Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents/guardians of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of religious holidays. The principal or designee of each school may excuse cases of necessary absence for other excusable causes not exceeding 7 day sessions or 14 half day sessions in any period of 6 months.

Parents/guardians will promptly notify the school of any absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible. Each school will establish the method by which parents/guardians shall notify the school in the event of absence or tardiness. If the absence is for a reason other than those reasons allowed under this policy or in the school handbook, then the absence will be considered “unexcused.”

ABSENCES DUE TO ILLNESS

In all events, and regardless of how many absences have occurred to date, students should stay home if:

- A temperature over 100°F. Please remember that Tylenol, Advil, etc. can mask the effects of a fever. Your child should be fever-free (without medication) for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea (unrelated to a known, non-communicable condition) within 24 hours before returning to school
- A severe cold with fever, sneezing, and thickened nasal discharge
- A cough that keeps a child awake at night, worsens with increased activity, or is combined with other symptoms
- A persistent red, sore throat, especially if the tonsils are enlarged
- A severe and persistent earache
- Redness in the whites of the eyes, yellow discharge, and matted lashes are symptoms of conjunctivitis (pinkeye). A doctor should be consulted, as this may be highly contagious.
- Rashes can be difficult to evaluate. If they are all over the body, blistery, oozing, or painful, they could be a sign of a contagious infection. Please check with your school nurse or your doctor before you send your child to school.

If you are unsure whether to send your child to school, please call your school nurse. If you are keeping your child home from school, please call and notify your school on the day of absence. In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician’s statement regarding the absences.

- Sharon High School Nurse: 781-784-1554, ext 8007
- Sharon Middle School Nurse: 781-784-1560, ext 6005
- Cottage Elementary School Nurse: 781-784-1580, ext 1010
- East Elementary School Nurse: 781-784-1551, ext 2010
- Height Elementary School Nurse: 781-784-1595 ext 3230
- The Children’s Center Nurse: 781-784-1594 ext 6604
HOME OR HOSPITAL TUTORING

Students who will be out of school for an extended or chronic illness may be eligible for home or hospital tutoring if the absence will extend beyond, or are reasonably expected to accrue to, fourteen days and the situation meets the home/hospital regulations. (603 CMR 28.03 (3) (c), 28.04 (4)).

MAKE-UP WORK

Students who have missed school or a class are expected to make up missed assignments, tests, and other school work. Students who know that they will miss school because of planned activities (including college visits, exchange trips, field trips, academic competitions, etc.) should notify the affected teachers in advance in order to make arrangements with the teacher for making up work and with classmates to take class notes and record assignments on their behalf.

EARLY DISMISSAL

No pupil will be dismissed from school before the close of the school day, except in case of illness or other emergency, unless the school receives a request from the parent/guardian. All cases of early dismissal will be recorded. Students may not leave the school building until the person receiving the student has been properly identified. No student may leave the school grounds without permission of the principal or his/her designee.

UNEXCUSED OR CHRONIC ABSENCES

An unexcused absence or tardy may include, but may not be limited to, repetitive or chronic absence or tardiness due to illness or injury not documented by a doctor or other medical professionals, truancy, family vacations, undocumented absences, and non-emergency family situations.

Parents and students are reminded that Massachusetts Law requires compulsory attendance for students. We strongly discourage family vacations when school is in session. In addition to compromising the attendance law, family vacations interrupt the educational process of each course in ways that make-up work cannot reverse. Teachers are not required to give out homework assignments prior to a family vacation.

Students’ understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of their character. Parents/guardians can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly.

Chronic absenteeism may lead to academic failure for the year and retention of the student.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE NOTIFICATION

Each school is required to notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence. Each school will use reasonable efforts to confirm all absences of children in grades K – 12 on the same day, if possible.

Each school will notify a student's parent/guardian if a student has at least 5 days in which the student has an unexcused absence for 2 or more periods. In such case, each Principal, by whatever title they may be known, or designee shall contact any student and that student's parent/guardian to develop action steps to improve student attendance. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.
Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact school staff and work collaboratively with them to correct the reasons that the student is missing school.

HABITUAL TRUANCY

Under state law, a student may be considered “habitually truant” for willfully accruing 8 unexcused absences in a quarter. In such case, school officials may file a CRA (Child Requiring Assistance) or a CHINS (Child in Need of Services) petition with the Juvenile Court which could result in a hearing before a Juvenile Court Judge. Prior to the filing of a CRA, Families and Students will be required to work with school administrators to improve the student’s attendance.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered to have permanently left public school unless an administrator of the school which the student last attended has sent notice within a period of 5 days from the student’s tenth consecutive absence to the student and the parent or guardian of that student in both the primary language of the parent or guardian, to the extent practicable, and English. The notice shall initially offer at least 2 dates and times for an exit interview between the superintendent, or a designee, and the student and the parent or guardian of the student to occur prior to the student permanently leaving school and shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview. The notice shall indicate that the parties shall agree upon a date and time for the exit interview, and that interview shall occur within 10 days after the sending of the notice. The time for the exit interview may be extended at the request of the parent or guardian and no extension shall be for longer than 14 days. The superintendent, or a designee, may proceed with any such interview without a parent or guardian if the superintendent, or a designee, makes a good faith effort to include the parent or guardian. The exit interview shall be for the purpose of discussing the reasons for the student permanently leaving school and to consider alternative education or other placements.

The superintendent or a designee shall convene a team of school personnel, such as the principal, guidance counselor, teachers, attendance officer and other relevant school staff, to participate in the exit interview with the student and the parent or guardian of the student. During the exit interview, the student shall be given information about the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school, the benefits of earning a high school diploma and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to a student who has completed the regular course of education, or apply to a student whose absences have been excused, nor shall this section be construed to permanently exclude a student who wishes to resume his education.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The School District is required to comply with state laws on school attendance. If there is a conflict between state law and this policy, then state law will prevail.

The School Committee directs the Superintendent to develop guidelines for the implementation of this policy and to publish these guidelines in the appropriate handbooks. These guidelines will include procedures to monitor student attendance, to communicate with parents/guardians about student attendance, and to intervene if a student has a pattern of poor attendance.

SOURCE: MASC October 2014

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 76:1; 76:1B; 76:16; 76:18; 76:20