

August 1, 2009

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

We want to make you aware of our current attendance policy. This policy was developed to help us meet state law about attendance, to align our requirements with other agencies that address school attendance, to keep the children of our school safe and to help our students be successful in school. We want to be sure caregivers and students understand the policies.

Excused and Unexcused Absences:

Excused absences include:

1. Health concerns such as illnesses or doctor's appointments [The school may require a physician or other provider certification (therapist, occupational or physical therapist, etc.) of the illness or visit]. A physician's note is required if the student is out more than five days in a row.
2. Religious holidays
3. Court appearance
4. Funeral or death in the immediate family

Any other activities or emergencies would need to be approved by the director who has the right to determine if the absence is excused. If a student has 15 or more consecutive unexcused absences an attendance review meeting will be scheduled.

These are some examples of excused and unexcused calls received at the school:

Excused:

"My child is sick."

"My child has a medical evaluation in Hartford today."

"My child's grandmother died and he/she will be out of school."

"We are celebrating Hanukkah."

Unexcused:

"My child missed the bus."

"My son needs a mental health day."

“I don’t have a babysitter for afterschool.”

“The bus didn’t pick up my child.”

A sibling comes to school and says my brother or sister is sick.

“I’m just keeping him/her home today. He’s/she’s not sick.”

“It’s my child’s birthday.”

Calling In the Absence:

A parent/guardian must call in the absence daily to have it excused. If a child is not in school and the parent doesn’t call, the school will be calling the parent/guardian each day the student is out. This is a safety procedure to be sure the parent is aware the student is not in school that day.

Tardiness or Leaving Early:

Excessive tardiness or removing your child before the end of the school day is a form of truancy. The school hours are 8:00am to 3:00PM. Students should be in school during these hours so the student maximizes his/her learning opportunities. Parents should try to schedule medical appointments during after school hours when possible. A note from the doctor’s (dentist’s, counselor’s, etc.) office should be presented when the student returns to school from an appointment.

Definition of Truancy According to Connecticut State Statutes:

Current law defines a student as “truant” if they are between age 5 and 18, enrolled in a public or private school, and has four unexcused school absences in one month or 10 unexcused in any school year. A “habitual truant” is a child with 20 unexcused absences in a year. Regular and punctual attendance is essential to education process and parents/caregivers are responsible for being sure their child attends regularly during the school hours.

We want all our students to be successful learners and regular school attendance is an important part of this. Let’s work together to help your child gain the most benefit from his/her education.

Sincerely,

Amy Sheppard, School Social Worker