

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

### I. PURPOSE

- A. St. Mary's School believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.
- B. This policy also recognizes that class attendance is a joint responsibility to be shared by the student, parent or guardian, teacher and administrators. This policy will assist students in attending class.
- C. Exceptions may be made for students with disabilities who are on IEPs or 504 plans.

### II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

#### A. Responsibilities.

##### 1. Student's Responsibility

It is the student's right to be in school. It is also the student's responsibility to attend all assigned classes every day that school is in session and to be aware of and follow the correct procedures when absent from an assigned class. Finally, it is the student's responsibility to request any missed assignments due to an absence.

##### 2. Parent or Guardian's Responsibility

It is the responsibility of the student's parent or guardian to ensure the student is attending school, to inform the school in the event of a student absence, and to work cooperatively with the school and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

##### 3. Teacher's Responsibility

It is the teacher's responsibility to take daily attendance and to maintain accurate attendance records in each assigned class. It is also the teacher's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance and to apply these procedures uniformly. It is also the teacher's responsibility to provide any student who has been absent with any missed assignments upon request. Finally, it is the teacher's responsibility to work cooperatively with the student's parent or guardian and the student to solve any attendance problems that may arise.

#### 4. Administrator's Responsibility

a. It is the administrator's responsibility to require students to attend all assigned classes. It is also the administrator's responsibility to be familiar with all procedures governing attendance, to apply these procedures uniformly to all students, and to maintain accurate records on student attendance and to prepare a list of the previous day's absences stating the status of each. Finally, it is the administrator's responsibility to inform the student's parent or guardian of the student's attendance and to work cooperatively with them and the student to solve attendance problems.

b. In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22, the students of the school are REQUIRED to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session, unless the student has been

excused by the Principal or Board of Education from attendance because the student has withdrawn, or has a valid excuse for absence.

B. Attendance Procedures.

Attendance procedures shall be presented to the Board of Education for review and approval. When approved by the St. Mary's Board of Education, the attendance procedures will be included as an addendum to this policy.

1. Excused Absences

- a. To be considered an excused absence, the student's parent or legal guardian may be asked to verify, in writing, the reason for the student's absence from school. A note from a physician or a licensed mental health professional stating that the student cannot attend school is a valid excuse.
- b. The following reasons shall be sufficient to constitute excused absences:
  - (1) Illness.
  - (2) Serious illness in the student's immediate family.
  - (3) A death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative.
  - (4) Medical, dental, or orthodontic treatment, or a counseling appointment.
  - (5) Court appearances occasioned by family or personal action.
  - (6) Religious instruction not to exceed three hours in any week.
  - (7) Physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc.
  - (8) Official school field trip or other school-sponsored outing.
  - (9) Family Vacations/essential work at home (not to exceed 5 days), if approved in advance by school administration – generally the school is notified three (3) days in advance so teachers are prepared and the student prepared for what he/she will miss.
  - (10) Removal of a student pursuant to a suspension. Suspensions are to be handled as excused absences and students will be permitted to complete make-up work.
  - (11) Family emergencies.
  - (12) Active duty in any military branch of the United States.
  - (13) A student's condition that requires ongoing treatment for a mental health diagnosis.
- c. Consequences of Excused Absences
  - (1) Students whose absences are excused are required to make up all assignments missed or to complete alternative assignments as deemed appropriate by the classroom teacher.
  - (2) Work missed because of absence must be made up within the number of days missed plus 2 days from the date of the student's return to school. Any work not completed within this period shall result in "no credit" for the missed assignment. However, the principal or the classroom teacher may extend the time allowed for completion of make-up work in the case of an extended illness or other extenuating circumstances.

## **\*\*Excessive Excused Absences for Illness or Other Reason**

When a student has accumulated eight (8) excused absences in a semester for illness, the school will require the student to bring in a signed note from a medical provider, on medical stationary indicating the reason for illness for each day or illness beyond eight (8). Failure to do so will result in those days being classified as an unexcused absence.

All other parent-excused absences for beyond eight (8) in a semester will be considered on a case by-case basis to allow for extenuating circumstances. However, St. Mary's School reserves the right to classify any parent-excused absence as an unexcused or truant. Any student with seven (7) or more unexcused absences will be referred to Stevens County Truancy Court as Habitually Truant. (See Section on Truancy, Truancy Reporting & Habitual Truancy)

### 2. Unexcused Absences

a. The following are examples of absences which will not be excused:

- (1) Truancy. An absence by a student which was not approved by the parent and/or the school district.
- (2) Any absence in which the student failed to comply with any reporting requirements of the school's attendance procedures.
- (3) Work at home.
- (4) Work at a business, except under a school-sponsored work release program.
- (5) Personal trips to schools or colleges.
- (6) Absences resulting from cumulated unexcused tardies (5 tardies equal one unexcused absence).
- (7) Any other absence not included under the attendance procedures set out in this policy.

b. Consequences of Unexcused Absences

- (1) Absences resulting from official suspension will be handled in accordance with the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act, Minnesota Statutes 121A.40-121A.56.
- (2) Days during which a student is suspended from school shall not be counted in a student's total cumulated unexcused absences.
- (3) In cases of recurring unexcused absences, the administration may also request the county attorney to file a petition with the juvenile court, pursuant to Minnesota statutes.

