

School Engagement and Attendance

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How can Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) and the school community encourage school engagement and attendance?

FCPS is committed to providing stimulating curriculum in all subjects and believes that the adults in our students' lives have a role in ensuring that all students are connected, committed, and engaged in the learning process. Together, FCPS and the school community encourage:

- Supportive relationships with adults at home and at school.
- Challenging, interesting, and important school activities.
- Consistent enforcement of rules that meet student needs.
- Opportunities to work with peers.
- Opportunities for active learning.
- Expectations of success.
- Safe and fair learning environment.
- Reduction and elimination of physical problems, e.g., stress, medical issues.
- Achievement in school.

2. When should children stay home from school?

Students with symptoms such as rashes, watery and inflamed eyes, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea should stay home until a doctor evaluates their symptoms and determines whether or not they are contagious. The Fairfax County Department of Health recommends that children remain home fever-free for 24 hours after an illness prior to returning to school.

To limit the spread of illnesses, parents or guardians should provide specific information about the reason for the absence when notifying the school. If your child is ill, please be specific about a physician's diagnosis such as strep throat or pink eye. If your child has not seen a physician, please be specific about the symptoms your child is having such as fever, cough, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, or vomiting.

3. Other than for illness or medical appointments, for what other reasons may students be excused from school?

- Religious observances.
- Death in the immediate family.
- Prearranged college campus visits (juniors and seniors).
- School-sponsored field trips, sporting events, and competitions.
- Documented hardship reasons approved by the principal.

4. How do I prearrange an absence?

Parents or guardians should contact the school to request a prearranged absence form, ensuring that your student's teachers and the principal have advance notice of the absence. Students are responsible for making up assignments, quizzes, and tests missed while absent. Parents should review their child's school attendance policy regarding makeup work and tests.

5. When are absences unexcused?

Absences that occur because of childcare, work, or other family issues typically are not excused. Extended family trips during the school year typically are not excused. Families should plan their vacations for times when school is not in session. It is essential that patterns of absence, and the reasons for them, be addressed as early as possible.

6. Is regular attendance for kindergarten required?

In Virginia, once enrolled, school age students, age 5-18 years, are expected to attend school regularly. Kindergarten students are not exempt from this requirement.

7. If families are experiencing a hardship, such as potential loss of housing or employment, to whom at the school should they report the problem?

Contact the school principal or your student's counselor to discuss your situation.

8. When a student has significant medical or mental health concerns and is unable to attend school regularly because of treatment, what should parent(s) or guardian(s) do?

Parents or guardians may contact the school counselor or another member of the school team, such as the public health nurse, to discuss his or her child's medical treatment plan and related needs.

9. What happens when students are late to school?

Students are expected to report to the school office to receive a pass to go to class. He or she will need to explain why he or she is arriving late. The lateness will be recorded as excused or unexcused, depending upon the reason given. As the student begins class, he or she will be asked to participate in a class already in session. If lateness becomes a pattern for a specific student, a conference may be requested.

10. What happens to make-up work when students miss a significant amount of school?

Students and their parents or guardians should arrange to obtain make-up work when students have been absent. Students are responsible for completing the work and submitting it to his or her teachers. Teachers are not expected to re-teach material missed in class. Check with your individual school to learn more about the expectations for submission of assignments when students have been absent.

11. How can parents or guardians ensure that their children understand their responsibilities to be well prepared, timely, and engaged in learning?

Parents or guardians should encourage good study and sleep habits, reinforce school and home responsibilities, and support the school's learning opportunities. Parents or guardians should contact the school to learn ways to help their students if they are experiencing academic, social, or emotional challenges.

12. What is the attendance procedure decision process?

The Attendance Procedure Decision Process outlines what occurs from the teacher's recording of an absence through the consequences of incurring multiple absences. Details are available in the Attendance Procedure Decision Process Chart.

13. What are the Code of Virginia attendance requirements?

Parents or guardians are required to send their children to school from aged 5 years until the child is 18 years old. For more information, please view the attendance requirements.

14. What are the guidelines for attendance and truancy action?

The Attendance and Truancy Action Guidelines outline the process from initial parent or guardian contact of absences through truancy petitions. Parents can view guidelines online.