Attendance Frequently Asked Questions

Below are responses to the most commonly asked questions regarding school attendance.

1. **I told my child to inform his teacher that he was absent because he was sick. Do I have to send in a written note?** Yes, a written note (excuse) is required every time your child is absent from school. The written note (excuse) must be submitted to the school within three (3) days of the student returning to school.
2. **What happens if our family has planned an out of town trip that will require my child to miss school?** Out of town trips, vacations, cruises, etc. are not acceptable reasons for lawful/excused absences. The days will be unlawful/unexcused and will count towards truancy.
3. **How many days is my child allowed to miss school because of sickness?** The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) states that a school year consists of 180 days of instruction. Students who miss ten (10) or more days risk not receiving credit for classes. In the event of a serious medical issue/illness, please contact your child's school to investigate the possibility for homebound instruction.
4. **My child missed the bus. Is this an excused absence?** No. If your child misses the school bus and subsequently misses an entire day of school the day will count as an unlawful/unexcused absence.
5. **My child was absent from school because of a death in the family, are the two days for the funeral services excused?** Yes, the child's absence will be lawful/excused for "bereavement" in the event of a death of an immediate family member. Upon the child's return to school a written note (excuse) will be required.
6. **One of my children is sick, are his/her siblings able to be excused from school because of the medical appointment?** No, if siblings are not sick and are absent from school, the absence would be unlawful/unexcused.
7. **I took my child to the doctor, but forgot to get a medical excuse note when we were in the office. Is it too late to submit the excuse?** No, as long as it is submitted within three (3) days of your child's return to school. Please make every effort to secure a medical excuse note whenever your child is seen by a doctor.
8. **My child was seriously injured and is physically unable to attend school. What are the options?** In the event that your child is battling a significant illness, prolonged hospital stay, surgery, etc. the student may qualify for medical homebound instruction. Contact your child's school to investigate the possibility.
9. **Is the annual band trip considered an excused absence for my child?** Yes, school days missed because of school activities, trips or functions will be lawful/excused absences.
10. **My child was late to school/signed out early, why has my child been marked absent?** Students must attend school for 50% of the instructional day to be counted present. If your child was not in school for at least 50% of the instructional day, then the student is considered absent for the day.

Attendance Tips for Parents

Let Children Know that Good Attendance is Important

- ✓ Attendance is a parent and student responsibility. Let your child know that you think attending school daily is important. Show them you are interested in their school activities and tell them that you want them to do well in school.
- ✓ Good attendance habits start at an early age. Make sure your child goes to school regularly and on time. This helps them develop a positive view of school and the importance of attendance and their education.
- ✓ Do not provide inappropriate excuses for your child to miss school. It is more difficult to break a bad habit of allowing a child to stay home from school "just this once" than it is to say "no" school is important.

Establish a Routine

- ✓ Give yourself and your child enough time to get ready each morning.
- ✓ Plan ahead the night before by getting needed items (bookbags, homework, etc.) together and placed where they can be retrieved easily in the morning.
- ✓ Get proper rest. Set a regular age appropriate bedtime schedule.

Show Interest in Your Child's Activities

- ✓ Attend Back to School Night and PTA Meetings.
- ✓ Make education and your child's success a family priority.
- ✓ Encourage your child to get more involved with their school. Studies show that the more involved a child and parent/legal guardian are with their school, the child will achieve better attendance and success

Keep the Lines of Communication Open with your Child, the Teacher, the Guidance Counselor, and the Principal

- ✓ Provide written excuses to the school within three (3) days of the student's return to school. Provide a medical excuse if it is available for the absence.
- ✓ If your child does not want to go to school, find out why and work with your school and child to address the concerns. Let your child know he/she must attend school.
- ✓ Ask teachers, guidance counselor, staff, etc. at your child's school for advice on how to address any attendance issues for your child.
- ✓ Check your child's bookbag regularly. Occasionally important letters (such as the medical excuse for last Thursday's absence) can become lost in a full bookbag.
- ✓ Do not let your child persuade you into making an excuse for him/her. Don't give up. Reward good behavior and take it one day at a time.



Updated 2025/2026

Dorchester School District Two

leading the way, every student, every day through relationships, rigor, and relevance

Dorchester School District Two desires to be recognized as a "World Class" school district, expecting each student to achieve at his/her optimum level in all areas, and providing all members of our district family with an environment that permits them to do their personal best.

Attendance Guidelines

Please carefully read the following information concerning South Carolina Attendance Laws and the Dorchester School District Two Guidelines for student attendance. The Dorchester School District Two Board believes that attendance is a key factor in student achievement, and any absence from school represents an educational loss to the student. However, the board also recognizes that some absences from school are unavoidable.

Requirements to be Counted Present for the School Day

Students must attend school for 50% of the instructional day to be counted present.

Explanation/Clarification

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) states that a school year consists of 180 days of instruction. Depending on whether your student attends elementary, middle or high school, the length of the instructional day varies. In calculating the length of the school day, a student must be present for a minimum of ½ of the total instructional day to count as one of the 180 days required by the SCDE. This includes "Early Release" days. An "Early Release" day is not a full instructional day, therefore, on "Early Release" days the student would need to be present for the entire time to be counted present for the day.

