

FAQ: Mainland Regional High School's Attendance Policy

Q1. Why is my student's attendance calculated and tracked at Mainland Regional High School?

- A. Mainland Regional High School calculates and tracks a student's (1) daily attendance and (2) period attendance for the purposes of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school Code of Conduct for attendance. The student attendance policy is adopted pursuant to the authority and responsibility delegated to the Mainland Regional High School Board of Education by N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25 and 26 and N.J.A.C. 6A:32-8.3.

Q2. What is the difference between daily and period attendance?

- A. Daily attendance is the frequency of days that a student attended school. Students are recorded as absent, present or excused-religious for purposes of daily attendance to satisfy State reporting requirements.
Period attendance is the how often your student attended each class for more than ½ of the class period. Students must be in class for more than ½ of the class period to have their class attendance recorded as present.

Q3. What counts as an "excused absence" from Mainland Regional High School?

- A. There are only 2 State recognized reasons an absence will be considered excused. **(1) Religious Holiday**- Observance of the student's religion on a day approved for that purpose by the State Board of Education and **(2) Bring Your Child to Work Day**. All other absences, which are not Excused Absences according to the above, shall be considered "Unexcused Absences" regardless of the reason or documentation.

Q4. What counts as an "unexcused absence" from Mainland Regional High School?

- A. All absences other than a student's observance of a religious holiday and/or Bring Your Child to Work Day are considered unexcused absences. Unexcused absences are recorded in 2 ways for the purposes of determining promotion, retention, truancy, grades, course credit, and eligibility to make up missed assignments and tests for full credit, and violations of the school Code of Conduct for attendance. Unexcused absences are recorded as either **(1) "verified-unexcused"** or **(2) "unverified-unexcused."**

Q5. What is the difference between a "verified-unexcused absence" and an "unverified-unexcused absence?"

- A. **"Verified-unexcused absences"** require documentation submitted to the Attendance Office explaining why your student was absent within 10 days from the date of the absence. These absences do not count towards the period attendance limits delineated in Q6. Unexcused absences will be recorded as "verified" insofar that the documentation submitted to Mainland Regional within 10 days indicates the following:

- Student illness;
- A death or critical illness in the student's immediate family, or of others with permission of Principal;
- Quarantine;
- The student's required attendance in court;
- Interviews with an admissions officer of an educational institution or college visits (on a limited basis);
- Necessary and unavoidable medical or dental appointments that cannot be scheduled at a time other than the school day;
- Requirements of a student's individual health care plan; The student's suspension from school; NOTE: Any in-school suspension time shall be considered as days present
- Requirements of the student's individualized education program (IEP);
- Alternate short or long term accommodations for students with disabilities;
- Such good cause as may be acceptable to Administration

The District reserves the right, under certain circumstances, to consider an absence Unverified-Unexcused even though documentation has been provided with ten (10) school days.

An **"unverified-unexcused absence"** does not meet the requirements outlined for "excused" or "verified-unexcused absences." These absences do count towards the period attendance limits delineated in Q6. Unexcused absences will be recorded as "unverified" because:

- Student illness- Parent/Guardian provided no documentation, note, etc., to the school or such documentation was not submitted within ten (10) school days;
- Unknown student absence- Parent/Guardian provided no communication in any form to the school regarding the absence;
- Family travel;
- Performance of household or babysitting duties;
- Other daytime activities unrelated to the school program;
- Leaving school without permission when school is still in session;
- Leaving class because of illness and not reporting to the school nurse as directed and/or not following appropriate late arrival/early dismissal procedures (see "Late Arrival and Early Dismissal" below);
- Being present in school but absent from class without approval. Such absence from class is a "class cut";
- Other absences deemed Unverified-Unexcused Absences by Administration

Q6. Why is it important to “verify” my student’s absences?

- A. Course credit may be withheld if the student does not satisfy the attendance rules and regulations or fails to fulfill the specified course proficiencies. Students that are absent (unverified-unexcused) in excess of **fourteen (14)** class periods in an individual yearlong course or **seven (7)** class periods in an individual semester course shall not receive credit for completing the course. Students that exceed the aforementioned period attendance limits are afforded the opportunity to file an attendance appeal. The attendance appeal’s process is outlined within MRHS Policy 5113, *Attendance, Absences, and Excuses*.

Q7. When should a parent or guardian report and verify their student’s absence?

- A. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the school **prior to 9 A.M.** when a child will be absent and for informing the school of the reason for the absence. Every absence (excused or unexcused) must be documented in the Attendance Office **no later than ten (10) school days** following the student’s return to school. Any Excused Absence or Verified-Unexcused Absence that is not documented within the ten (10) school days will be considered an Unverified-Unexcused Absence.

Q8. What happens if my student is persistently absent?

- A. Persistently absent students have accumulated between five (5) to nine (9) absences. Students that accumulate nine (9) unexcused absences (verified and/or unverified) must have an attendance **Action Plan** developed. Attendance **Action Plans** establish outcomes based upon the student’s patterns of unexcused absences and to specify the interventions for supporting the student’s return to school and regular attendance.

Q9. What happens if my student has excessive daily absences?

- A. Any pupil who misses **ten (10)** full school days consecutively (includes Verified-Unexcused and/or Unverified-Unexcused Absences) and does not appear on homebound instruction, and/or is not medically verified incapacitated shall be considered truant and will be issued a written notification to report back to school **within five (5) school days**. Failure to do so will result in the following:
- Parents/guardians of pupils under the compulsory school age (below 16 years of age) may be presented with a formal written notice to cause the child to attend school (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-29). Failure to comply with the provision of the law may cause the parent to be deemed a disorderly person and the parent be subject to a fine (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-29);
 - Pupils above the compulsory age who do not comply with the notice and who do not return to school after **five (5) days**, and who do not present a satisfactory explanation to the Principal within **five (5) days**, shall be dropped from the rolls of the school.

Note: Such students must then present a written petition to the high school Principal requesting that they be readmitted to school. Each case will be reviewed on the merits of their petition.

*Pupils above the compulsory school age who miss **ten (10)** full days of school in any semester or **twenty (20)** full days in any year in non-consecutive fashion, will be notified in writing, as well as the parent/guardian, that a conference will be required with the High School Principal or his/her designee within **five (5) days** of notification to determine the reasons for the absences and develop an **Attendance Improvement Plan**;*

*Students who do not cooperate with the **Attendance Improvement Plan**, who do not attend the conference with their parent/guardian, or who attend but do not provide an adequate explanation for the student’s absences may be denied privileges including but not limited to participation in activities/sports, senior privilege, prom, graduation ceremony, or any other school related function, activity, or school related privilege, or may be potentially dropped from the rolls of school. Students and parents/guardians may request a hearing with the Superintendent of Schools, and through the Superintendent, a hearing before the Board of Education.*

*The state of New Jersey considers any student who is absent for 10% or more of the total number of school days for any reason, excluding absences excused due to religious observances/holidays, as being “Chronically Absent” (e.g. 18 absences over 180 school days equals Chronically Absent). A pupil must be in attendance for **162** or more school days in order to be considered to have successfully completed the instructional program requirements to which he/she is assigned.*

Q10. What is the procedure for signing my student out of school early?

- A. Requests for early release for students must be made in writing by the student’s parent/guardian and submitted to the attendance office at that start of school. This note must indicate:
- The date, time and reason for early dismissal;
 - A valid phone number where the parent/guardian may be reached;
 - The reason for the early dismissal will be verified by the attendance office before a student will be permitted to sign out
 - The means by which the student will be transported from school. Students shall sign out at the attendance office before leaving the building

