

## **Student Attendance**

It is the intention of this district to encourage regular attendance by offering incentives for good attendance and by assessing penalties for excessive absences.

**Mandatory Attendance:** All children who are ages five (5) through seventeen (17), on or by August 1st, are required to begin school that school year with the exception of five-year-old children for whom kindergarten has been waived by the parent, guardian, or person having custody or charge; students who have received a high school diploma or its equivalent; or students who are enrolled in a post-secondary vocational-technical institution, a community college, or a two-year or four-year institution of higher education.

## **Absences**

Students should not be absent more than ~~8~~ <sup>10</sup> days in a semester. When a student has ~~4~~ <sup>5</sup> absences, his/her parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis shall be notified that the student has missed half the allowable days for the semester. Whenever a student exceeds ~~8~~ <sup>10</sup> absences in a semester, the District shall notify the prosecuting authority and the parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty as prescribed by law.

Students with ~~9~~ <sup>11</sup> absences in a course in a semester may not receive credit for that course. If the student fails to receive credit for a sufficient number of courses and at the discretion of the principal after consultation with persons having knowledge of the circumstances of the absences, the student may be denied promotion or graduation. Excessive absences, however, shall not be a reason for expulsion or dismissal of a student.

In accordance with Ark. Code Ann. §§ 6-18-201 et seq. and 6-20-2303 an absence will be defined as follows.

A student is absent if the student is not:

1. present for onsite instruction provided by the district,
2. participating in a planned district-approved activity, or
3. engaged in scheduled instruction at an off-site location, including remote learning.

It is the Arkansas General Assembly's intention that students having excessive absences due to illness, accident, or other unavoidable reason be given assistance in obtaining credit for their courses. Therefore, at any time prior to when a student exceeds the number of allowable absences (unless unable to do so due to unforeseen circumstances), the student, or his/her parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis may petition the school or district's administration for special arrangements to address the student's absences.

**If any student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan conflicts with this policy, the requirements of the student's IEP or 504 Plan take precedence.**

## **Additional Absences**

Additional absences that are not charged against the allowable number of absences are those where the student was on official school business or when the absence was due to one of the following reasons and the student brings a written statement upon his/her return to school from

the parent, guardian, person in loco parentis, or appropriate government agency stating such reason:

1. To participate in any school-sponsored activity;
2. To participate in the election poll workers program for high school students;
3. To serve as a page for a member of the General Assembly;
4. To visit his/her parent or legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is on leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone, or combat support posting;
5. For purposes pre-approved by the school administration such as visiting prospective colleges, to obey a subpoena, or to attend at an appointment with a government agency;

The District shall notify the Department of Finance and Administration whenever a student fourteen (14) years of age or older is no longer in school. The Department of Finance and Administration is required to suspend the former student's operator's license unless he/she meets certain requirements specified in the code.

**Excused Absences:** Excused absences are defined as follows:

1. Personal illness of the student (in cases of excessive absenteeism due to illness, the school administration may require written documentation from a physician concerning the circumstances of the absence).
2. Death in the immediate or extended family.
3. Observance of recognized holidays observed by their faith.
4. Medical/legal appointments.
5. Attendance at an appointment with a government agency.
6. College visits by seniors (limited to 2) will be counted as SE (school event absence) provided they bring back the proper documentation showing that they were at college or on a job interview. Failure to provide documentation will result in an unexcused absence. Students are expected to provide a two-day in advance written notice of their intent to the office and teachers. Failure to provide notice will result in absences that will count toward the ten (10) day limit.
7. Any extenuating circumstances which the Attendance Committee determines to justify an excused absence but are not covered above.
8. Driver's license test. (for the 1<sup>st</sup> attempt only)
9. Approved school or 4 H activities.
10. Participation in the Election Poll Workers program for high school students.
11. Absences for students excluded from school by the Arkansas Department of Health during a disease outbreak because the student has an immunization waiver or whose immunizations are not up to date.
12. Absences for a student who is the child of a fallen service member or fallen first responder:
  - Due to a mental health concern; or
  - To attend an event from a sponsoring organization that provides support to families of fallen service members or first responders or provides support for traumatic loss, grief, or resiliency.
13. Upon the written consent of a student's parent, legal guardian, person having lawful control of the student, or person standing in loco parentis to the student, the District shall grant an excused absence for the following purposes:
  - Social or public policy advocacy; or

- Attempts to influence legislation or other governmental policy-making at the local, state, or federal level.

Additional excused absences shall be granted to allow a student to visit his/her parent or legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is on leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. The number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the principal.

