



# **Manheim Township School District Attendance Guide**

*The Mission of the Manheim Township School District:  
Nurture and Challenge for Success*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Manheim Township District is committed to working with our students and families to create a structure and environment that supports regular attendance for all students. We value our district families and are committed to ensuring that all students receive the same high-quality education. To obtain the best education possible, students must be present in school. Regular attendance at school is an integral part of every student's success and is necessary to gain the greatest benefit from the educational experience.

The Manheim Township School District supports good attendance habits and adheres to the requirements established by the State of Pennsylvania to assist students in their development. Policies and procedures have been developed to serve as a guide as the school district works with our children and parents/guardians to achieve the goal of good attendance. This guide was compiled to assist district parents/guardians and students in understanding State Law and District Policy regarding attendance and truancy.

## **PENNSYLVANIA COMPULSORY EDUCATION LAW**

Effective in 2020-2021, all children from the age of six (6) through the age of eighteen (18) must comply with compulsory school attendance requirements. To meet these requirements, parents must ensure that their child between the ages of 6 and 18 is attending or participating in one of the following: a public elementary, middle, or high school; a public charter or cyber-charter school; a private licensed academic or private religious school; home tutoring by a certified teacher; or an approved program of homeschooling. Children may be excused from compulsory attendance for documented medical reasons or other compelling reasons as outlined in District attendance policy and procedures.

## **ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance at school is an essential part of every student's success and is necessary to gain the greatest benefit from the educational experience. Students who are frequently absent from school miss direct instruction and regular contact with their teachers. When a student is absent from school due to illness or family emergency, it is the expectation of the parent or guardian to notify the school in writing (excuse card or note authored by parent/guardian). Every absence and tardy is entered on the student's permanent record. Regular attendance affects scholastic performance and academic standing.

## **FLEXIBLE INSTRUCTIONAL DAYS**

If a student does not complete and submit all of their assigned work during a FID, or within the first two days after returning to school from the FID, they will be charged with (a) a "tardy-unexcused", (b) a "half day absence", or (c) a "full day absence" for the FID. A "half day

absence” or a “tardy-unexcused” absence will be recorded if work is only submitted in some (instead of all) of the student’s assigned courses. Such absences will require a signed parent note detailing the reason for the student’s absence. As per the district’s attendance procedures, the lack of a signed parent note after three school days will result in the absence being coded as an “Unlawful Absence.” Students may receive a zero on any assignments that are not submitted.

## EXCUSES

Students who are absent, arrive late, or leave early, are required to provide a written excuse signed by the parent or guardian. The date and reason for the absence, tardy, or early dismissal should be clearly indicated on either the Sapphire portal, a school excuse card, or home stationery. All written excuses are to be turned in to the office on the day of an early dismissal or when the student returns to school after an absence. After the third day of absence with no excuse card or note from home or a treating physician, the absence or tardy will be considered unlawful and will be marked as such on the report card and the student’s permanent record. Any time a student visits a medical provider, a letter from the provider is necessary to excuse the absence. The letter must confirm that the student was seen by the provider or is a patient of the practice.

Emails or other electronic formats (outside of Sapphire) will not be permissible.

*Absence Excuse forms are available on the district website under ‘Attendance’ or at your school’s office.*

*Four (4) approved methods for submitting a parent-excused absence:*

- 1. Sapphire Portal*
- 2. Picture of a handwritten note uploaded to Sapphire*
- 3. School Excuse Card submitted to the main office*
- 4. Home stationery note submitted to the main office*

The Board considers the following conditions to constitute reasonable cause for absence from school:

1. Illness
2. Obtaining professional health care or therapy service rendered by a licensed practitioner of the healing arts in any state, commonwealth or territory.
3. Quarantine
4. Family Emergency
5. Recovery from accident
6. Required court attendance
7. Death in family

8. Participation in a project sponsored by a statewide or county 4-H, FFA, or combined 4H and FFA group, upon prior written request
9. Participation in a musical performance in conjunction with a national veterans' organization or incorporated unit, as defined in law, for an event or funeral.
  - a. The national veterans' organization or incorporated unit must provide the student with a signed excuse, which shall include the date, location, and time of the event or funeral.
  - b. The student shall furnish the signed excuse to the district prior to being excused from school.
10. Observation of a religious holiday observed by a bona fide religious group, upon prior written request from the parent or guardian.
11. Nonschool-sponsored educational tours or trips, if the following conditions are met:
  - a. The parent or guardian submits the required documentation for excusal prior to the absence, within the appropriate time frame.
  - b. The student's participation has been approved by the Superintendent or designee.
  - c. The adult directing and supervising the tour or trip is acceptable to the person in parental relation and the Superintendent.
12. College or post-secondary institution visit, with prior approval
13. Other urgent reasons that may reasonably cause a student's absence as well as circumstances related to homelessness and foster care.

