

Student Attendance Policy

Introduction:

Attendance at school is compulsory except in the case of sickness or special circumstances with prior approval of the teachers or guardians. Approval for absences over 2 days must be given by the College of Teachers.

This policy applies to all school age students as laid out in the Independent School Act. School age is defined as being “of school age at the beginning of a school year if the [student] will have reached age 5 on or before December 31 of that school year, and to continue to be of school age until the end of the school year in which the student reaches age 19.”

1. Academic reasons:

The Waldorf curriculum is experiential and “rhythmic”. That is, the teacher crafts a pedagogical program such that the final grasp of abstract concepts is developed out of a sequence of learning experiences that are rhythmically repeated and sequentially expanded from day to day, even term to term and year to year. This entails the weaving together of practical experiences, imaginative context and abstract concepts. This experiential aspect of the education is particularly enabled and supported by the fact that students are kept together in class groups for the entire educational journey. Inconsistent and irregular attendance undermines the student’s experience of the learning sequence and compromises their capacity to personally unfold the insights necessary for academic progress; gaps in knowledge develop which are then continually compounded by further absence.

2. Social reasons:

The fact that students are kept together in class groups for the entire educational journey introduces another largely unique and centrally important aspect to Waldorf education. This pedagogical structure facilitates modelling of a community where each member learns about themselves through the experience of the development their own and others strengths and in the acceptance of weaknesses and faults. Continual absence makes it difficult for students to feel safe and comfortable in their peer group and to maintain and develop relationships.

3. Legal reasons:

It is the legal obligation of parents to send students to school and for the school to report any un-notified absence. Furthermore when a student enrolls, the school takes formal legal responsibility for the student’s education. It cannot fulfil this responsibility if a student is chronically absent.

Chronic Absenteeism:

Teachers are provided with weekly and cumulative attendance records every Friday by the administration.

Any **unexcused absences** are to be followed up immediately (within 0.5 hour of school beginning) by the Office Manager, who will report to teachers and guardian as well as the Pedagogical Manager.

Ratified by the College of Teachers, June 16th, 2014

The class teacher or guardian will follow up all students who, without a satisfactory reason, have a **weekly attendance of less than 75%**.

The class teacher or guardian will follow up on any student with or without a stated reason with a **cumulative attendance of less than 75%**.

It is incumbent on the class teacher or guardian to initiate a process for students who maintain a cumulative attendance of less than 75%. They will contact the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) to obtain a satisfactory commitment to improve the student's attendance **within a specified time frame.**

If they are unable to obtain this commitment or in the event of the situation continuing, they will immediately inform the Pedagogical Manager and the Admissions Officer. A follow-up meeting will be then held with the parents to present the school's position and to mediate in rectifying the situation. At this interview, strategies to assist can be discussed but the parent/guardian needs to also be informed that continuation of the poor attendance will result in a formal process, involving other members of the College of Teachers and/or faculty, to discuss conditions for the student's continued enrolment.

Continued sporadic attendance will be deemed as lack of support on the part of the family and the student's continued place in the class would be reviewed.

Punctuality

The school considers the need to reinforce punctuality of students for the following reasons:

- We regard rhythm and form as essential to the pedagogy of Waldorf education.
- It is very disruptive to the class and the rhythm of the lesson for students to come in after a lesson has started.
- Expectations of punctuality also encourage a healthy respect for work and study.

Students must be at school and ready for work in the morning in time for classes (advertised school starting for Kindergarten, Grade School and High School programs respectively).

The roll will be marked before the beginning of classes.

Teachers will consistently follow up lateness and take action appropriate to the student and class level.

Consistent lateness (i.e. one time late in each of 2 consecutive weeks) may be addressed Class Teacher/Guardian who may initially contact the parents by **sending a note/email**.

If the lateness continues, that is if a second note/email is required, a formal interview should be arranged immediately. At this interview strategies to assist can be discussed but the parent/guardian needs to also be informed that continuation of the lack of punctuality will result in a formal process, involving the Pedagogical Manager to discuss conditions for the student's continued enrolment.