



RATIONALE

Regular and punctual attendance supports student learning, achievement, engagement, and connection to the school community. At Mt. Sentinel Secondary, we believe attendance is a shared responsibility among students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and school staff.

Every class provides important opportunities for learning, collaboration, skill development, and connection. When students miss class, they may miss learning that can be difficult to fully make up.

We recognize that absences occur for many reasons. Occasional absences due to illness, appointments, family circumstances, or other legitimate reasons are expected. Students who are sick should remain home to rest and recover and to help prevent the spread of illness.

SUPPORTING ATTENDANCE

Attendance concerns are not defined solely by whether an absence is excused or unexcused. A pattern of absences, regardless of the reason, may affect a student's learning and engagement.

When attendance begins to interfere with learning, school staff will work collaboratively with students and parents/caregivers to understand the circumstances and identify appropriate supports.

Factors that can support regular attendance include:

- Safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environments
- Strong family and school relationships
- A sense of belonging and connection
- Positive relationships with peers and caring adults
- Engagement in learning, clubs, and co-curricular activities
- Access to appropriate academic, health, and wellbeing supports
- Addressing barriers such as transportation, housing, food security, and other essential needs

Our goal is to **support students in attending school consistently and successfully**, while recognizing and responding to the individual circumstances that may affect attendance.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Students are expected to attend regularly and punctually, participate in their learning, and communicate with their teachers when they are absent.

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to support regular attendance, communicate absences to the school, and work with school staff when attendance concerns arise.

Teachers and school staff are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records, identifying emerging attendance concerns, communicating with families, and working collaboratively to support student success.

REFERENCES

Attendance requirements and responsibilities are established under the **BC School Act** and **School Act Regulation**, including:

- School Act, Section 2 – Access to Educational Programs
- School Act, Section 6 – Duties of Students
- School Act, Section 94 – Provision of Educational Programs
- School Act Regulation, Section 4(1)(c) and (f) – Duties of Teachers
- School Act Regulation, Section 5(8) – Duties and Powers of Administrative Officers

ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE**Important Terminology**

In accordance with district and school policy, all absences require notification from a parent/caregiver. Absences are classified as *excused*, *unexcused* or *truant*.

Excused

Parent/caregiver must contact the office, with a phone call, email, online reporting tool, or note, for the absence to be excused. Excused absences include:

- Illness
- Health appointments that CAN NOT be made outside of class time
- Travel to medical appointments outside the area (eg: Kelowna, Calgary, Vancouver, etc.)
- Emergency family situations
- Observance of religious holiday
- School-sponsored activities (eg. Field trips, sporting events)
- Community-sponsored activities agreed to by the administration (eg. Cadets, hockey tournaments)

Unexcused

Absences for personal reasons with parental permission, or absences that do not have an educational focus including hair appointments, shopping excursions, family vacations, etc. Please discuss with administration if you are unsure if the absence fits into this category.

Truant or “skipping”

This is generally defined as when a student is expected to be at school but does not arrive to school or if the student is at school but does not attend class.

Chronic absenteeism

This is generally defined as missing ten percent or more of a school year, including excused and unexcused absences – which results in approximately 18 days a year, or about two days every month.

Procedures and Responsibilities:

The following outlines how student attendance is reported and recorded.