The district may limit the number and duration of nonschool-sponsored educational tours and trips (ETTs) and college postsecondary institution visits for which excused absences may be granted to a student during a school year.

Parents/Guardians Notifying the School: Absences shall be treated as **unexcused** until the district receives a written excuse explaining the absence, to be submitted within three (3) days of the absence.

A maximum of ten (10) days of cumulative, lawful absences verified by parental notification shall be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten (10) cumulative days, shall require an excuse form from a licensed practitioner of the healing arts.

## **UNLAWFUL AND UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

Absences that do not meet the criteria indicated above shall be permanently considered unexcused.

An out-of-school suspension shall not be considered an unexcused absence.

School Notification of Parent/Guardian: The district staff will provide prompt notice to the parent or guardian for each incident of unexcused absence.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS**

When a student has been absent for three (3) days during the current school year without a lawful excuse, the school administration will provide notice to the parent or guardian within ten (10) school days of the student's third unexcused absence.

Pursuant to the BEC 24 P.S 13-1327, public schools must notify parents/guardians regarding the need for a family conference upon the third unlawful student absence. The Manheim Township School District offers a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP) to help guide the school and family on the path to the elimination of truancy. A cooperative school attendance improvement conference is scheduled to engage participants involved in the student's life to explore possible solutions to increase the student's attendance. We anticipate that maintaining open communication between the student and the adults in the student's life will facilitate positive outcomes. Causes of truancy and identifying, understanding, and exploring all issues are used to develop a mutually agreed-upon plan to assure regular school attendance is achieved..

For students eligible under the Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA), such as a special education student, all attendance issues should be discussed and resolved with the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) team. While the SAIP form and format may be followed to aid discussion, all attendance improvement-related solutions should be made by the IEP team members and noted in the IEP.

If a child suffers from a long-term medical ailment that interferes with regular attendance, please contact your school's attendance secretary or nurse to discuss possible alternative solutions.

## **EARLY DISMISSAL**

Any student who becomes ill at school must report to the nurse's office. The school nurse will contact the parent/guardian to make arrangements for the student to leave school. At no time may students leave the building without permission from the office. Students who leave school for early dismissal must present an excuse, signed by a parent/guardian, to the office stating the time and reason for dismissal.

Appointments at doctor's offices, Department of Motor Vehicles, Social Security, etc., are excused only if, upon the student's return, a doctor's note or dated documentation is submitted.

*Absence Excuse forms are available on the district website under 'Attendance' or at your school's office.*

## **HOMELESS STUDENTS - McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

### **MTSD Homeless Students -[Board Policy# 251](#)**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires states and schools to work to remove barriers to the education of homeless children and youth, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to absences. Compulsory attendance laws can be such barriers, particularly when they result in court involvement. Students in homeless situations may miss school due to their living situations. Social Worker/Home & School Visitor will determine if the absence of a displaced student meets criteria to be excused.

## **AUTOMATED ATTENDANCE NOTIFICATION TO PARENT**

If you receive an automated phone notification that your child is not in school, but should be, please call your school office as soon as possible so that we can properly account for your child.

## **FAMILY EDUCATIONAL TRIP AND EDUCATIONAL TRIPS OR TOURS (ETT)**

Parents are urged to schedule educational trips or tours during days when school is not in session. Classroom work and interactions are important, even in the lower grades in order to stay on grade level. Requests must demonstrate that the trip will provide an opportunity for the student's educational enrichment under the direction and supervision of an adult acceptable to the parents/guardians and the Superintendent. A trip may be considered an educational experience if it broadens the student's understanding of social, cultural or geographic values and concepts.

Educational trips or tours and Family educational trips require a request form to be submitted at least two (2) school days in advance of the first day of the requested trip and are limited to a cumulative total of five (5) days per school year. The forms are available online or at your school's office. Any trip or tour days taken in excess of the five (5) cumulative days will be coded as unlawful absences.

## **ANTICIPATED ABSENCES**

Whenever an anticipated absence will occur, it is important that parents communicate with their school's office as soon as possible. The school will direct parents of completing required forms, notes or proof of an event based upon the reason for the absence.

