

PELHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY
JH - STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ABSENTEEISM, AND TRUANCY

Category: Priority

Absences

The Board requires that school-aged children (age 6 years and under 18 as defined in RSA 193:1) enrolled in the District attend school in accordance with all applicable state laws and Board policies. The educational program offered by the District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation in order for students to achieve academic standards and consistent educational progress.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled in the District during the days and hours that school is in session. The Board recognizes that absences from school may be necessary at times. For that reason, the Board recognizes two types of absences from school: excused and unexcused absences.

Attendance Monitoring and Accounting

Each school principal is responsible for overseeing attendance procedures and ensuring that:

1. Attendance is accurately checked and reported to the school office daily for each class.
2. All student absences are recorded.

The Superintendent will ensure the maintenance of all permanent records of student attendance through the SAU office.

The Board considers the following to be excused absences:

1. Illness or injury covered by doctor note or parent notice
2. School sponsored or mandated absence
3. Required court attendance
4. Medical and dental appointments
5. Death in the family or close family friend
6. Observation or celebration of a religious holiday
7. Planned extended absences (i.e. college visits, etc.)
8. Absences approved by the Superintendent under RSA 193:1, 1(c)
9. Absences as a result of waivers from the Superintendent for alternative learning plans under RSA 193:1.1(h)

Any absence that has not been excused for any of these reasons will be considered an unexcused absence.

In the event of an illness, parents must call the school and inform the District through established protocols in each building, of the student's illness and absence. For other absences, parents must provide notice that states one of these reasons for non-attendance. Once a student exceeds ten half days of verified absences, the Principal may require parents to provide additional documentation in support of their written notice, including but not limited to doctor's notes, court documents, obituaries, or other documents supporting the claimed reason for non-attendance. The Principal's decision is final.

A parent seeking to have their child absent for a reason that is not otherwise excused may file a written request with the Principal that specifies why the student will be absent and for how long.

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The Principal will make a determination as to whether the stated reason for the student's absence constitutes sufficient reason for granting an exception to the Policy. The Principal will notify the parents of his/her decision. If the Principal determines that an exception to the Policy is not warranted, the parents may request a conference with the Principal to request that the Principal reconsider his/her initial determination.

Family Vacations/Educational Opportunities

Generally, absences other than for illness during the school year are discouraged. The school principal or his/her designee may, however, grant special approval of absence for family vacations, provided written approval is given in advance. After receiving approval from the Principal, parents are asked to write a note to their child's teacher at least two weeks before the trip. This advance planning will allow the teacher enough time to work with parents and the student regarding homework completion.

Building Principals are responsible for developing Student Handbooks, which will include rules based on this Policy regarding student absences, excuses and truancy. These rules will apply to all students.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as any unexcused absence from class or school. Any absence that has not been excused for any of the reasons listed above will be considered an unexcused absence.

Ten half-days of unexcused absence during a school year constitute habitual truancy.

Under New Hampshire law, habitual truancy is a ground for filing a CHINS petition in the local district court.

A half-day absence is defined as a student missing more than two hours of instructional time and less than three and one-half hours of instructional time.

Any absence of more than three and one-half hours of instructional time shall be considered a full-day absence.

The Principal and/or Administrator's designee is hereby designated as the District employee responsible for overseeing truancy issues.

Intervention Process to Address Truancy

The Principal or Administrative designee shall ensure that the administrative guidelines on attendance properly address the matter of truancy by including a process that identifies students who are habitually truant as quickly as possible.

When the Principal or Administrative designee identifies a student who is habitually truant or who is in danger of becoming habitually truant, he/she shall commence an intervention with the student, the student's parents, and other staff members as may be deemed necessary. The intervention shall include processes including, but not limited to:

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1. Investigating the cause(s) of the student's truant behavior;
2. Considering, when appropriate, modification of his/her educational program to meet particular needs that may be causing the truancy;
3. Involving the parents in the development of a plan designed to encourage regular attendance and reduce the truancy;
4. Seeking alternative disciplinary measures, but still retains the right to impose discipline in accordance with the District's policies and administrative guidelines on student discipline; and
5. Determination as to whether school record keeping practices and parental notification of the student's absences have an effect on the child's attendance.

Parental Involvement in Truancy Intervention

When a student reaches habitual truancy status or is in danger of reaching habitual truancy status, the Principal will send the student's parent a letter which includes:

1. A statement that the student has become or is in danger of becoming habitually truant;
2. A statement of the parent's responsibility to ensure that the student attends school; and
3. A request for a meeting between the parents and the Principal to discuss the student's truancy and to develop a plan for encouraging regular attendance and reducing the student's truancy.

Developing and Coordinating Strategies for Truancy Reduction

The Board encourages the administration to seek truancy-prevention and truancy-reduction strategies along the recommendations listed below. However, these guidelines shall be advisory only. The Superintendent is authorized to develop and utilize other means, guidelines and programs aimed at preventing and reducing truancy.

1. Coordinate truancy-prevention strategies based on the early identification of truancy, such as prompt notification of absences to parents.
2. Assist school staff to develop site attendance plans by providing development strategies, resources, and referral procedures.
3. Encourage and coordinate the adoption of attendance-incentive programs at school sites and in individual classrooms that reward and celebrate good attendance and significant improvements in attendance.

Distribution

The Superintendent shall ensure that this policy is included in or referenced in the student handbook.

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District Policy History:

Adopted: July 1998

Revised: June 28, 2017

Revised: February 22, 2023

Legal References:

RSA 189:34, Appointment

RSA 189:35-a, Truancy Defined

RSA 193:1, Duty of Parent; Compulsory Attendance by Pupil RSA
193:7 Penalty

RSA 193:8, Notice Requirements

RSA 193:16 Bylaws as to Nonattendance

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 (a)(1), Attendance and Absenteeism

NH Code of Administrative Rules, Section Ed 306.04 ©, Policy Relative to Attendance and
Absenteeism