

Attendance Policy

Guiding Statement:

As our homepage states, “with a commitment to teaching and learning, the Belmont Public Schools strive to nurture the knowledge, skills, and emotional development of each student in order to create a community of engaged learners who contribute to the common good and are of service to others.” In order to deliver on this goal for every student, the faculty and staff at Belmont High School believe that attendance in class every day is critical. Each student’s attendance is her/his/their commitment to both their own education and the community of learners at Belmont High School. Below, you will find the ways in which staff and faculty hope to partner with students and families to support successful attendance in school.

Attendance Policy Guidelines and Protocols

Students are expected to attend every class meeting unless excused according to procedures described here.

Individual Responsibilities

Student’s Responsibilities

- It is each student’s responsibility to be aware of his/her/their attendance status in class and to make responsible decisions about attending all classes on a regular basis.
- The student should monitor his/her/their own attendance and speak with his/her/their teachers if he/she/they has any questions about attendance records.
- The student must obtain and make-up class work missed due to absences when appropriate. It is the student’s responsibility to see his/her/their teachers to obtain missed work. If the student does not submit missed work by the agreed upon due date, the work will not receive credit.

Parent/Guardian Information and Responsibilities

- The parent/guardian should monitor his/her/their child’s attendance in each of his/her/their classes via robocalls when absent and daily attendance emails home.
- We encourage parents to discuss the importance of good attendance with their children.
- To excuse a student’s absence, the parent/guardian must call the high school attendance office the night before, or the day of the student’s absence at (617) 993-5999 prior to 2:00 p.m. Messages left after 2:00 p.m. will not be considered, and the student will be marked unexcused for the day. Special circumstances will be reviewed by the assistant principal. If a student needs to leave school midday due to illness, they must be dismissed from the Nurse’s Office to be considered excused from any remaining classes.
- When leaving a message on the attendance line, please leave the following information:
 - Student’s name
 - Student’s grade
 - Reason for absence (see below)
 - Return telephone number
- **Phone calls submitted after 2:00 p.m. of the day of the absence will not be accepted.**

Faculty, Staff, and Administration Responsibilities

- Record each student’s attendance in PlusPortals for each class on a daily basis.
- Submit the daily attendance records by the end of the first mod (27 minutes) in each class.
- Reconcile all adjustments to a student’s attendance the following day.
- Notify the student, parent, guidance counselor, and assistant principal when a student reaches cut, absence, or tardy totals as outlined below.
- Assistant principals will address students whose absences are unexcused or excessive

MA Laws

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, ch. 76, §2, Parents/guardians of children aged six to sixteen are obligated to send their children to school unless otherwise provided by law. Absences are considered excused or unexcused. An absence will be considered excused only for health reasons, family emergencies and justifiable personal reasons, as permitted by law, School Committee policy and procedures developed by the Superintendent. All other absences will be considered unexcused.

Definitions

1. **Unexcused tardy**- When a student arrives late to school or class and no phone call or note has been provided, the student receives an unexcused tardy.
2. **Cut/Skip**- When a student misses class and no phone call or note has been provided. The student receives a grade penalty and discipline. Parents/guardians will be notified when a student cuts/skips. This is marked in PlusPortals as an "UA" or Unexcused Absence. Unexcused absences include but are not limited to:
 - If a student is in school and fails to attend a class
 - If a student arrives at class after 27 minutes (the first mod) is complete OR leaves class for an extended period without a pass.
 - If a parent/guardian fails to call the attendance office by 2:00 p.m. to excuse the student's absence
 - If a leaves school for a dismissal without advanced communication from a parent/guardian or the school nurse.
3. **Excused absence** (called in by parent/guardian) – When a student is absent due to illness, the parent/guardian must call the high school attendance office the night before or the day of the student's absence at (617)993-5999 prior to 2:00PM. A parent/guardian note is not required for this absence. Phone calls made after a student's absence will not be considered excused. If a student needs to leave school midday due to illness, they must be dismissed from the Nurse's Office to be considered excused from any remaining classes.
4. **Documented excused absence**- When a student is absent due to a special circumstance, the parent/guardian must provide a note to document the absence. Examples of documented excused absences are listed below.

Documented Excused Absences

The following absences are considered documented excused, however documentation must be provided ***no later than one day after the absence*** and missed work must be made up within the agreed upon time:

Reasons-Required Documentation

- Religious holidays - Parent note
- Mandatory court visits - Court documents
- Testing (Special education, etc.) - Evaluator note
- Field Trips/School-sponsored-events - None required
- Extended illness (4 or more consecutive) - Doctor/ Nurse practitioner note can be faxed or brought in
- Family funeral/emergencies - Parent note
- Health professional visits - Doctor/Nurse practitioner note
- College/private school visits (3 maximum) – Parent or College/School note

Routine health professional appointments should be scheduled after school. If this is unavoidable, parents/guardians must notify the main office or submit a note in advance of the appointment.

