



QUAKERTOWN COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT Attendance Policies 2015-16

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), “[i]n order for students to realize the opportunities and benefits from school, students have to not only be in attendance, but they must also be meaningfully connected to the school and experiencing success” (BEC 24 P.S. 13-1327). Frequent absences from regular classroom learning experiences disrupt the continuity of the instructional process. Regular school attendance is essential for the successful completion of the educational objectives of the Quakertown Community School District. Our Attendance Policies are outlined below in a question-and-answer format. If you have any questions or concerns about these policies, please do not hesitate to contact the main office of your child’s school.

APPLICABILITY OF ATTENDANCE POLICIES

What does “compulsory school age” mean?

Commonwealth law defines “compulsory school age” as “the period of a child’s life from the time the child’s parents elect to have the child enter school, which shall be not later than at the age of eight (8) years until the age of seventeen (17) years” (24 P.S. 13-1326). Therefore, until a child reaches the age of 17, both the child and his/her parents/guardians may face legal penalties for violating compulsory school attendance requirements.

It is important to note that all district attendance policies apply to students regardless of age. While no legal penalties may be imposed upon students who are not of compulsory school age, the district may impose academic and/or disciplinary consequences for attendance policy violations. Please refer to your child’s student handbook for additional information.

ABSENCES

What if my child is absent from school?

All absences require a signed parental note stating the day(s) of and reason for the absence. Notes must be turned in within three (3) calendar days of the absence, or the absence(s) will be permanently counted as unexcused. If your child misses three (3) consecutive days, a parental note and a note from a licensed medical practitioner are required. Please note that while a call or an email to your child’s school is appreciated, a call does not replace a written, signed note.

Can my child participate in extracurricular activities if absent from school?

No, students who are absent from school may not participate in athletics or any other cocurricular or extracurricular event/activity.

What counts as an excused/lawful absence?

- Illness or quarantine
- Death in the immediate family
- Appointments for licensed medical practitioners
- Physical or mental disability that is verified by a licensed medical practitioner
- College visits (up to 3 days per school year). Upon return from a college visit, students must submit a signed notice from the institution (usually via the Admissions Office) as proof of the visit.
- Religious holidays (upon written parental request)

- Educational travel (with prior administrative approval)
- Court hearings related to the county Children and Youth Agency or Juvenile Probation Office
- Urgent/emergency reasons. Please note that the Commonwealth requires that this excuse be “strictly construed” (24 P.S. 13-1329(a)). Examples of excuses that are not urgent include, but are not limited to: missing the bus, job interviews, unauthorized trips (such as hunting or fishing), oversleeping, or car trouble.

What counts as an unexcused/unlawful absence?

Unless the absence is due to one of the specific reasons deemed excusable by the Commonwealth (see above), then the absence is unexcused/unlawful. Absences are also unlawful if a parental note is not submitted to the school office within three (3) calendar days of the absence.

What if my child is absent for 10 or more days during the school year?

A student absent for 10 or more days throughout the school year, regardless of the absences being excused or unexcused, shall be required to present a note from a licensed medical practitioner for any additional absences.

What happens if my child is absent from school without a lawful excuse and is of compulsory school age (under 17 years of age)?

In an effort to avoid legal penalties, schools will invite students and parents/guardians to design a “School Attendance Improvement Plan” (SAIP). The SAIP is a proactive measure that seeks to improve your child’s attendance while outlining the consequences for failing to do so.

Students who accumulate more than three (3) unexcused absences are considered “habitually truant.” Because of their age, they are in violation of the Commonwealth’s compulsory school attendance laws and regulations. After the third unlawful absence, parents/guardians will receive a certified notice alerting them to the possible legal penalties for continued violation of the compulsory school attendance laws. These penalties may be imposed on both students and parents/guardians by a magisterial district judge. The specific penalties are outlined in the PA School Code (24 P.S. 13-1333 and 1338.1) and can include, but are not limited to: fines, community service, completion of a parenting education program, and referral to the county Children and Youth Agency.

Students are also subject to the disciplinary consequences described in their school’s student handbook.

What happens if my child is absent from school without a lawful excuse and is not of compulsory school age (17 years of age or older)?

Students who accumulate more than three (3) unexcused absences are considered “habitually truant.” In addition to the disciplinary consequences described in the QCHS Student Handbook, students may be placed on a “School Attendance Improvement Plan” (SAIP). The SAIP outlines additional consequences, including revocation of extracurricular activities and privileges.

EARLY DISMISSALS

What if my child needs to be dismissed early from school?

While services by licensed medical practitioners should ideally be scheduled after school, this is not always possible. Requests to leave school before dismissal should be presented to the office or attendance secretary as soon as possible. Requests may be a signed parental note or an appointment card from a licensed medical practitioner, both of which must indicate the departure time and an approximate time for returning to school (when appropriate). Students must check in with the office or attendance secretary when departing from or returning to school.

If a parent/guardian has not provided a note beforehand, such as in an emergency situation, the parent/guardian must sign the student out in the office. Please note that early dismissals will not be considered excused unless approved by administration and/or the school nurse.

TARDINESS/LATE TO SCHOOL

What if my child is tardy (late) to school?

Students who arrive to school after the official start time must check in with the office or attendance secretary in the Main Office. Parents of elementary students must enter with the student to sign excuse forms. The same rules apply for both absences and tardiness (for example, the need for parental notes and the differences between excused and unexcused). Additionally, students may be subject to disciplinary consequences as outlined in their school's student handbook.

EDUCATIONAL TRIPS

What if my child is going on a non-school sponsored educational trip?

In order for days out of school to be approved for family educational trips, the "Educational Trip Request Form" must be submitted to the building principal a minimum of 10 days prior to the trip. Please note that trips will not be approved during the first two weeks of school, in cases of excessive absences, during standardized testing windows, or if the child is in academic jeopardy.