

Attendance Frequently Asked Questions

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

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 five (5) days of the student returning to school.

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.

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.

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.

My child was absent from school because of a death in the family, are the 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.

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.

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 5 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.

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.

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

✓ 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 (book bags, 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 five (5) 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 book bag regularly. Occasionally important letters (such as the medical excuse for last Thursday's absence) can become lost in a full book bag.

✓ 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.



Marion County School District

Preparing all students to live and work effectively, responsibly and productively within our society.

Attendance Guidelines

Please carefully read the following information concerning South Carolina Attendance Laws and the Marion County School District Guidelines for student attendance. The MCSD 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

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) states that a school year consists of 180 days of instruction. Schools may count students present only when they are actually at school, on medical homebound instruction, or are present at a school activity which is authorized by the school. In MCSD, primary and elementary students must be present for 3½ hours of instruction for the instructional day to count as one of the 180 days required by the SCDE.

Required Excuses

Within 5 days after returning to school, a student must submit a written excuse explaining his/her absence, signed by his/her parent/legal guardian and accompanied, if applicable, by a doctor's statement. If a student does not do so, his/her absence will be considered unlawful. An excuse form can be picked up from the attendance office and completed with the appropriate information.

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.

Suspension (s)

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

Notice of Non-Discrimination

Marion County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies.

Section 504-Dr. Cassandra Strickland, Director of Federal Programs
Title IX-Mrs. Paula Grant, Director of Human Resources

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Chronic Absenteeism

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 % of the instructional day for any reason and regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. In other words, students must attend class 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 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 6 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 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.

MCS D Attendance Procedures

The board designates the principal of the school to promptly approve or disapprove any student's absence of more than 10 days. In order to receive one Carnegie unit of credit, a high school student or students in the middle school taking courses for graduation credit must be in attendance at least 120 hours, per unit, regardless of the number of days missed. Denial of credit for high school students will uniformly occur at the 11th absence per yearly course (sixth absence per semester course). Credit for any course will be denied if a student does not meet attendance requirements. This means that any number of absences greater than 10 per 1-unit course (or 5 for a .5-unit course) will require the student to make up time to accrue the 120-hours (1-unit) or the 60-hours (.5-unit).

Truant Procedure

When a student is identified as truant (three (3) consecutive unlawful/unexcused absences or a total of five (5) unlawful/unexcused absences), the attendance clerk will communicate with the student and parent/guardian to identify the reasons for the student's absences. An attendance contract and intervention plan will 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 attendance clerk will schedule an additional conference to address the continued attendance concerns. The school will also complete the Family Court Referral Packet for court action and send to the Attendance Supervisor.

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 Attendance Supervisor will 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.

Middle/High Tardy to Class Procedures

All students are expected to arrive to school on time and be inside their classroom before the tardy bell rings. Being at or near the door means that the student is late. Inside the classroom means that the student's entire body is inside the classroom. Students who are late to class will receive consequences on a cumulative/yearly basis if the behavior continues.

1st & 2nd tardy - the teacher will issue a verbal warning.

3rd tardy - the teacher will have two-way communication with the parent/legal guardian and will document entries when coding in the comment box of PowerSchool.

4th tardy - the student will be assigned lunch detention & issued a written tardy notice warning.

5th tardy - the school administrator will request a parent/legal guardian tardy conference.

6th thru 9th tardy - the student will be assigned 1 full day of in-school suspension (ISS).

Primary/Elementary School Tardy Procedures

All students are expected to arrive to school on time and be inside their classroom before the tardy bell rings. Students who are late to school receive consequences if the behavior continues. Students who are continually late may expect the following on a semester basis:

1st tardy - the office/teacher will issue a verbal notification.

2nd tardy - the office/teacher will issue written notification.

3rd tardy - the office/teacher will issue a second written notification.

4th tardy - the office/teacher will issue a written tardy notice warning.

5th tardy - the school administrator will request a parent/legal guardian tardy conference.

6th & 7th tardy - the student will be placed on a tardy intervention contract.

8th & 9th tardy - the student may be assigned In-School Suspension.

10th tardy - the student may be given one day out-of-school suspension for each additional tardy after 10.

Middle/High con't.

10th tardy - the student will be placed on a tardy intervention contract. The student will also meet with a guidance counselor prior to being assigned out-of-school suspension.

11th thru 13th tardy - the student will be assigned 1 full day of OSS. High school students will also lose driving privileges at the 10th tardy for at least 30 days. If a student continues to drive during the 30 days of revoked privileges, then the student's driving privileges will be revoked for the remainder of the year.

14th tardy - the student will be assigned 1 full day of OSS for each additional tardy after the 14th tardy.

MINUTES LATE PER DAY	EQUIVALENT OF MISSING	HOW MANY LESSONS THIS IS MISSED
5 MINUTES	3.4 SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR	17 LESSONS
10 MINUTES	6.9 SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR	35 LESSONS
15 MINUTES	10.3 SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR	51 LESSONS
20 MINUTES	13.8 SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR	69 LESSONS
30 MINUTES	20.7 SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR	104 LESSONS

School /District Attendance Staff

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