria College Pastoral Team

Appendix 3

VP Email

Date (to be added)

Dear (personalise)

The College has set an attendance target of 97% and above in the School Development Plan, which is in line with the Department of Education's guidelines.

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance is currently below 90%. I would ask you to ensure that all absence notes have been provided through the College's absence portal.

The College believes that your involvement contributes significantly to your child's education and I would like to thank you in advance for your active support in ensuring your child attends College and understands the significance of good attendance in ensuring the best levels of attainment in subjects.

If attendance falls below 85% the College is required to discuss the matter with Education Welfare and a referral may be required.

I appreciate your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Vice Principal (Pastoral)

Appendix 4

Date (To be added)

Dear (name)

Since our previous communication it has been noted that your child's attendance has not improved. As you will be aware, attendance at school is linked to academic performance and pastoral wellbeing. The College wishes to ensure all the support available is in place for your child and to achieve this we will be referring this matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

The Education Welfare Officer will be able to offer support to you and your child to encourage improved attendance.

Please do not hesitate to contact the College to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely

Vice Principal