

## Excused (Lawful) Absences

A student who is absent from school must present a note to the attendance office within 48 hours of his/her return to school. No more than 10 days of excuses, with a note written by a parent/legal guardian, can be accepted for lawful absences during any school year.

*Absences will be excused if they fall in the following categories:*

- Cases of extended or chronic illnesses with a doctor's note.
- Doctor or dental appointments.
- Contagious illness that could spread to students and staff.
- Serious illness or death in the student's family limited to three days, unless approved by the principal. Family includes spouse, children, parents, brother/sister, grandparents, grandchildren, uncle/aunt, cousin, nephew/niece, and any relative who lives in the student's home or for whom the parent has legitimate responsibility.
- Recognized religious holidays.
- School-related activities.
- Short-term suspensions from school.



## Unexcused Absences

A student will not be excused for the following reasons:

- The student does not attend school without a good reason and without the parent/ guardian's knowledge.
- The student does not attend school without a good reason and with the parent/ guardian's knowledge.
- Any reason not listed under "Excused (Lawful) Absences".

## Tardies

When a student has over 10 unexcused tardies and or early dismissals during the school year, parents and or guardians of elementary or middle school students will be required to complete an Intervention Plan to address tardies.

### Office of School Social Work

**Pendergrass Fairwold School**  
5935 Token Street  
Columbia, SC 29203

**Phone: (803) 735-3435**  
**Fax: (803) 735-3482**

**Principal: Faythe Redenburg**  
**Assist. Principal: Cedrick Richie**  
**School Counselor: W. Cyntrell Legette**  
**School Social Worker: Rosetta Penny**  
**Attendance: Demetria Pam**

*Contact your child's school social worker or  
attendance secretary*

# Student Attendance and Truancy

*School Board Policy JHB*

## What you need to know!

**R1CHLAND ONE**  
ENGAGE • EDUCATE • EMPOWER

**RICHLAND ONE OFFICE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK  
AND STUDENT ATTENDANCE**  
1310 LYON STREET, COLUMBIA, SC 29204  
PHONE: 803-231-6757, FAX: 803-231-6761

## The Law and the School District Policy

As a parent, you are responsible for ensuring that your child attends school every day.

Beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, a new definition of "absent" will be used to identify students who are chronically absent. As part of the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, districts and schools are required to report to the South Carolina Department of Education the number of students who are chronically absent each year. According to the United States Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR), an absent student is one who misses 50 percent of the instructional day for any reason and regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. In other words, students must attend class for at least half of the instructional day to be considered present for that day.

Using this new definition, the OCR requires states to report the number of students in each district and school who are absent at least 10% of the time during which they are enrolled in a particular school or district. More specifically, students who are enrolled in the same school for an entire academic year and miss 18 or more days (10 percent) will be considered chronically absent. The total number of chronically absent students will be included on district and school report cards and reported to the OCR.

## Chronic absenteeism is not the same as truancy.

### Chronic Absenteeism

**Chronically absent:** Any student in grade K-12 who misses 50 percent or more of the instructional day for any reason for 10 percent (or more) of the enrollment period.

All types of absences contribute to chronic absenteeism:

- Excused Absences
- Unexcused Absences
- Suspensions

A student is absent if he or she is not physically on school grounds and is not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for the school day.

### Truancy

**Truant:** A student between the ages 6- 17 who has accumulated unexcused absences on three consecutive days or has accumulated a total of five or more unexcused absences during the academic year.

- Only full-day unexcused absences contribute to truancy.
- Excused absences and suspensions do not affect truancy.

Under South Carolina Law when students accumulate three days in a row or a total of five unexcused days at any time in the school year, parents/guardians will be contacted by the school to schedule a meeting.

## ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT MEETINGS

At the meeting, the parent and school staff will talk about the reasons for the absences. They will also develop an Attendance Intervention Plan. The student may also be asked to come to the meeting.

After an attendance plan is developed, if the student continues to have unexcused absences the school will complete a petition and the parent/guardian and student will be required to appear before a Judge in Family Court.

If the student is placed under a court order, the student and parent must follow all requirements of the court order. The school is required to file a contempt of court complaint if the court order is not followed. If the parent/guardian is found guilty, he/she can be fined \$50.00 and put in jail for each day that the student has an unexcused absence.

As a parent and partner with the school it is important to know the difference between an excused and unexcused absence.

### Questions?

If your child is having a problem with attendance, please call your school social worker for help in developing a solution.

