

ATTENDANCE RULES FOR GREENVILLE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Regular school attendance is an essential part of a child's learning process and vital to graduating with a good education. Students who are frequently absent may be putting their futures in jeopardy by falling behind in academics and missing important socialization. Chronic absenteeism is a behavior that is strongly associated with dropping out of school.

In South Carolina, all children are required to attend a public or private school or kindergarten beginning at age five (5) and continuing until their 17th birthday. If a parent chooses not to send their children to kindergarten, a waiver must be signed. Waivers may be obtained at the local school. Parents also have the option of home schooling their children provided the requirements for home schooling are met.

In accordance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law and S.C. Code of Regulations, uniform rules have been adopted to ensure that students attend school regularly. Students are expected to attend school each day and are counted present only when they are actually in school, on homebound instruction, or are present at an activity authorized by the school principal.

Elementary School Absences

The school year consists of 180 days. To receive credit, students must attend at least 170 days of each year, as well as meet the minimum requirements for each course. Accrued student absences may not exceed 10 days during the school year. The first 10 absences may be lawful, unlawful, or a combination. Any absence in excess of 10 may cause the student to lose credit for the year.

A. Lawful Absences

1. Absences caused by a student's own illness* and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health or the health of others. (*Verified by a physician statement within two days of the student's return to school.)
2. Absences due to health related appointments. An excuse for an appointment lasting for a short portion of the school day does not excuse an entire day. Appointments should be scheduled after school hours if possible. Absences must be verified by physician within 2 days of the student's return to school.
3. Absences due to hospitalization or extended medical care by a physician, which are not of sufficient duration to warrant homebound instruction. Homebound instruction may be requested by a physician for students who are out of school for longer periods due to medical conditions.
4. Absences due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family verified by a statement from the parent within 2 days of the student's return to school.
5. Absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith when approved in advance. Such requests must be made to the principal in writing.
6. Absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the principal. This would include absences for extreme hardships. Such approval should be prearranged when possible.
7. Absences for court appearances. (Documentation must be provided.)
8. With approval from the principal, students may be absent for a portion of the school day or the entire day for school-sponsored activities such as field trips, academic competitions, athletic events or other extracurricular activities. The school will not count the student absent from class/school in such cases.
9. Suspensions are lawful absences (*unless a student is subject to court ordered attendance*). However, suspensions are not counted for the purpose of awarding credit.

B. Unlawful Absences

1. Absences of a student without the knowledge of his or her parents.
2. Absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her parents.
3. Absences of a student for which an excuse was not provided to the school within 2 days of the student's return to school.
4. Any absence not specifically defined under lawful absences.

C. Truancy

Although the state requires students to only attend 170 of the 180 day school year, parents and students should be aware that S.C. Code of Regulations - Chapter 43-274 stipulates that a child ages 6 to 17 years is considered truant when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.

D. Tardiness

Punctuality is one of the most important skills that a person can learn. It directly correlates to an individual's success in the business world. Parents should have students at school on time each day. Furthermore, secondary students are expected to be in their individual classes on time. Late arrival (tardiness) results in interruptions to the learning process – not only for the tardy student but for other students in the class as well. Additionally, the tardy student misses important instruction. Each school has guidelines for the disciplinary consequences for tardiness.

What Do I Do If My Child Refuses To Go To School?

First, call the attendance clerk at your child's school and report the problem. If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, an administrator from your child's school will schedule an intervention conference with you and your child. At that time a plan will be devised to improve your child's attendance. If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, his/her case will be referred to an attendance supervisor or social worker. The attendance supervisor or social worker will convene a conference with you and your child regarding his/her attendance problem. If your child continues to miss school unlawfully, the case may be referred to Family Court for further intervention.