

Student Attendance Policy

Attendance Policy

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all students. The Code §22.1-254, requires that all children who have reached their fifth birthday on or before September 30th and who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday must attend school. This requirement does not apply to any child who has obtained a high school diploma, its equivalent, or a certificate of completion or who is exempted pursuant to the provisions of the law.

When a student accumulates more than six (6) unexcused absences in an academic year the attendance officer/superintendent's designee will enforce the provisions of the Code §22.1-258 by either or both of the following: (1) filing a complaint with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision or (2) instituting proceedings against the Parent for contributing to the delinquency of a minor.

Absences

Students are expected to attend school every day. Parents are expected to contact their child's school on the day of the child's absence to inform the school of that absence. Parents are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the date of such appointments is known. When such notification is made, the Parent need not contact the school on the first day of the absence. For any reason, a written note providing the dates of and reasons for the child's absence is required from the Parent within five days of the child's return to school. The purpose of this note is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. This note will be maintained until the end of the school year for documentation purposes.

Excused Absences

In support of the mandatory attendance law, Newport News Public Schools defines the following conditions as the only acceptable reasons for a student's absence from school.

Illness - When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the Parent or a physician documenting the illness will provide evidence of the illness for the school.

Chronic/Extended Illness - For students who are absent because of chronic illnesses, a disability, or because of a need for homebound services, the Parent must complete a chronic/extended illness notification form with the principal at the beginning of the enrollment of the student in school or upon the onset of the student condition that affects regular attendance. Documentation from a physician will be required. For students who have excessive excused absences (10-18 days) and/or who exhibit defined patterns of absences, the Parent will be required to complete the Chronic/Extended Illness Notification Form. Documentation from a physician will be required.

If the Parent does not complete the form or does not provide documentation from a physician or other mental health professional of a chronic or extended illness, the principal will review the child's attendance for needed services and/or applicable sanctions of the attendance law (Code §22.1-258). Failure to provide documentation may result in the absences being unexcused.

Prearranged Appointments - For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the school.

Family Death or Emergency - For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the Parent must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence.

Religious Observances - Absences as a result of observances of religious holidays should be prearranged by the Parent, who is responsible for notifying the child's school of the religious holiday(s) to be observed. If the Parent is unable to prearrange the absence, a request for exemption must be received no later than the second day after the student's return to school from the absence occasioned by the religious observance.

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Exclusions/Suspensions - For absences because of an exclusion or suspension, the Parent will be notified of the suspension/exclusion and the date when the student will be expected to return to school. The student must return on the indicated date.

Exceptional Circumstances - The principal may approve prearranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interests of the student and his/her family.

Prior to the student's absence, the Parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form. The Parent will document on this request the rationale for the absence, dates of absence, and siblings within the school division for whom the exception will be also requested. The principal must provide the response to the Requests for Exceptional Circumstances in writing to the Parent. In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after-the-fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy.

For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the Parent must complete the Request for Exceptional Circumstances within two days of the student's return to school.

No more than five (5) days may be approved by the principal for exceptional circumstances during a school year. For requests of more than five days, the request must be endorsed by the principal and approved by the superintendent/designee.

Parent Notification Procedures

Excused and Unexcused Absences

For all absences, the school will contact the home on each day of the child's absence from school using the automated dialing system.

Unexcused Absences

In compliance with the Code of Virginia §22.1-258 and Regulations Governing Collection and Reporting of

Truancy Related Data and Student Attendance Policies (8VAC20-730-20), the school division has established procedures that school division personnel are required to follow when a student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent is aware of and supports the student's absence.

The following procedure will be implemented when notifying families of unexcused absences.

In accordance with state law, whenever any student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by school personnel that the pupil's parent "is aware of and supports the student's absence" (unexcused absence), a reasonable effort to notify by telephone the parent to obtain an explanation for the student's absences shall be made by the principal's designee(s), or volunteers.

The following intervention steps shall be implemented to respond to unexcused absences from school and to engage students in regular school attendance.

