



# What Every Parent | Guardian Needs to Know About School Attendance Policies

## Q. 1. How do I report my child's absence?

A. All absences must be reported through the [Genesis Parent Portal](#). Other methods (phone calls, handwritten notes) will not be accepted unless there are extenuating circumstances. Instructions for using the portal are shared annually and available on the district website under [Parents > Attendance/Absence Reporting](#).

## Q. 2. Can I provide supporting documentation for my child's absence?

A. Yes. When reporting an absence, you may upload supporting documents (e.g., medical notes, court summons) directly to the [Genesis Parent Portal](#).

## Q. 3. What happens if I don't report my child's absence?

A. If an absence is not reported, you will receive a robocall and email immediately after the absence reporting deadline. The first robocall will occur at approximately 9:30 a.m. for elementary and 8:50 a.m. for middle school (the high school does not use the robocall system for attendance). The communication will include a reminder to log in to Genesis to report and verify the absence. A second robocall will be sent at the end of the school day if the absence is not verified, and the absence will be marked as unexcused.

## Q. 4. What counts as an "excused" absence?

A. An absence shall be considered an "excused absence" for the purpose of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance, for the following reasons:

- Student illness (first 9 absences with a parent note, doctor's note required for additional absences)
- Death or critical illness in the immediate family
- Quarantine
- Religious observance ([list of approved holidays](#))
- Court appearance (with documentation)
- Necessary medical or dental appointments (with documentation)
- Suspension from school
- Requirements of a student's IEP or individual health plan
- Interview with a college admissions officer (with documentation)
- Any reason listed in the state-excused absences (see below)

## Q. 5. What is considered a "state-excused" absence?

A. State-excused absences are as follows:

- Religious observance as defined by law ([list of approved holidays](#));
- A college visit (up to 3 days per school year, only for students in grades 11 and 12);
- Take Our Children to Work Day;
- Participation in observance of Veterans Day or participation in district board of election membership activities;
- The closure of a busing district that prevents a student from having transportation to the receiving school;
- Attendance at a civic event one time per school year, provided that the student is enrolled in grades 6 through 12 and written notice with supporting documentation is submitted to the principal at least five school days in advance.

**Q. 6. Can I provide a doctor's note for the first 9 absences due to illness?**

**A.** Although a parent may opt to provide a doctor's note for any or all of the first 9 absences, doctors' notes will not be required for any of the first 9 absences to be considered "excused." Each absence for illness beyond the 9th absence for illness will require a doctor's note in order for that absence to be considered "excused," regardless of written parental notification.

Important Reminder: Without a valid doctor's note, any absence beyond the ninth absence for illness will be recorded as "unexcused."

**Q. 7. What is considered an "unexcused" absence?**

**A.** An unexcused absence may be counted toward retention, truancy, loss of course credit, ineligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school code of conduct for attendance.

Absence is expressly not excused for any of the following reasons (this list is intended to be illustrative and is not inclusive):

- Family travel
- Daytime activities unrelated to the school program
- Leaving class or school without permission
- Being present in school but absent from class without approval

**Q. 8. What is considered a school day for the purposes of daily attendance?**

**A.** A day in session shall consist of not less than four hours, exclusive of recess and lunch periods. Be mindful of tardies and early dismissals.

**Q. 9. What happens if my child is marked as truant?**

**A.** Truancy is defined as 10 or more cumulative unexcused absences. If this threshold is reached, the principal or designee will review the case and may refer it to court if necessary. Under the Compulsory Education Law, every parent or guardian must ensure that children between the ages of six and sixteen attend school regularly.

To keep you informed, you will receive formal notifications when your child reaches both 5 and 9 unexcused absences, as part of the school's responsibility in addressing attendance concerns.

Upon your child's 11th unexcused absence, you will receive a formal truancy notice from the school, detailing the potential legal implications of truancy.

If your child does not resume regular attendance within 5 school days of receiving this notice, the principal may need to submit truancy documentation to the Juvenile/Family Crisis Intervention Unit (JFCIU).

**Q. 10. What happens if my child is chronically absent?**

**A.** Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year, which amounts to 18 or more absences (including both excused and unexcused absences).

Elementary School and Middle School: Unexcused absences over 10% of the school year may lead to retention. The school will seek to collaborate with you to improve your child's attendance and address root causes.

High School: Unexcused absences exceeding 10% of class sessions may result in loss of course credit.

**Q. 11. Can I appeal a decision regarding my child's attendance?**

**A.** Yes. Parents can appeal decisions such as retention, loss of course credit, or other disciplinary actions by contacting the principal and requesting a meeting with the Attendance Review Committee.

High School: The school will send an appeal notice each time a student exceeds the absence limits in an individual course. Please access the [PHS Student Handbook](#) for additional information.

**Q. 12. What should I do if my child needs to be absent for an extended period for non-medical reasons?**

**A.** Notify the school as soon as possible. If the absence is expected to exceed ten days, an Extended Absence Notification Form will be published in Genesis for you to complete. This form provides important information regarding [Board Policy 5113](#) and explains the potential impact of an extended absence on your child's academic progress.

During extended absences, such as family travel, if you opt to withdraw your child who is under the age of 16, you are responsible for ensuring your child is enrolled in an educational program, transferred to an accredited school, or is home-schooled.

**Q. 13. What should I do if my child needs to be absent for an extended period for medical reasons?**

**A.** A student who anticipates an absence due to a temporary or chronic health condition may be eligible for home instruction in accordance with [Board Policy 6173](#). The parent must request home instruction with appropriate medical documentation. Please contact the school counselor or case manager for additional information.

**Q. 14. How do I prepare for my child's return to school after an absence?**

**A.** If absent due to a communicable illness, your child may need clearance from a doctor before returning. Depending on the circumstances, the school may request a medical re-entry meeting with relevant staff.

**Q. 15. What are the responsibilities for completing schoolwork during absences?**

**A.** Upon request by the parent or student, teachers will prepare assignments for anticipated absences of 5 or more days. For extended absences for non-medical reasons, accommodations will be considered individually. Parents or students are responsible for requesting missed assignments.

**References**

[Board Policy 5113](#)  
[N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.4 - Student Attendance](#)  
[N.J.S.A. 18A:36-25.6 - Report of Absence](#)

**Questions?**

If you have any questions, please reach out to your child's school directly.