Lawful/Excused Absences

- ♦ The absence is caused by the student's own illness and whose attendance in school would endanger his/her health or the health of others.
- ♦ The absence is due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family.
- ♦ The absence is due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith.
- ♦ The absence is due to school activities that are approved in advance by the principal.

Unlawful/Unexcused Absences

- ♦ The absence of the student without the knowledge of his/her parent/legal guardian.
- ♦ The absence of the student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his/her parent/ legal guardian.
- ♦ Absences not approved by the principal.

Suspension(s)

- ♦ Suspension(s) are not to be counted as an unlawful/unexcused absence for truancy purposes.

Required Excuses



Within three (3) days after returning to school, the student must submit a written excuse explaining his/her absence. If applicable, the student may also submit an excuse from the doctor. If a student does not submit an excuse, his/her absence will be considered unlawful/ unexcused.

The excuse should include the following information:

Student's Name
Date the excuse was written
Date(s) of the absence(s)
Reason for the absence(s)
Signature of the parent/legal guardian
Telephone number

Seat Time Requirements for High School Classes (Carnegie Units of Credit)

Students must meet academic and attendance requirements in order to receive Carnegie units of credit in high school courses. Absences are accrued per course. Excessive absences may result in credit denial and can affect a student's promotion or retention status. **Students with excessive absences, <u>whether excused, unexcused or a combination thereof</u>, are subject to failure due to absences.** Students with excessive absences may make up work in addition to taking advantage of Seat Time Recovery (STR). Students may be denied credit for:

- * **Any absence** in excess of 10 days for a course meeting 180 days (meets daily year-long),
- * **Any absence** in excess of 5 days for a course meeting 90 days (semester block or year-long A/B), or
- * **Any absence** in excess of 3 days for a course meeting 45 days (meets daily for a quarter).

Students may make-up missed class time by participating in Seat Time Recovery (STR). Students are expected to complete assignments during this time. If STR is not completed, then a grade of FA (Failure due to Absences) is assigned regardless of the grade in the course. It will carry no earned points; however, it will be factored into the student's GPA as a 50. The student may need to retake the course to attempt and receive credit.

By law, **all absences** must be made up within 30 days of the course ending before credit can be given. Administration cannot complete required paperwork for obtaining a driver's license unless the student is in compliance with the South Carolina Truancy Law. One (1) hour of STR = 1 class absence. STR requires prior registration and Administrator approval. Hours cannot be banked and transportation will not be provided. STR opportunities may be provided before school, after school, Saturdays, or virtually.

Waiver Options

<u>Field Trips</u> - School sponsored field trips with documented attendance will satisfy the days instructional requirements.
<u>College Visits</u> - Juniors & Seniors are allowed up to three (3) college visits per semester. For credit, students must bring written proof of their visit to the institution on the college's letterhead the day they return to school. Failure to do so will count as an Unexcused Absence and will count against your allotted absences per semester.
<u>Extracurricular Activities</u> - School sponsored extracurricular activities, to include athletics, fine arts, and school sponsored clubs that require a student to be out of class during a normal instructional day will count in an equivalent manner as a field trip.

Check the school's website for the STR schedule.

South Carolina State Law (R 43-274) Attendance Definitions

Chronic Absenteeism

A 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 % 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 %) 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.

Truant

A student ages 6 to 17 years of age meets the definition of truant when the student has three (3) consecutive unlawful/unexcused absences or a total of five (5) unlawful/unexcused absences.

Habitual Truant

A student ages 12 to 17 years of age meets the definition of a habitual truant when the student has reached the level of truant, fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, student and parent/guardian, and accumulates two (2) or more additional unlawful/unexcused absences.

Chronic Truant

A student ages 12 to 17 years of age meets the definition of chronic truant when the student has reached the level of habitual truant, has been through the intervention process, has been referred to family court, placed on an order to attend school, and continues to accumulate additional unlawful/unexcused absences.

Tardy to School

A student is tardy to school when he/she arrives after the established start time for the school day.

Early Dismissal

A student is dismissed early from school when he/she leaves the school premises prior to the end of the scheduled day.

Dorchester School District Two Attendance Procedures to Address Attendance Issues

Chronic Absenteeism Procedure

At the beginning of each month, schools will compile a list of students who are considered chronically absent (any student who is absent a minimum of 10% of his/her enrollment period in the current school year for any reason (e.g. illness, suspension, excused or unexcused) is considered chronically absent). Letters will be sent to the parent/guardian notifying them as to the status of the student and explaining the importance of regular school attendance. An administrator must schedule an attendance conference with the parent/guardian when the student has been identified as chronically absent. Research shows that poor attendance can impact student performance. Students who miss too many days in kindergarten and first grade can have trouble mastering reading by the end of the third grade. Chronic absenteeism of middle and high school students is the leading warning indicator for predicting students who dropout.

Truant Procedure

When a student is identified as truant (three (3) consecutive unlawful/unexcused absences or a total of five (5) unlawful/unexcused absences), an administrator will communicate with the student and parent/guardian to identify the reasons for the student's absences. An attendance contract and intervention plan must be developed and signed to address and improve the student's attendance in school.

