



Revised Attendance Procedures

(Effective November 9, 2022)

Attendance Procedures

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. Parents/Guardians can provide their child's school with a note via the school's website. 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.

Mental or Behavioral Health - Consistent with Virginia Department of Education guidelines, students may be granted an excused absence from school due to the student's mental or behavioral health.

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. This documentation will only support the absences related to the child's medical/mental health reason(s) and will be reviewed throughout the school year. 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.

Civic Engagement- Consistent with Virginia Department of Education guidelines, any middle school or high school student will be granted a one school day absence per school year to engage in a civic or political event.

4-H Participation - A maximum of 5 school days per academic year are permitted and will be excused for a 4-H educational program or activity.

Participation in Tribal Nation Gathering - Students who are members of a state-or federally recognized tribal nation that is headquartered in Virginia shall be granted one excused absence per academic year to attend such nation's pow wow gathering provided that the student's parent provides the student's school with advanced notice.

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.

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/guardian. In addition to an email and phone contact, a letter will be sent to the Parent/Guardian and an effort will be made to verify the unexcused absences regarding the need and state law requirement to develop a plan to resolve the student's non-attendance. The principal or designee will be responsible for convening a meeting to complete attendance monitoring plan, which will be documented as an intervention with the student support team. 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 nonattendance explained. An attendance plan shall be made with the student and parent or parents to resolve the nonattendance issues.
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 student support 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 (CHINS) 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.

Unexcused Absences in High School Credit Classes for Middle and High School Students

At the secondary level (Middle and High) the parent and student will be notified in writing of a semester grade not exceeding a 59, should the student reach nine (9) unexcused absences in a class for a given semester. Notification will include a process for the parent to request an exemption of one or more unexcused absences. The request for exemption must be filed within (10) days to the principal after the conclusion of the semester. Documentation must accompany the request in order to be considered.

Excessive Absences/Chronic 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 excused and unexcused absences).

Elementary School Excessive Absences and Chronic Absenteeism Procedures

1. When a student has reached ***two-thirds*** of the allowable days prior to being determined as chronically absent for the full school year, the parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the number of absences and provided further guidance to avoid future absences.
2. The principal or designee will schedule a meeting with the parent within 10 days once the student has met the ***three-fourths*** allowable days prior to being determined as chronically absent for the full school year. A student support team meeting will be held by the principal or designee to identify and address any barriers to improved attendance. A Plan for Attendance Improvement will be completed and signed during the student support team meeting. The student will be monitored weekly by the attendance clerk.
3. The principal will convene a meeting with the student's teacher, parent, and school counselor up to 30 days prior to the end of the academic year once the student ***has met or exceeded the threshold for chronic absenteeism***. At the conclusion of the meeting, the parent will be notified in writing whether the student will be promoted, retained, or required to attend summer school.

Middle and High School Excessive Absences and Chronic Absenteeism Procedures

1. When a student has reached ***two-thirds*** of the allowable days prior to being determined chronically absent for the full school year (which is defined as 10 percent of the days in which the student is enrolled for the entire school year), the parent/guardian will be notified in writing of the number of absences and provided further guidance to avoid future absences.
2. The principal or designee will schedule a meeting with the parent within 10 days once the student has met the ***three-fourths*** allowable days prior to being determined as chronically absent for the full school year. A student support team meeting will be held by the principal or designee to include any of the following staff: school counselor, school social worker, teacher, parent and student. A Plan for Attendance Improvement will be completed and signed during the student support team meeting. The student will be monitored weekly by the attendance clerk.
3. The principal or designee will review the attendance record of all students who have met or exceeded the threshold for chronic absenteeism to determine whether the student will retain all privileges of a student in good standing. The building principal may determine which (if any) student privileges are removed or suspended

**Examples of Two-Thirds and Three-Fourths Threshold
For Excessive Absences and Chronic Absenteeism Procedures**

Entry Date	School Days (#)	Chronic Threshold-Accreditation		
		10% Maximum Absences	Two-Thirds	Three-Fourths
Aug 29 th	176	18	12	14
Oct 1 st	151	15	10	12
Dec 1 st	113	11	6	8
Jan 31 st	87	N/A (<50% of Enrollment)		

Waiver of Retention or Grade Reduction

A parent/guardian may request a waiver of the attendance sanction or retention or grade reduction. The Newport News Public Schools Attendance Waiver Request form shall be available at each school. The Waiver form must be completed and submitted to the principal prior to the close of a school year for students recommended for retention or remediation.

For students enrolled in a credit bearing class at the middle or high school, the parent/guardian may submit a waiver request to the principal at the close of the semester, but no later than 10 days after the close of a semester.

Appeal of Waiver Decision

A parent/guardian may appeal the decision of the principal by submitting the appeal to the School Leadership department within three (3) days of the receipt of the principal’s decision.

Additional Sanctions related to Excessive Absences

Students who accrue excessive absences from grades 8 through 12 may lose privileges related to attendance at special school events such as school dances, prom, school parking privileges and off campus passes.

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 teacher 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:

- Reviewing class assignments in Canvas or Seesaw (elementary)

- Contact the teacher via email or call the school office requesting assignments remembering that teachers need 24 hours to prepare assignments.

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

2. When students cut class or cut school, teachers shall assign a failing grade for any work or test missed due to an absence that resulted from class cutting or truancy.

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. Students with excessive tardies at the high school level may lose parking privileges or the possibility of obtaining parking passes in the future. Refer to the Student's Rights and Responsibilities Handbook for additional information on tardiness.

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.

LEARNFARE AGREEMENT AND TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

Learnfare is a Virginia Welfare Reform initiative which ties welfare payments to the school attendance of students under the age of 18 who are TANF recipients.

Newport News Department of Human Services and the school division will coordinate efforts to identify those students who are deemed truant and not in compliance with attendance requirements. When students with attendance problems are identified by the division, the Newport News Department of Human Services will be contacted to develop a plan with the parent/guardian.