Attendance Follow-Up:

We believe attendance is a crucial element of a student's ability to invest in their own academic and social development at Belmont High School. As such, students and families will be contacted via phone, email, or letter by a school administrator when a student's total daily absences exceed five (5) per quarter regardless of the nature of the absences. Additionally, students and families will be contacted when a student's total tardy marks in a given class exceed ten (10) per quarter regardless of the nature of the tardy. This communication will serve as an opportunity to put any necessary support in place to ensure the student is able to successfully attend school and be on time.

Cuts/Skips:

- **First** cut/skip in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class. Students must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of a cut class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.
 - o parent will receive notification from the teacher and administrator via email or phone call
- **Second** cut/skip in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class. Student must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of a cut class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.

- o parent will receive notification from the administrator
 - o Student and parent(s)/guardian(s) will be invited to a meeting with the classroom teacher, assistant principal, and guidance counselor. The athletic director and/or performing arts director will also be invited when applicable to alert relevant coaches/theatre and band leaders of a student's cut. All parties will agree to an attendance contract at this meeting. The assistant principal will send out a copy of the contract to relevant parties.
- Two (2) cut/skips in a quarter after an attendance contract has been signed:
 - o parent will receive phone call from administrator
 - o student will earn a failing grade (50%) for the quarter
 - o Continued unexcused absences will result in further disciplinary action

Unexcused Tardy:

- First unexcused tardy in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class prior to arrival. Student must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of the class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.
 - o Teacher may request student to meet outside of class time regarding tardy
 - o parent will receive notification via the daily attendance email home
- Second unexcused tardy in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class prior to arrival. Student must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of the class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.
 - o parent will receive notification via daily attendance email home
- Third unexcused tardy in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class prior to arrival. Student must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of the class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.
 - o parent will receive notification via phone call or email home from the teacher
- Fourth unexcused tardy in a quarter:
 - o Student will not receive full credit for work due or completed in class prior to arrival. Student must reach out to the teacher within 24 hours of the class to earn the opportunity to complete missed work for up to 80% credit.
 - o parent will receive notification from the administrator
 - o student will work with assistant principal to establish appropriate consequences and follow-up

Dismissals

Once the school day has commenced and a student is in attendance, he/she/they may be dismissed via a parent/guardian phone call or written note **prior to the dismissal. Notification after the fact will not be excused and will be recorded as an unexcused absence.**

- When a student is dismissed, he/she/they is expected to leave school grounds or wait for his/her/their ride in the main lobby.
- In the event of illness while the student is in school, the student must see and be released by the school nurse for a documented dismissal. The student will wait for his/her/their ride in the nurse's office.
- A dismissal request without good cause (see "Documented Excused Absences") will be denied. A student is not to be dismissed from a class to stay in school and do work for other classes. Any student found on school grounds while dismissed, will be marked unexcused for all missed classes.
- If the student returns to school for a portion of the day, he/she/they must immediately report to the main office for an office pass prior to going to class. When a student misses a class due to a dismissal in which a test/quiz is given, he/she/they will be expected to take the test/quiz later that day, if the teacher is in agreement. The student bears the responsibility of making these arrangements around the convenience of the teacher's schedule.

Incompletes

Students who are absent for an extended period of time due to an illness or hospitalization and are able to make-up the work may receive an Incomplete (I) for the quarter. All work must be made-up within two (2) weeks after the end of the quarter. Teachers must change the Incomplete to a grade within two (2) weeks after the end of the

quarter.

Medical Exemption

A doctor or nurse practitioner's note will excuse absences for an ongoing, chronic, or long-term illness (***long-term illness is defined as four (4) or more consecutive days of absence***) provided that the note is written on the doctor's or nurse practitioner's stationary, showing the name of the student and stating that the student was under his/her/their care for a particular time interval. If the illness impacts the quarterly grade, the student's assistant principal, in consultation with the guidance counselor, will review his/her/their situation and determine if the student will receive an Incomplete (I) for a grade.

Extended Absence

If a student ends up missing more than 45 school days during the school year for medical/mental health reasons the student will only be able to earn a Pass/Fail for the course grade. If a student works with an outside tutor for more than 50% of the school year the course name on the transcript will reflect this.

Skip Days

There are NO sanctioned "skip days" at BHS. Student organized "skip days" undermine the educational process. The school will not accept parental excuses to participate in "skip days". Students involved in a "skip day" will be considered cut/skip.

Standing Early Dismissals

Some students' classes are completed at 2:00 p.m. Parents/guardians may choose to submit a letter requesting a standing dismissal for their student for such days. A standing dismissal letter permits students to leave campus no earlier than 2:00 p.m. If a student with a standing dismissal remains on school grounds after the 2:00 p.m. dismissal, they remain subject to all school rules. The administration retains the right to revoke a standing dismissal. Students' schedules frequently change from first to second semester. Therefore, all requests for standing dismissals must be re-submitted within one week of receiving their schedule.