Habitual Truant Procedure

When a student is identified as habitual truant (fails to comply with the attendance contract and intervention plan and has accumulated two (2) or more additional unlawful/unexcused absences), the administrator must schedule an additional conference to address the continued attendance concerns. The school must also complete the Family Court Referral Packet for court action and send to the appropriate District Director.

Chronic Truant Procedure

If all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted and a student is identified as chronic truant (has been through the intervention process, has been referred to family court, placed on an order to attend school, and continues to accumulate additional unlawful/unexcused absences), the school must file a contempt of court petition with Family Court. The student will appear in court for violating the previously issued court order to attend school.

Did You Know...

Starting as early as preschool and kindergarten, regular attendance is essential for students to gain the academic and social skills they need. Research shows that when students are chronically absent (missing 10% or of the school year or 18 days over an entire year), they are less likely to read proficiently by third grade, achieve in middle school and graduate from high school.

Absences can be a sign that a student is losing interest in school, struggling with school work, dealing with mistreatment or facing other serious problems.

By 6th grade, absenteeism is a sign that a student may drop out of high school.

By 9th grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation than 8th grade test scores.

Student can be chronically absent even if they only miss a day or two of school every few weeks.

Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from high school, graduate from college and be successful in the workforce.

Late to School/Early Dismissal from School

The board recognizes the importance of student arrival on time to school and to each class period. School administration shall have authority to issue consequences to students who fail to arrive at school or to class in a timely manner pursuant to board policy and administrative rule JICDA/JICDA-R.

Students who are chronically late to school or who are dismissed early from school often suffer academically from lost instructional time. For this reason, a record will be kept of all tardies to school and early dismissals.

Late to School/Early Dismissal Procedures

- **Elementary School** – The parent/guardian of a student who arrives at school late must bring the student into the school office to sign the student in and list the reason for the student being late to school.
- **Middle/High School** – The student must report to the school office to sign in or be signed in by parent/guardian and list the reason for the student being late to school.
- **Elementary/Middle School** – If a student is dismissed early, the parent/guardian must come into the school office and sign the student out, listing the reason for the early dismissal. **Please note that if a student is being signed out early, it must be done 30 minutes prior to the scheduled dismissal time.**
- **High School** – If a student is dismissed early, the parent/guardian must come into the school office and sign the student out, listing the reason for the early dismissal **or** the parent may send a note allowing the student to be dismissed early. The school will verify all notes received for early dismissal. **Please note that if a student is being signed out early, it must be done 30 minutes prior to the scheduled dismissal time.**
- **All Schools** – The administration will determine if the lateness and/or early dismissal will be lawful/excused or unlawful/unexcused.

District/School Phone Numbers

Alston-Bailey Elementary	843-695-5210
Alston Middle	843-873-3890
Ashley Ridge High	843-695-4900
Beech Hill Elementary	843-821-3970
DuBose Middle	843-875-7012
Eagle Nest Elementary	843-695-2460
East Edisto Middle School	843-695-2451
Eugene Sires Elementary	843-695-5205
Flowertown Elementary	843-871-7400
Fort Dorchester Elementary	843-832-5550
Fort Dorchester High	843-760-4450
Gregg Middle	843-871-3150
Joseph Pye Elementary	843-695-2979
Knightsville Elementary	843-873-4851
Newington Elementary	843-871-3230
Oakbrook Elementary	843-821-1165
Oakbrook Middle	843-873-9750
RISE Achievement Academy	843-832-5558
River Oaks Middle	843-695-2470
Rollings Middle School of the Arts	843-873-3610
Sand Hill Elementary	843-695-5201
Spann Elementary	843-873-3050
Summerville Elementary	843-873-2372
Summerville High	843-873-6460
William Reeves Elementary	843-695-2450
Windsor Hill Arts Infused Elementary	843-760-9820
District Office	843-873-2901
Transportation	843-873-6196

School Bell Schedules

Elementary Schools	7:15 AM - 2:15 PM
Middle Schools	8:30 AM - 3:05 PM
High Schools/RMSA	9:30 AM - 4:00 PM
RISE Achievement Academy	8:30 AM - 3:05 PM

Lost Learning

School attendance is essential to academic success, but too often student, parents and schools do not realize how quickly absences - excused or unexcused - can add up to academic trouble.

If your child misses…	That equals…	Lost Learning K-12
1 Day Every 2 Weeks	20 Days Per Year	Nearly 1 ½Years
1 Day Per Week	26 Days Per Year	Over 2 ½Years
2 Days Per Week	80 Days Per Year	Over 5 Years

If your child misses…	That equals…	Lost Learning K-12
10 Minutes Per Day	50 Minutes Per Week	Nearly ½Year
20 Minutes Per Day	1 Hour 40 Minutes Per Week	Nearly 1 Year
30 Minutes Per Day	1 Day Per Week	Over 2 ½ Years

Chronic Absence Rate	Days Missed Per Year	Lost Learning K-12
5%	9 Days	6 Months
10%	18 Days	1.3 School Years
20%	36 Days	2.6 School Years