**Unexcused Absences:** Any absence that is not otherwise specified as excused is an unexcused absence.

\*The Attendance Committee will review all absences of students that are required to meet before the committee and make a valid assessment of those days that are legitimately excused and those that are unexcused.

### **Returning to School:**

Upon returning to school, proper documentation must be presented as follows: a doctor's statement, a note from a custodial parent or guardian, documentation of a court appearance, documentation of death in the family, or documentation of religious observance. **Ozark Mountain School District will accept a note from a parent to the school office documenting illness without referral to the Attendance Committee. Only three (3) days per semester may be excused with a note from a parent documenting illness.**

\*\*Per Board Policy students have two (2) days to turn in doctor's note for excused absence. If not turned in to the office by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day the absence will be changed to unexcused.

It is the student's responsibility to arrange to make up classroom work missed, including tests, in consultation with the individual classroom teacher. Work may be made up at a rate of one day of makeup for each day

### **Penalties for Excessive Unexcused Absences**

1. The student's parent/guardian shall be notified as required by law and as necessary. As a minimum this notification shall occur when the student has accumulated four (4) ~~five (5)~~ or more unexcused absences per semester.
2. After four (4) ~~five (5)~~ unexcused absences per semester, parents/guarding will be contacted by phone or mail explaining any further absences could subject your child to lose credit in a particular class and/or petition filed with the prosecuting attorney.
3. After the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) ~~tenth (10<sup>th</sup>)~~ unexcused absence, a petition will be filed with the prosecuting attorney to take whatever action is necessary to improve student attendance which could lead to a penalty of \$500.
4. After the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) ~~tenth (10<sup>th</sup>)~~ unexcused absence, in three or more of the core class periods, students in grades 7 and 8 may be denied promotion. Students must remain in the class in which promotion will be denied and do the assigned work for the remainder of the semester.
5. After the eighth (8<sup>th</sup>) ~~tenth (10<sup>th</sup>)~~ unexcused absence, students in grades 9-12 may be denied credit in those courses and the student may receive an "NC" on their transcript for the course grade. Students must remain in the class in which credit will be denied and do the assigned work

for the remainder of the semester. Days missed due to in-school or out-of-school suspension shall not count toward the allowable number of days absent.

**NOTE—ISS does not count as an unexcused absence, but OSS does.**

### **Appeal Procedure:**

This action may be appealed to the Attendance Committee if the parent can provide information substantiating that the absences were due to personal illness, serious personal or family emergency or professional appointments that could not be scheduled after school.

The parent and student must request to appear before the Attendance Committee within five (5) school days and show that the absences were for the reasons listed as excused absences.

### **Attendance Committee:**

The Attendance Committee will be composed of the principal and two (2) faculty members.

The duty of the Attendance Committee will be to review all absences of students that are required to appear before them and make a valid assessment of those days that are excused and those that are unexcused.

### **Operation Stay-in-School**

As authorized by State Law, Act 867 of 1989, the Stay-in-School Program authorizes school districts to enter into cooperative agreements with law enforcement officials to implement a stay-in-school program. The program provides that law enforcement officials may attempt to locate and detain students who are off school premises during school hours but who should be in school, or to transport to his/her parents, or to a truancy reception center which has been designated by the school district.

Each school district must notify the Department of Finance and Administration whenever a student is 14 years or older and is no longer in school. (Ark. Cod Ann. 6-18-222, as amended by Act 572)

The Department of Finance and Administration shall notify the student that his/her motor vehicle operator's permit will be suspended unless the student requests a hearing within thirty (30) days. The license may be retained if the student can provide evidence of:

1. Reaching the age of eighteen (18).
2. School attendance.
3. Obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent.

*The Department of Finance and Administration may grant hardship exceptions.*

### **Tardy Policy**

Whether at school or work, it is important for the students to be on time. Constantly being late or tardy is a bad habit, is inconsiderate of others, and is a waste of valuable time. It is important to be on time to get the maximum benefit from their classes and for teachers to be able to conduct classes effectively and efficiently. Persistent tardiness will result in disciplinary action.

At the high school level, tardy #3 will be counted as an absence for test exemption purposes.

### **Truancy Policy**

Truancy is defined as the following: (1) not attending school after leaving home to do so, (2) leaving school without permission from the office, (3) not attending a class the student is enrolled in without a legitimate pass to do so, and (4) leaving class without permission. Students and their parents/guardians hold the main responsibility for school attendance. The School Board asks for the cooperation of both the student and parent/guardians in these matters so that the student can receive the best education possible. Any student who fails to follow all or any part of the assigned schedule, whether the student is on or off campus, without checking out at the office, will be considered truant, and the student will not receive credit for the time truant.