

## DCPS Attendance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) -August 2023

### **Background**

Attendance is one of the key metrics that schools review as part of our whole child intervention lens. Attendance patterns provide key insight into experiences that may be impacting other domains of development for the child. This FAQ addresses most frequently asked questions regarding attendance, the protocols school officials will implement if your child is absent or truant, and requirements related to the enforcement of DC Health immunization mandates.

- **Is attending school legally required for my child?**
  - Yes. School attendance is required by law for all DC students who reach five years of age on or before September 30 of the current school year. Students must attend school daily until they meet high school graduation requirements or reach their 18th birthday. (DC Code § 38-202 (a)).
- **What are the attendance requirements for my child in PK?**
  - DC Public School Attendance and Truancy Policy requires Pre-K students to be subject to the same requirements regarding excused and unexcused absences as K-12th grade students. Although attendance-based referrals to CFSA are not required for students below the age of five (5), schools are required to implement school-based attendance other required interventions can be found [here](#) (starting at page 11)
- **What should I expect if my child misses school?**
  - DC Public School Attendance and Truancy Policy has clearly articulated interventions and supportive referrals that must be completed and may be differentiated by grade band. Examples may include robo call, student attendance conferences, court referrals, etc. These requirements can be found [here](#) (starting at page 9).
- **What is the difference between an excused and unexcused absence?**
  - The DC Municipal Regulations and DCPS Policy list absences that are legally permitted to be excused. There is also a provision for limited special excusal circumstances. Any absence that does not fall within one of these categories is considered unexcused. Note that parents must submit an excusal note within 5 school days of the student's return from any absence for the absence excusal to be considered. See [here](#) starting at page 6 for more details.
- **How do I submit an excuse note? How long do I have to submit a note?**
  - Per DCPS Policy and DC law, valid excuses for absences must be provided within five school days of your child's return to school. Schools are required to mark all absences as unexcused unless a valid excuse is provided by a parent or guardian within five days of the student returning to school. See 5-E DCMR § 2101.4 and 5A DCMR §2102.4.
- **Does my child have to be up to date on immunizations to attend school?**
  - Yes. All students attending DC public and charter schools are required to have up-to-date immunization certification on file with their school within the first 20 school days. For School Year 2023-2024, only students enrolled in grades pre-K 3, kindergarten, 7, or 11 who remain non-compliant after Oct. 5 (also referred to as "Count Day") will be eligible for temporary exclusion from school until immunization certification is met.

Students in all other grades must also be compliant with their immunization certification but will not be eligible for temporary exclusion due to non-compliance. It is important for all children to get their vaccines to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and schools will continue to conduct outreach to all non-compliant students. See <https://osse.dc.gov/page/immunization>, for more information. You may also refer to <https://enrolldcps.dc.gov/node/71> in order to complete all Health Forms, including those related to immunizations.

- **What if my child misses school for a field trip, athletic activity, or other school-sponsored event?**
  - School staff will mark students as present using the “school activity” code, so your child will not be considered absent even though he/she was away from class or school.
- **What if my child is suspended?**
  - Students suspended in or out of school will be excused using the ISS (In School Suspension) or OSS (Out-of-School Suspension).
- **Do absences impact my child’s grades, or ability to be promoted?**
  - Elementary and middle school students who accrue 30 or more unexcused absences are subject to retention. See retention policy [here](#).
  - Secondary students who accrue more than 30 unexcused absences in any class will fail the class and be given the grade of FA (failure due to attendance). See policy [here](#).
- **What if my child is late for school or class?**
  - Students will be marked as tardy rather than absent. If a secondary student misses more than 40% of the school day, he/she will be considered absent for the school day.
- **What if my child misses school for a religious holiday?**
  - DCPS policy allows for students to be excused for observance of a religious holiday and, to participate in religious events or celebrations outside of a religious holiday (up to five cumulative days in a school year). Parents must submit an excuse note within five school days of their student’s return to school.
- **How much of the school day does my child need to attend to be considered present?**
  - Per 5-A DCMR § 2199.1, Students must attend 60% of the school day to be considered “legally present” for the school day. DCPS has implemented this for secondary schools only.
- **Can my child be excused to participate school/college visits?**
  - Yes. DCPS has classified the following additional circumstances as excused absences:
    - College visits for students in 9th through 12th grades (up to three cumulative days in a school year);
    - School visits for students in K through 8th grades (e.g., a 5th grader visiting a middle school before enrolling) (up to one day);
- **What are my options if my student is too ill to attend school?**
  - **Please contact your school’s attendance Point of Contact (POC) to discuss possible options such as:**
    - Short term – excuse note
    - Home and Hospital Instruction Program (HHIP) if approved due to medical reasons
    - Virtual for high school aged students enrolled at one of DCPS’s Opportunity student only. See [here](#) for more information.
- **How do I submit an excuse note?**

- Notes must be submitted to the school's attendance POC. Written notes may be submitted via email, text messages, and other written electronic communications to your school's attendance POC. All written notes must be dated, include the reason for the absence, and specify the dates the student was or will be out of school.
- **How many days do I have to submit an excuse note?**
  - For an absence to be excused, a written note must be provided to the school by the student's parent or guardian prior to a partial or full-day absence or within five (5) school days after the student's partial or full-day absence or return to school after an extended period of absence. Written notes may be submitted via email, text messages, and other written electronic communications. All written notes must:
    - 1. Be dated;
    - 2. Include the reason for the absence; and
    - 3. Include the specific dates the student was or will be out of school.
    - Notes that fail to meet the requirements above will not be considered.
- **How can I expect to be informed if and when my child is absent or tardy?**
  - Each evening families receive robo call if their students missed school that day, each day attendance letters are sent via email or U.S. mail to keep families up to date regarding the number of absences students have accrued and the legal and grading implications of such absences
  - Additionally, families of students who have missed 5% or more of the school year may also receive other communications. These communications are letters and texts about attendance and include excused and unexcused absences. The goal of these communications is to help families keep track of their students' absences and offer resources and support. If families would like to stop receiving these messages, they can text stop to opt out. To stop receiving attendance reports, call the phone number at the bottom of your report and enter your optout code.

#### Key Resources

- [Attendance and Truancy Policy: Note that until the 23-24 Policy is publicly posted, the 22-23 Policy will be in effect.](#)
- [DCPS Student Attendance and Support](#)
- Find more at: **attendance.dc.gov**

For additional information, please contact your school's attendance POC.