Students with unexcused absences without parent permission shall be subject to discipline in the following manner:

- (a) Grades K-6 student's parents will be contacted and if appropriate a meeting with the teacher, principal, and parents will be held.

C. Tardiness.

1. Definition: Students are expected to be in their assigned area at designated times. Failure to do so constitutes tardiness.
2. Procedures for Reporting Tardiness
  - a. Students tardy at the start of school must report to the school office for an admission slip.
  - b. Tardiness between periods will be handled by the teacher.
3. Excused Tardiness

Valid excuses for tardiness are:

  - a. illness;
  - b. serious illness in the student's immediate family;
  - c. a death or funeral in the student's immediate family or of a close friend or relative;
  - d. medical, dental, orthodontic, or mental health treatment;
  - e. court appearances occasioned by family or personal action;
  - f. physical emergency conditions such as fire, flood, storm, etc;
  - g. any tardiness for which the student has been excused in writing by an administrator or faculty member.
4. Unexcused Tardiness
  - a. An unexcused tardiness is failing to be in an assigned area at the designated time class period commences without a valid excuse.
  - b. At the elementary school, consequences of tardiness may include detention after five (5) unexcused tardies and again at each multiple of five. In addition, five unexcused tardies are equivalent to one unexcused absence.

**REQUIRED REPORTING**

A. Continuing Truant.

Minnesota Statutes section 260A.02 provides that a continuing truant is a student who is subject to the compulsory instruction requirements of Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22 and is absent from instruction in a school, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 120A.05, without valid excuse within a single school year for:

1. three days if the child is in elementary school;

B. Reporting Responsibility.

When a student is initially classified as a continuing truant, Minnesota Statutes section 260A.03 provides that the school attendance officer or other designated school official shall notify the student's parent or legal guardian, by first class mail or other reasonable means, of the following:

1. that the child is truant;
2. that the parent or guardian should notify the school if there is a valid excuse for the child's absences;
3. that the parent or guardian is obligated to compel the attendance of the child at school pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 120A.22 and parents or guardians who fail to meet this obligation may be subject to prosecution under Minnesota Statutes section 120A.34;
4. that this notification serves as the notification required by Minnesota Statutes section 120A.34;

5. that alternative educational programs and services may be available in the child's enrolling or resident district;
6. that the parent or guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the child's truancy;
7. that if the child continues to be truant, the parent and child may be subject to juvenile court proceedings under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260C;
8. that if the child is subject to juvenile court proceedings, the child may be subject to suspension, restriction, or delay of the child's driving privilege pursuant to Minnesota Statutes section 260C.201; and
9. that it is recommended that the parent or guardian accompany the child to school and attend classes with the child for one day.

C. Habitual Truant.

1. A habitual truant is a child under the age of 17 years who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for seven school days per school year if the child is in elementary school or for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year if the child is in middle school, junior high school, or high school, or a child who is 17 years of age who is absent from attendance at school without lawful excuse for one or more class periods on seven school days per school year and who has not lawfully withdrawn from school.
3. A school district attendance officer shall refer a habitual truant child and the child's parent or legal guardian to appropriate services and procedures, under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 260A.

**\*\*St. Mary's School will send a letter to parents after 3 unexcused absences, a second on 5 unexcused absences, and the final on the 7<sup>th</sup> along with reporting to human services.**

***Legal References:***

Minn. Stat. § 120A.05 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.22 (Compulsory Instruction)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.24 (Reporting)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.26 (Enforcement and Prosecution)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.34 (Violations; Penalties)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.35 (Absence from School For Religious Observance)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40 - 121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.02 (Definitions)  
Minn. Stat. § 260A.03 (Notice to Parent or Guardian When Child is Continuing Truant)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.007, subd. 19 (Habitual Truant Defined)  
Minn. Stat. § 260C.201 (Dispositions; Children in Need of Protection or Services or Neglected and in Foster Care)  
*Goss v. Lopez*, 419 U.S. 565 (1975)  
*Slocum v. Holton Bd. of Educ.*, 429 N.W.2d 607 (Mich. App. Ct. 1988)  
*Campbell v. Bd. of Educ. of New Milford*, 475 A.2d 289 (Conn. 1984)  
*Hamer v. Bd. of Educ. of Twp. High Sch. Dist. No. 113*, 66 Ill. App.3d 7, 383 N.E.2d 231 (1978)  
*Gutierrez v. Sch. Dist. R-1*, 585 P.2d 935 (Co. Ct. App. 1978)  
*Knight v. Bd. of Educ.*, 38 Ill. App. 3d 603, 348 N.E.2d 299 (1976)

*Dorsey v. Bale*, 521 S.W.2d 76 (Ky. 1975)

***Cross References:*** MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)