



## **Student Attendance**

Park West School expects that all students attend school daily and be present for all classes. Students who attend school regularly are more engaged in learning, have greater access to resources, a sense of belonging, and are more likely to reach their full potential. Student presence and engagement are essential for success, while absenteeism can negatively impact educational performance, graduation rates, and social inclusion.

### **Definitions**

- **Presence:** Attending and participating in school as required. Students may be present even if they are not physically within a classroom, depending on their student-specific plan.
- **Engagement:** Students' attitudes towards schooling, their attendance and participation in school activities, disposition towards learning, and working and socializing with others in school.
- **Regular Attendance:** Coming to school and/or participating in learning consistently and on a routine, habitual basis, missing no more than five days for the entire school year.
- **Absence:** Any time that a student is not in class or not participating in a school activity while not being on suspension/expulsion.
- **Excused Absence:** Any time that a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) with the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent
- **Unexcused Absence:** Absences when a student is not present in class or not participating in a school sanctioned activity (while not being on suspension/expulsion) without the mutual consent of the school principal and the parent.
- **Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 10 or more classes in a single high school course or 10 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.
- **Severe Chronic Absenteeism:** Where unexcused absences account for 20 or more classes in a single high school course or 20 percent or more of instructional days in Kindergarten to Grade 8 in a reporting period.
- **Student-Specific Plan (SSP):** A planning, record-keeping, and communication document, as outlined in Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (MEECL, 2022).



## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Students:**

- Attend school and classes regularly and punctually.
- Comply with the school's code of conduct and complete all assignments.
- Participate in student-specific planning as developmentally appropriate.
- Communicate any barriers to attendance to teachers or school staff.
- Engage positively in school activities to foster a sense of belonging.

### **Parents:**

- Stay informed regularly about their child's attendance, behavior, and academic achievement.
- Cooperate fully with teachers and school staff to ensure compliance with the school's code of conduct.
- Take reasonable measures to ensure their child attends school regularly.
- Participate in planning meetings regarding their child's attendance and educational needs.
- Support their child's engagement with school by fostering positive attitudes toward education.

### **Teachers:**

- Monitor and accurately record student attendance daily.
- Communicate promptly with the principal and parents regarding attendance concerns, including chronic absenteeism or lateness.
- Identify potential issues related to absenteeism and proactively address them.
- Promote and support regular attendance through positive engagement strategies.
- Document all communications with students, parents, and outside agencies regarding attendance issues.
- Participate in student-specific planning processes, contributing insights and strategies for individual student needs.



**Principals/Designates:**

- Work collaboratively with teachers, students, and parents to promote regular attendance and identify necessary supports.
- Ensure accurate and timely maintenance of attendance records by teachers.
- Monitor and analyze student attendance data regularly to identify trends and intervene as necessary.
- Oversee the student-specific planning process, including the assignment of a case manager for students experiencing chronic absenteeism.
- Report chronic and severe absenteeism to the school division and work on appropriate interventions.
- Invite community agencies and organizations to collaboratively plan for student support and educational programming.
- Lead school-based initiatives aimed at improving attendance and engagement.

**School Divisions:**

- Ensure that all students eligible for enrollment receive regular and appropriate educational programming.
- Collaborate with schools, parents, and community partners to promote regular attendance and address barriers.
- Track student attendance accurately and maintain records of chronic absenteeism, taking immediate action to address underlying causes.
- Work with schools to identify and implement supports for both educational and non-educational needs of students and families.
- Promote culturally safe educational environments and ensure cultural competence among all staff.
- Ensure that student attendance is a standing agenda item at senior administration and school-based support team meetings, fostering a consistent focus on attendance-related issues.



### **Expectations of Regular Attendance**

To be considered in attendance, a student must be present at school for the school day or at an approved off-site activity. Such activities include field trips, athletic contests, student conventions, and musical festivals, as authorized by the Board. The Superintendent/CEO is responsible for designating school-related activities, and principals may record attendance for students participating in these activities, provided prior approval is granted.

### **Excused Absences**

The Superintendent/CEO, principal, or designated teacher has the right to excuse a student for valid reasons, including:

1. **Illness or Injury:** Absences due to illness or injury preventing attendance.
2. **Quarantine:** Absences resulting from local health orders.
3. **Death in the Immediate Family:** Absences due to the death of immediate family members.
4. **Medical or Dental Appointments:** Absences for appointments, with prior approval.
5. **Court or Judicial Proceedings:** Absences for court appearances.
6. **Religious Observation:** Absences for religious events, with approval.
7. **Educational Opportunity:** Absences for valid educational purposes, with prior approval.

### **Unexcused Absences**

Unexcused absences include:

1. Willful absence without parent knowledge.
2. Absences for reasons not listed under "Excused Absences."

### **Proactive Strategies for Engagement**

In order to successfully enhance student presence and engagement, student attendance policies must reflect the following foundational principles and conditions:

- Foster respectful relationships with students, families, and communities.
- Establish safe and inclusive learning environments.
- Monitor attendance daily and implement early warning systems for chronic absenteeism.
- Engage in consistent communication with parents regarding attendance and support.



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### **Promotion of School Attendance:**

To promote regular student attendance, schools will implement comprehensive policies that include:

1. **Daily Recording Procedures:** Consistent recording of student presence and absence, categorizing absences as excused or unexcused.
2. **Monitoring Enrollment Data:** Regularly review enrollment data to ensure expected students are present, including year-over-year comparisons of enrollment registers and assessments of unclaimed pupil files and homeschool reports from the department.
3. **Data Analysis:** Ongoing monitoring and analysis of division-wide and school-specific enrollment and attendance data.
4. **Investigation Procedures:** Establish procedures for identifying the causes of student absences and determining necessary supports to encourage regular attendance.
5. **Early Warning System:** Implement a non-punitive outreach protocol to identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism by analyzing trends in attendance data.

### **Support for Absenteeism**

Park West School Division does not endorse punitive responses to absenteeism. Responses to absences must be non-punitive, fair, and predictable for all students. Suspension, expulsions, and withdrawals are inappropriate and counterproductive responses to absenteeism, and must be eliminated from practice. Students who are chronically absent must have a Student Specific Plan that identifies barriers and outlines strategies. Case managers will be designated to coordinate support for students and their families. Interventions may include personalized planning, alternative educational programming, and connections to community resources.

Schools will develop clear attendance conduct rules and regularly communicate expectations to students. Teachers are responsible for reporting attendance issues to the principal, who serves as the School Attendance Officer. At the end of each month, attendance reports will be reviewed, and principals will take appropriate actions, including:

- a. Counseling students about attendance issues.
- b. Contacting parents or guardians.
- c. Sending notification letters to parents/guardians and the Superintendent/CEO.
- d. Referring students to appropriate authorities for persistent attendance problems.