## **PROCEDURES WHEN A CHILD IS TRUANT**

State law defines truancy as when a student has incurred three (3) or more school days of unexcused absences during the school year by a child subject to compulsory school attendance. Habitual truancy shall mean when that child has six (6) or more unexcused absences during that school year.



When a student has one (1) unlawful absence, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians informing them of the absence. When a student has a second (2nd) unlawful absence, another letter will be sent to the parent.

After a third (3rd) unlawful absence, a letter will be sent informing the parent that the student is now truant and a School Attendance Improvement Conference will be scheduled (Note “SAIP” heading below). The letter will invite the parent to participate with the school team to determine the causes of the student’s absences and to develop plans to improve the student’s future attendance and educational success.

The letter also defines the consequences if the student becomes habitually truant. Once a student has accrued six (6) unexcused absences, the school must refer the parent/guardian and child to a school (or community) based attendance improvement program. Manheim Township School District will recommend that the family contact a local family services agency in order to register for their “Parenting Wisely” Program.

## **TARDY TO SCHOOL**

Tardiness is defined as arriving late to a student’s homeroom or class. Tardiness can have a significant impact on the learning process.

Students who arrive late shall present an excuse signed by a parent or guardian to the office stating the reason for the late arrival. Elementary students arriving at school after the start of school must be signed in at the office by a parent/guardian.

Students with excessive unexcused tardies may receive school consequences. All students entering the building after the start of school must use the designated front entrance. In accordance with the district's security policy, all other entrances are locked. Students need to follow the specific late arrival policies explained in building handbooks. Excessive student tardiness is defined within this document (below).

Transportation problems will not be excused unless there is a problem with district-provided transportation.

Students must be in their building by the start time of the school day. Below are the starting and ending times for each building in the district.

- Elementary (Grades K-4) - 9:00 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.
- Landis Run Intermediate School (Grades 5-6) - 8:10 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
- Middle School (Grades 7-8) - 7:25 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
- High School (Grades 9-12) - 7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

## **Manheim Township High School**

After a student has accumulated five (5) instances of unexcused tardies to school, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians indicating the tardy dates. Upon every 10th unexcused tardy, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians. School administration, under the direction of state code, will make the final determination on whether a tardy will be considered excused or unexcused.

Consequences for tardy to school are as follows:

- After the first 5 instances: Personal conference between student and grade level principal
- After the 2nd notification (10 unexcused tardies): Opportunity to Improve (OTI) [Lunchtime Intervention Program]
- After the 3rd notification (20 unexcused tardies): One (1) Administrative Detention (After School Detention); Referral to District Attendance Officer/District Social Worker
- After the 4th notification (30+ unexcused tardies): Depending on the conditions of the additional tardies, the following consequences may be assigned at the administration's discretion:
  - Administrative Detentions
  - In School Suspension (ISS)
  - Referral to county agencies
  - Referral to District Magistrate
  - Loss of Privileges which may include:
    - Parking privileges
    - Participation in Extracurricular Events/Programs (Sporting Events, Dances, Special Events, etc.)
    - Late Arrival/Early Release

Note: Tardiness for reasons such as oversleeping, missing the bus, and car troubles are not excused tardies.

Students are expected to be in their assigned first-period class at the start of the school day. Tardiness is excused in cases of illness, doctor appointments, bus delays, or extreme emergencies as determined by the building principal, and shall be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian. Failure to submit a tardy excuse signed by a parent/guardian within three (3) days of the tardy will result in the recording of an unexcused tardy for that day.

## **Manheim Township Middle School**

After the student has accumulated five (5) instances of unexcused tardies to school, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians confirming the dates. Upon every 10th unexcused tardy, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians. School administration, under the direction of state code, will make the final determination on whether a tardy will be considered excused or unexcused.

Consequences for tardy to school are as follows:

- After the first 5 instances: Personal conference between student and grade level principal and parent communication
- After the 2nd notification (10 unexcused tardies): Lunch Detention
- After the 3rd notification (20 unexcused tardies): One (1) Administrative Detention; Referral to District Attendance Officer/District Social Worker
- After the 4th notification (30+ unexcused tardies): Depending on the conditions of tardies, the following may be assigned at the administration's discretion:
  - Administrative Detention(s)
  - In School Suspension (ISS)
  - Referral to county agencies
  - Referral to District Magistrate
  - Restriction from Participation in Extracurricular Events/Programs (Sporting Events, Dances, Special Events, etc)

Note: Tardiness for reasons such as oversleeping, missing the bus, and car troubles are not excused tardies.

