

# **School Attendance**

## **Questions Frequently Asked by Parents**

### **1. What am I supposed to do when my child is too sick to go to school, but I cannot get a doctor's appointment?**

Three (3) parent notes can be used per semester to have an absence excused. One note is good for one day of absence. The note needs to state the child's name, the valid reason for absence, the date of absence and be signed by the parent or guardian. The note must be turned in to the school within three (3) days for the absence to be excused. Notes turned in after three (3) days will not be accepted, and the absence will be unexcused.

### **2. Are all doctor visits excused?**

Yes. If your child visits the doctor, get a doctor's note. Turn the note in to the school within three (3) days. If the child has the note and forgets to turn it in, the parent is responsible. Most doctors now fax notes directly to the school. Appointments for non-emergency situations should be scheduled after school or during school vacations if possible.

### **3. When my child wakes up complaining of feeling ill but gets to feeling better, should I keep the child at home or take him/her on to school?**

Take the child to school. Alert the school nurse or teacher that the child was feeling ill earlier in the day. One rule of thumb says if the child does not have a fever, rash, diarrhea, or vomiting, take the child to school. Of course the parent knows the child best.

### **4. If my child is suspended from the bus, I have no way of getting him to school. Is this an excused absence?**

No. Bus transportation is a privilege. Students must be taught to behave on the bus and follow bus rules. The parent is responsible for getting the child to school.

### **5. My child may have surgery and be required to miss several weeks of school. What should I do?**

If you can schedule your child's surgery during summer vacation or a school break, do so. If not, discuss the situation with the school principal and the child's teacher. If the medical condition requires the student to miss an extended period of time, contact the Houston County Board of Education office to discuss a homebound teacher placement. When your child returns to school, alert the school nurse to the student's condition.

### **6. What are valid reasons for being absent from school?**

Valid reasons for being absent from school include student illness, death in the family, religious holidays, court appearance, and appointments with a counselor, dentist, or doctor.

### **7. What happens if a child is referred to Juvenile Court for truancy?**

Parents and the school need to work together so that court involvement is the last resort. In the past we have seen a variety of consequences for truancy including the assignment of up to six hours of public service work for each day missed, fines up to \$50 for each day of unexcused absence, the assignment of a DCS counselor, and payment of court costs. Parents have been required to take parenting classes, obtain counseling, and in rare cases, parents have been sent to jail. For older students, poor attendance can also result in the revocation of a student's driver's license. In addition, high school students with excessive absences must make up time or risk losing credit for classes.

**8. If the school nurse calls and asks that I pick up my child because he/she is sick, does this count as unexcused?**

No. This will be an excused sign out.

**9. We have difficulty paying for the things my child needs. Sometimes he/she doesn't want to go to school because of this. What can I do?**

Make sure you talk to the cafeteria manager and fill out a form to receive free or reduced meals at school. This information is confidential. In addition, the school nurse and/or counselor can put families in touch with resources to help during difficult times. School nurses may be able to help provide medical information and resources.

**10. My child has been sent home from school because of nits. It is expensive to keep treating the child. We try hard but don't seem to be able to get rid of the nits. What can we do?**

The school nurse can provide you with resources and information to help you.

**11. How does the attendance policy apply to school field trips?**

Because the trip is school-related, the child is counted present. Students who do not to attend the school-related field trip must still be present for school.

**12. What general advice can you give me to help me with my child?**

- Keep in touch with your child's school.
- Set high expectations for your child.
- Make education a top priority.
- Be supportive. Offer encouragement and praise.
- Teach your child to accept responsibility and realize that actions have consequences.

(Don't make excuses or allow your child to make excuses.)

- Teach your child to respect authority.
- Relax, be patient, love the child, and enjoy this time in your life.