Standing Late Arrivals

Some students' classes start after 8:00am. Students are allowed to arrive no later than the start time of their first class, with parent/guardian approval. A letter from the parent/guardian requesting the late arrival must be submitted to the student's assistant principal in advance. Students' schedules frequently change from first to second semester. Therefore, all requests for standing arrivals must be re-submitted within one week of receiving their new schedule.

Truancy

An unexcused absence from school occurs when both parents and the school expect the student to be in attendance. For students under 16 years of age, in addition to school disciplinary action, the truant officer may be involved.

Make-up Work after an Excused Absence

Students are responsible for make-up work associated with excused absences. Students are allowed twice the number of calendar days they were absent to make up missed work (weekends and vacation days count towards this allowance). In addition to their availability during the school day, faculty members will establish and post times when they are available to assist students with make-up work. If a student is unable to meet with the teacher at the established time, it is the student's responsibility to contact the teacher and establish a mutually agreeable time for assistance with make-up work. If a student is excused for an extended period, the teacher, in consultation with the parent and/or guidance counselor, shall determine an appropriate and reasonable time period for the completion of make-up work. Teachers will make every reasonable effort to help students make up missed work. However, students and parents must understand that time lost from class is irretrievable.

Excused Late Arrivals

If a student has a professional health appointment or other obligation that requires him/her to arrive late to school, the parent/guardian must call the main office **prior** to the student's arrival to school to excuse the late arrival. A student who arrives late must immediately report to the main office for an office pass, prior to going to class. When a student misses a class due to a late arrival in which a test/quiz is given, he/she/they will be expected to take the test/quiz that same day, at the convenience of the teacher. It is the student's responsibility to make these arrangements. It is the student's responsibility to follow up with the teacher regarding missed work if he/she/they has missed a class due to a late arrival.

Field Trips

Students must get prior approval from the teachers whose classes they are missing. If approval is not given and the student participates in the field trip, the student is considered Absent Unexcused from the class.

Extracurricular Activity Participation

To be eligible for participation in any extracurricular activity offered by the school, the student must be in school from 7:35 a.m. – 2:25 p.m. that day. The student must be in school for the entire day on scheduled half-days and early dismissal Wednesdays. If a student's first class begins at 8:00 a.m. and he/she/they has been approved by his/her/their assistant principal for a late arrival, he/she/they must be in school by 8:00 a.m. If a student's last class of the day ends at 2:00 p.m. and he/she/they has been approved by his/her/their assistant principal for an early dismissal, he/she/they must remain in school until 2:00 p.m. Attendance during the final school day before a weekend or a vacation event will be used to determine a student's eligibility to participate in an extracurricular activity during the weekend or vacation. A student who does not attend school for the entire day prior to a weekend or a vacation will not be allowed to participate in the practice, contest, and/or performance during that weekend or vacation.

Extracurricular Activities = Any interscholastic athletic or school sanctioned activity

College/Private School Interviews and Visits

Students are encouraged to schedule college/private school visits during non-school hours. However, a student will be excused from school for college/private school visits or interviews that cannot reasonably be scheduled outside of school time. Students can schedule no more than three (3) college/private school visits or interviews during the school year. Any visits or interviews beyond the allocated three (3) days will be recorded as unexcused absences.

Family Vacations and Trips

Parents and students are reminded that Massachusetts's law requires attendance for students. We strongly discourage family vacations while school is in session. Family vacations/personal trips interrupt the educational process. Completion of make-up work does not compensate for the impact of lost instructional time and classroom experience, regardless of the course or course level. For family vacations/personal trips that are planned for a period longer than two (2) days, written notification must be submitted to the student's assistant principal two (2) weeks in advance. Teachers are not required to provide make-up work prior to the trip. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a meeting with each of his/her/their teachers to arrange for make-up work upon returning to school.

Alternative Semester Education Program

Parents/guardians must submit written request to the principal for permission for a student to attend an Alternative Semester Education Program eight (8) weeks in advance of the scheduled program. They must work together with the Belmont High School guidance counselor to see if the Alternative Education Program meets the Belmont High School graduation requirements. In order for a student to enroll in an AP course that year, the student's Alternative Semester Education Program must also offer the same AP course in its entirety. While attending the Alternative Education Program, students must withdraw from Belmont High School. When the student returns from the program, he/she/they will re-enroll and transfer his/her/their credits to Belmont High School.

Teacher Tardiness/Absence from Class

In the event that a teacher does not report to class within 10 minutes of the start of the period, please follow these procedures:

- o Do not assume that the class has been cancelled.
- o One member of the class should report to the department office or main office to confirm that the teacher is absent and that the class is cancelled.
- o If the teacher is absent and work has been assigned, students are responsible for the assigned work.

**** Belmont High School's Attendance Policy adheres to the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 76, Section 1 and conditions under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71, Section 37H****