1. Whenever a student fails to report to school on a regularly scheduled school day and no information has been received by school personnel that the student's parent is aware of and supports the absence, the school principal or designee, attendance officer, or other school personnel or volunteer will notify the parent by phone or email or any other electronic means to obtain an explanation. The school staff shall record the student's absence for each day as "excused" or "unexcused." Early intervention with the student and parent or parents shall take place for repeated unexcused absences.
2. When a student has received **five unexcused absences**, the school principal or designee or the attendance officer shall make a reasonable effort to ensure that direct contact is made with the parent. The parent shall be contacted in a face-to-face conference, by telephone, or through the use of other communication devices. During the direct contact with the parent and the student (if appropriate), reasons for nonattendance shall be documented and the consequences of

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nonattendance explained. An attendance plan shall be made with the student and parent or parents to resolve the nonattendance issues. The student and parent may be referred to a school-based multi-disciplinary team for assistance implementing the attendance plan and case management.

3. The school principal or designee or the attendance officer shall schedule a face-to-face attendance conference, or an interaction that is conducted through the use of communication technology, within 10 school days from the date of the student's **sixth unexcused absence** for the school year. The attendance conference must be held within 15 school days from the date of the sixth unexcused absence. The conference shall include the parent, student, and school personnel (which may be a representative or representatives from the multi-disciplinary team) and may include community service providers.
4. The school principal or designee shall notify the attendance officer or division superintendent of the student's **seventh unexcused absence** for the school year. The division superintendent or designee shall contact the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court intake to file a complaint alleging the student is a child in need of supervision (CHINSup) or to institute proceedings against the parent. In addition to documentation of compliance with the notice provisions of § 22.1-258 of the Code of Virginia, all records of intervention regarding the student's unexcused absences, such as copies of the conference meeting notes, attendance plan, and supports shall be presented to the intake worker.

Schools will provide interventions and alternative educational options for a student who fails to make academic progress as a result of attendance problems.

Excessive Absences

The principal/designee will also notify Student Advancement Outreach Services of the accrual of excessive absences or a pattern of absences that appear to be having an effect on the academic performance of a child. Efforts will be made to identify reasons for excessive absenteeism or patterns of absenteeism. Virginia Department of Education Accreditation

Standards (effective 2018/2019 school year) include Excessive Absenteeism (students with 10% absenteeism during their enrollment within a school year to include any type of absence) which will impact the accreditation of the school.

Make-Up Work

1. When students are absent (except for circumstances included in #2 below), an opportunity to make up work will be provided. Make-up work is encouraged so that students will profit from future instruction. In middle and high school, it is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher for the make-up work. Work (including tests) missed due to an absence may be made up and credit given for such work. Upon the student's return to school, he/she must make up the work within five school days. Additional time may be granted by the principal due to extenuating circumstances. A student will not be penalized for a teacher's absence.

Students are encouraged to get make-up work assignments before returning to school. They may do this by:

- Absence of one or two days: Contact a friend in class to obtain information on work missed.
- Absence of three or more days: Call the school office requesting assignments remembering that teachers need 24 hours to prepare assignments.

Students who are absent due to a short-term suspension will have the option to access and complete graded work during and after the suspension. Please contact the school to request assignments.

2. When students cut class or cut school, (Rules 1B or 1C of the students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook), high school teachers shall assign a grade of "F" for any work or test missed due to an absence that resulted from class cutting or school cutting. Teachers who assign grades on a five-point scale will give a zero to student work for the reasons stated in this procedure. For teachers who use a numerical grading system, the determination of the numerical grade equivalent of "F" will be left to the discretion of the individual teacher.

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Perfect Attendance

For purposes of determining perfect attendance, the student must be in attendance for a period of two hours to be counted as present for the school day.

Pre-arranged absences for religious observance will not count against perfect attendance.

Tardies

Tardiness to school or to class is addressed as a discipline issue in the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

Reports of Children Enrolled and Not Enrolled

The state code at §22.1-260, requires that within ten days after the opening of the school, each public school principal will report to the division superintendent:

- The name, age and grade of each pupil enrolled in the school, and the name and address of the pupil's parent or guardian; and
- To the best of the principal's information the name of each child subject to the provisions of this article who is not enrolled in school, with the name and address of the child's parent or guardian.

Within one calendar month of the opening of school, the principal of each school shall send to the parents or guardian of each student enrolled in the school a copy of the compulsory school attendance requirements of the law and the enforcement procedures and policies established by the School Board.

The school division will typically comply with the above requirements by delivering a digital copy of the student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook to students and their parents at the beginning of the school year. Attendance law, policies and procedures will be reflected in that Handbook.

Reports of Children with Five (5) or More Unexcused Absences and 10% of Any Type of Absence

The number of students with five or more unexcused absences and the number of students with 10% of any type of absence within the student's yearly enrollment period will be reported to the Superintendent of Public Instruction annually.