

ABSENTEEISM AND TRUANCY POLICY

Attendance Procedures

When a student is absent from school, the student's parent/guardian is REQUIRED to phone the school office (685-2533) before 8:30 a.m. (***Voicemail is also available to leave a message reporting your child's absence between the non-school hours of 4:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.***)

Homework requests for absences should be made in conjunction with the absence call. A child who has been absent from school must present a dated written excuse from his/her parents explaining the reason for the absence. The telephone call does not cancel the need for the note.

Leaving School Early

Students who need to leave school early for medical purposes (doctor or dental appointments) must bring a note to the office before leaving school. The note should include: (1) the requested dismissal time, (2) the reason the student needs to leave early, and (3) a parent signature. Parents are encouraged to communicate any dismissal changes no later than 2:00pm. Students leaving school before 2:30 p.m. are considered absent ½ day. After 2:30 p.m. is considered early dismissal. *Students must be present by 12:00 noon to be considered in attendance for half day.* If a student is ill during the day, the student must check out in the office before leaving the building. Students are not to arrange for parents/guardians to pick them up; the office will contact the parents/guardians.

Absences

St. Thomas School recognizes three (3) categories of absences:

- Excused absences
- Unexcused absences
- Truant absences (after the 9th unexcused absence)

Excused Absence: An excused absence is recognized as:

- A student's personal illness, including mental or behavioral
- A death in the immediate family or family emergency
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Medical visits
- Family vacations (up to 5 school days)
- Other situations beyond the control of the student as determined and approved by the Principal.
- Other circumstances that cause reasonable concern for the mental, emotional, or physical health or safety of the student.

A health care provider's note may be required to excuse a student and/or for returning to school after the third consecutive day of being reported ill. If medical documentation is not provided, the absence may be marked "unexcused." Students who have 9 or more days of absences due to being sick will be required to provide a doctor's note to excuse the absences.

Unexcused Absence: An unexcused absence is defined as an absence from school for a reason other than those listed above as an excused absence and/or an absence not authorized by the student's parent/guardian or the Principal. When a student's absence is unexcused, the parent/guardian may recognize the absence as being valid or legitimate; however, the school does not. The following are unexcused absences (even with parent/guardian consent):

- Family vacations that are 6 or more school days
- Needed at home
- Other avoidable absences.

Truant Absences: Truancy is defined as absence without valid cause for one or more periods of the student's school day. Parents/guardians may be notified following 9 days of absence or tardies within a school year, and a school intervention may be initiated. After the 9th school day (5% of regular attendance days) on which a student is absent without valid cause, he/she is deemed to be truant under Illinois law. Interventions to address truancy may include attendance letters, parent/teacher/principal conferences, student counseling, and/or involvement of the county truancy officer and/or local law enforcement. No punitive action, including out-of-school suspensions or court action will be taken against a chronically truant student unless available support services and other resources have been provided to the student, or offered to the student and refused. Any person who has custody or control of a child subject to compulsory attendance who knowingly or willfully permits the child to persist in truancy, if convicted, is guilty of a Class C misdemeanor and may be subject to up to 30 days' imprisonment and/or fine up to \$1,500.

To identify valid cause, diagnostic procedures will be used for identifying the causes of unexcused student absenteeism, which shall, at a minimum, include interviews with the student, his or her parent or guardian, and any school officials who may have information about the reasons for the student's attendance problem.

Truancy Data Collection

Once a week, the receptionist will run our "excessive absent/tardy - student" report. Using this report we will identify the students who have been absent an excess of 9 days and/or tardy an excess of 4 days.

For absences, we will run each of these names through the "student HR attendance detail" report. We will look at the reasoning for each of the absences and determine how many are excused and how many are unexcused. Any student with 9 or more unexcused absences will be reported to the principal. Additionally any student who has missed more than 10% of our in session days for the current school year will be reported to the principal.

For tardies, we will report any middle school student (5th - 8th grade) to our Dean of Students for review.

If it is deemed that the individual is in fact truant/tardy the principal may take any of the below steps:

- Letter/phone call email to parent of the child informing them of a concern
- Schedule a meeting with the family to help identify causes and create a plan for improvement.
- Notify Peoria Heights truancy officer.

Family Vacation Absences: Family travel during the school year does interrupt a student's regular progress; however, we recognize the educational value of these trips. Therefore, five (5) vacation days per school year will be allowed as excused. Any days after five (5) school days will be unexcused. Early notice of travel will help school personnel to accommodate parents and students during that period. It will be the student's responsibility to obtain all missing work from their teachers during their absence. Some assignments may not be available until the student returns to school. A folder containing all missed assignments will be prepared for the student upon his/her return. Work shall be completed and returned to the teacher within three (3) days for the child to receive credit.

Tardiness: Students are expected to be in class on time so they may maximize their learning opportunities. Teachers and the Principal will monitor student tardiness. Students are marked tardy after 8:30 a.m. Arrival after 9:30 a.m. is considered ½ day absence. Students in middle school receive a detention after 4 tardies. ***An accumulation of three or more tardies will prohibit a student from receiving perfect attendance.***

Make Up Work

Students who have excused absence(s) from school will be allowed to make up work for equivalent academic credit. The time allowed for makeup work will generally be two school days for every day missed, starting with the first day the student returns to school. In extenuating circumstances, a student may ask his/her teacher or the Principal for additional time to make up work. It is the responsibility of the student (and his/her parent/guardian), not the teachers, to get the assignments, complete them, and turn them in, and to arrange a time with the teacher to make up any missed quizzes or tests. Incomplete work or failure to do the work may result in a lowering of grades.

Attendance at Extracurricular Activities

Students who are absent, or who left school for an illness during the day, will not be allowed to attend or participate in extracurricular activities until they have attended school.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Crisis and Referral Entry Services (CARES)

- 800-345-9049 (Available 24/7)
- Mental health crisis calls for Illinois children and youth

Illinois Call4Calm Text Line

- Text TALK to 552020 for English or HABLAR for Spanish (Available 24/7)
- Stress-related to COVID-19 pandemic and need emotional support
- Anonymous

Crisis Text Line

- Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor
- 24/7 support to anyone in any type of crisis
- <https://www.crisistextline.org>

Disaster Distress Helpline

- 800-985-5990 (Available 24/7)
- Text: TalkWithUs to 66746
- Support for emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)

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