Attendance Policy
Saplings Nature School
August 2022

Rationale

It is important for educational and safety reasons to know when students are present and absent. For reasons of safety and security, teachers or staff must follow up with family/guardians in the case of unexcused absences.

It is important for students to attend school every day. Absent or late students miss valuable coursework and instruction and may fall behind in their education. This is true even for excused absences. Families are encouraged to not schedule appointments, vacations, or other events at times that would cause students to be absent from school as absences of any type (excused or unexcused) dramatically decreases a student's ability to graduate on time.

Definitions

Excused Absence –Saplings Nature School will report absences as excused when we have received verifiable communication from students' parents or guardians providing identifying information for the student, dates and expected duration of absence, and the reason for the absence. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence include:

- Illness
- Appointment
- Bereavement
- Alternate Program
- Counsellor
- Trips with educational component (Students may be required to report on their trip to illustrate the experiential learning that occurred)
- Self isolation
- Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony
- Participation in a district or school approved activity or instructional program;
- Illness, health condition or medical appointment for the student or a person for whom the student is legally responsible;
- Family emergency including, but not limited to, a death or illness in the family;
- Religious or cultural purpose including observance of religious or cultural holiday or participation in religious or cultural instruction;
- Court, judicial proceeding, or serving on a jury;
- Post-secondary, technical school or apprenticeship program visitation, or scholarship interview;
- Absence directly related to the student's homeless status;
- Absence resulting from a disciplinary/corrective action (e.g. suspension or expulsion);
- Head of School and parent/guardian mutually agreed upon activity.

When possible, the parent/guardian is expected to notify the school office on the morning of the absence by phone, e-mail, text, Slack message, or written note and to provide the excuse for the absence. If no excuse is provided with the notification, or no notification is provided, the parent/guardian will submit an excuse via phone, e-mail or written note upon the student's return to school. Adult students (those over eighteen) and emancipated students (those over sixteen who have been emancipated by court action) will notify the school office of their absences with a note of explanation.

Unexcused Absence – in the absence of direct communication from the parent/guardian, student absences will be recorded and reported as unexcused. Examples of unexcused absences include:

- Going shopping
- Going to the beach, lake for non experiential learning
- Missing the bus
- Skipping school

Authorized Absence – an authorized absence will be recorded for students who are in attendance at a school authorized event, such as a field trip or sport event not located at Saplings Nature School.

Late - A student will be marked as late if they arrive at the school 15 minutes or more after the start of the school day. If students are more than an hour and a half late they will be marked absent for the first half of the day.

Students are expected to be in class on time and being late to school, class, or an activity is not acceptable. Students at secondary school that show up for class only for attendance purposes, but are absent from class for the learning portion, are considered functionally absent and will be recorded as an unexcused absence in the attendance system. The teacher shall counsel those students who are developing a pattern of being late. The teacher shall refer students to the Head of School, who in the teacher's judgment are not making progress towards correcting the problem and whose tardiness becomes frequent or disruptive. The Head of School may select an appropriate action, including additional school support, parent contact, a student/parent or guardian conference, or some other action.

Procedures

An accurate daily record of attendance shall be kept for each student.

- Attendance will be recorded and maintained in MyEd by the educational team
- Attendance will be taken twice a day, once in the morning and again in the afternoon
- Unexcused absences will be reported to parents by a phone call, text, or email from the school

The Head of School, in consultation with the educational team, will establish and implement a system for identifying students whose attendance patterns raise concern.

In cases where there is a concerning pattern of unexcused absences, or overall concern regarding a student's attendance behaviour the Head of School will contact the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) as soon as practical to inform the parent(s) or guardian(s) and develop an attendance support plan.

Withdrawal

A student absent without excuse for more than 30 consecutive school days after an attendance support plan has been implemented shall be withdrawn from the school's enrollment. The Head of School will notify the parent/guardian in writing.