Students are expected to be in their homeroom by 7:25 a.m. Tardiness is excused in cases of illness, doctor appointments, bus delays, or extreme emergencies as determined by the building principal, and shall be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian. Failure to submit a tardy excuse signed by a parent/guardian within three (3) days of the tardy will result in the recording of an unexcused tardy for that day.

### **Landis Run Intermediate School (Grades 5-6)**

Students are to be in school at or before 8:10 a.m. If a student has accumulated five (5) instances of unexcused tardies, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians indicating the tardy dates. If your child is late or is absent, you will receive a phone call generated by an automated school message program stating that your child is not in school. Upon every 10th unexcused tardy, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians. School administration, under the direction of state code, will make the final determination on whether a tardy will be considered excused or unexcused.

Consequences for tardy to school are as follows, but may vary on individual student circumstances and needs.

- After the first 5 instances: Student check-in/phone call home
- After the 2nd notification (10 unexcused tardies) : Parent conference - Tardy SAIP
- After the 3rd notification (20 unexcused tardies): Referral to District Attendance Officer/District Social Worker
- After the 4th notification (30+ unexcused tardies): Depending on the condition/reasons for the tardies, the following actions are at the discretion of the building level administration:

- Referral to county agencies
- Referral to District Magistrate

Note: Tardiness for reasons such as oversleeping, missing the bus, and car troubles are not excused tardies.

Students are expected to be in their building at the start of the school day. Tardiness is excused in cases of illness, doctor appointments, bus delays, or extreme emergencies as determined by the building principal, and shall be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian or medical provider. Failure to submit a tardy excuse signed by a parent/guardian within three (3) days of the tardy will result in the recording of an unexcused tardy for that day.

### **Elementary Schools (Grades K-4)**

Students are to be in school at or before 9:00 a.m. If a student has accumulated five (5) instances of unexcused tardies, a letter will be sent to the parents/guardians indicating the tardy dates. If your child is late or is absent, you will receive a phone call generated by an automated school message program stating that your child is not in school. Upon every 10th unexcused tardy, a letter will be sent to parents/guardians. School administration, under the direction of state code, will make the final determination on whether a tardy will be considered excused or unexcused.

Consequences for tardy to school are as follows, but may vary on individual student circumstances and needs.

- After the first 5 instances: Student check-in/phone call home
- After the 2nd notification (10 unexcused tardies): Parent conference - Tardy SAIP
- After the 3rd notification (20 unexcused tardies): Referral to District Attendance Officer/District Social Worker
- After the 4th notification (30+ unexcused tardies): Depending on the condition/reasons for the tardies, the following actions are at the discretion of the building level administration:
  - Referral to county agencies
  - Referral to District Magistrate

Note: Tardiness for reasons such as oversleeping, missing the bus, and car troubles are not excused tardies.

Students are expected to be in their building at the start of the school day. Tardiness is excused in cases of illness, doctor appointments, bus delays, or extreme emergencies as determined by the building principal, and shall be accompanied by a note from a parent or guardian or medical provider. Failure to submit a tardy excuse signed by a parent/guardian within three (3) days of the tardy will result in the recording of an unexcused tardy for that day.

## **DROPPING STUDENT FROM SCHOOL ROLLS**

Those students who are absent from school for ten (10) consecutive school days shall be dropped from the active membership roll unless the school is provided with evidence that the absence is legal or compulsory attendance prosecution is being pursued.

Disenrollment procedures do not apply when a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) has been absent for 10 consecutive days. The district will follow the procedures outlined by IDEA and 22 Pa Code Chapter 14 when a student with an IEP is unenrolled from school.

## **DISTRICT CYBER PROGRAM STUDENTS**

Students enrolled in Manheim Township's cyber school are required to maintain attendance standards as outlined in the cyber school attendance guidelines. Please see the cyber guidelines on the website.

## APPENDICES

- [\*School Board Policy #204\*](#)
- [\*Absence Excuse Form\*](#)
- [\*Educational Trip/Tours Guidelines and Request Form\*](#)
- [\*Request for Intermittent Release from School\*](#)
- *Absence Notifications*
  - [\*1st Unlawful Absence Notification\*](#)
  - [\*2nd Unlawful Absence Notification\*](#)
  - [\*3rd Unlawful Absence Notification\*](#)
- [\*Sample School Attendance Improvement Plan \(SAIP\)\*](#)
- [\*6-day Absence Letter and Recommendation Letter to COBYs Family Services\*](#)
- [\*10-Day Absence Notification\*](#)