Reporting Student Absences	• The student's parent/caregiver must notify the school and report the reason for the absence. The school can be contacted by phone (250-359-7219), online reporting tool, email at clerical.mss2@sd8.bc.ca, or with a note signed by the parent/guardian brought by the student on the day they return. • teachers submit attendance within 15 minutes of the start of each class • an automated message will be texted/emailed to parents/caregivers from the office for each class absence
Arriving to school and/or class late	Students are expected to be in class on time. When the bell rings, students should proceed to their scheduled class. A tone will ring three minutes following the bell to signal the start of class to the teacher. Late arrival creates a disruption to the educational process in the classroom and learning time is lost. When a student is late: • if arriving within 15 minutes after the warning bell for class; teachers will update attendance from absent to late. • if arriving 15 minutes after the warning bell for class, check in at the office to obtain a late slip • students arriving at or after the halfway point of the class will be considered absent regarding attendance • showing up for class only for attendance purposes, but absent from class for the learning portion, is considered functionally absent and will be recorded as an unexcused absence in the attendance system
Leaving class early	• discuss with classroom teacher in advance – determine what learning will be missed • consent of parent/caregiver is required prior to student leaving the building • students sign out at the office by presenting written notification, having the parent sign out the student at the main office, or by the parent making direct contact with the office secretary. Text messages are not permitted.
Participation in extracurricular activities	• students are not permitted to participate in extracurricular activities unless they have attended school the day of the activity • exceptions to this policy include, but not limited to, doctor/dentist appointments
Prior arrangement for extended absences (planned or unplanned)	• Students are required to complete a "prior arrangement form" available through the office or our website. • parent/guardian contacts the school to arrange for a homework package to be provided by classroom teachers.

Response to Attendance Patterns that Interfere with Learning

Students are responsible for all learning, assignments, tests and other demonstrations of learning missed due to an absence or late arrival. They should plan to complete the missed material within a day or two of returning to school.

Managing Late:**Stage 1 Response: Teacher Follow Up with Student**

When a pattern of lateness begins to emerge, the teacher will address the concern directly with the student. The teacher will seek to understand the reasons for the lateness, clarify expectations, and work collaboratively with the student to identify strategies that may improve punctuality.

Where appropriate, the teacher may use restorative or other supportive interventions to address the concern and encourage improved attendance and punctuality.

Stage 2 Response: Parent/Caregiver and School Communication

When lateness continues or becomes a significant pattern, the teacher will contact the parent/caregiver to share the concern, invite their support, and work together to identify strategies to improve the student's punctuality.

The teacher will maintain appropriate communication and feedback with home and advise school administration of the concern and the interventions that have been attempted.

Stage 3 Response: School Based Support

When a pattern of lateness persists despite classroom based interventions and collaboration with the student and parent/caregiver, the teacher will seek additional support from the school based team. This may include a referral to the full School Based Team (SBT) or consultation with individual members of the team, depending on the nature of the concern and the support required.

Next steps may include a student support meeting involving the student, parent/caregiver, teachers, and/or appropriate school based staff. The team will work collaboratively to identify barriers to punctuality, determine appropriate supports, and establish a plan for monitoring and follow-up.

Managing Absence:**Stage 1 Response: Teacher Communication With Student and Home**

When a student misses 3 classes (outside of illness) the teacher will communicate with the student and will contact home to communicate with the parent/caregiver to bring the concern to their attention. The teacher will seek to understand the circumstances contributing to the absences, clarify the importance of regular attendance, and identify strategies that may support improved attendance and engagement. The teacher will also identify missed work that requires completion.

Stage 2 Response: Collaborative Attendance Meeting

When concerns about attendance continue beyond 5 absences (outside of illness), the student and their parent/caregiver will be invited to meet with the teacher and appropriate school staff to discuss the attendance pattern, identify barriers, and determine appropriate support. School administrative will be informed if not part of the meeting.

Stage 3 Response: Enhanced Support Planning

After a student misses more than 10 classes, all parties will meet again, including school administration, to discuss possible pathways to success which may include additional support beyond the school, tiered interventions, or an adjustment in their timetable or courses. School administration may also discuss the potential of a referral to the District Based Team.

If the parent/guardian is not able to attend the meeting(s), they will be informed of the outcome and any decisions made via email.

The work we do as educators is in partnership and communication with parents/caregivers to support our students to thrive in a caring learning environment. The goal of this attendance policy is to cultivate a culture of engagement in learning by increasing and supporting consistent attendance patterns.