**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Good attendance is a habit every student should develop. A student with excessive absenteeism cannot be taught effectively and cannot keep up with the work missed in class. To develop and maintain good attendance habits for all students, Highlands has adopted a strict and effective attendance policy.

*New School Laws of Pennsylvania classify all absences as unexcused or illegal except those for the following reasons: illness of the pupil, death in the family, religious, and “exceptionally urgent reasons” such as quarantine, recovery from an accident, required court attendance, approved family educational trips, educational tours, etc.*

Highlands will enforce the state’s compulsory attendance laws to eliminate absenteeism. Parents can access their child’s attendance at any time by logging into PowerSchool at [www.goldenrams.com](http://www.goldenrams.com/).

A doctor’s excuse is required for absences due to illness in excess of ten days, and for each day of absence thereafter. A warning letter will be sent after the eighth day of absence regardless of the reason.

**ABSENCE REPORTING / INFORMATION**

* It is not necessary to call the school when your child is absent. Feel free to communicate with your child’s teachers about absences, but please understand that a phone call will not excuse the absences. Written or email documentation is required for our records.
* A call will be made to all homes/families of students who **are** marked absent from their homeroom.
* Family educational trips (up to 5 days) *must be pre-approved* by the building principal. Requests must be submitted at least one week in advance of the trip and should be submitted to the office.
* **If an excuse is not provided to the school within 3 days of the student’s absence, the absence(s) will be recorded as an illegal absence.** Excuses will not be accepted if they are turned in late.
* If a student has 3 illegal absences, parents will receive a Notice of Truancy in the mail notifying them of the illegal days and encouraging them to participate in an attendance improvement meeting.
* After the 6th illegal absence, a letter will be sent in the mail with a date and time for a Student Attendance Improvement Plan conference. If parents cannot attend due to work, they should contact the school office within 48 hours of the meeting to reschedule. Failure to attend the meeting and/or continued absences may result in a citation with the local magistrate.
* When a student reaches an 8th Excused absence, a Warning Letter will be mailed notifying parents that all absences beyond 10 require a doctor’s excuse or the absence will be illegal.
* **Truancy is defined as 3 unexcused absences; habitually truant is defined as 6 unexcused absences.**
* **If a student has 10 days of consecutive non-attendance, they will officially be withdrawn from Highlands School District.** Re-enrollment would be required to attend Highlands School District in the future.
* Please contact the District Attendance Officer if you have any questions about the policy

@ 724-226-2400 press 3, ext. 3007.

**EXCUSE FOR ABSENCE**

* After an absence, a student **MUST** provide a written or email excuse to the student’s school secretary. The excuse must include the student’s full name, date(s) of absence(s), reason(s) for absence(s), the date(s) the excuse was written, and the signature of the parent or guardian. The excuse must be submitted upon return to school, or the absence will be classified as illegal. Attendance contacts by building are:
	+ Highlands High School, HHSAttendance@goldenrams.com

Main office 724-226-2400, press 4 and follow the prompts

* + Highlands Middle School, HMSAttendance@goldenrams.com

Main office 724-226-2400, press 3 and follow the prompts

* + Highlands Elementary School, HESAttendance@goldenrams.com

724-226-2400, press 2 and follow the prompts

* + Highlands Early Childhood Center, HECCAttendance@goldenrams.com

724-226-2400, press 1 and follow the prompts

* Excused absences include illness, accidents, death in the family, religious reasons, or impassable roads. All other absences may be judged illegal.
* Parents and students should make every effort to schedule appointments for special services after school. Administrators and teachers discourage the practice of dismissal during school hours, but if it is necessary to be excused during the day, the student must follow this procedure:
	+ Submit to the office, a written request from the parent stating the reason and time the student is to be excused. The excuse must be presented to the office one day in advance. **(Requests made by phone will not be honored.)**
	+ After verifying the request, the school will give the child a special excuse on a blue slip.
	+ The parent or guardian must report to the office to have the student released.

**ABSENCE FOR VACATION/EDUCATIONAL TRIP/TOUR**

For optimal student(s) success, we request you do not schedule vacations when school is in session. Absences due to family vacations will only be considered legal if the following conditions are met:

* Submit request on required district form (see Appendix), detailing the nature and dates of the vacation to the building principal at least one week in advance of the departure date.
* The length of the vacation does not exceed five (5) school days. Any days exceeding 5 will result in illegal absences.
* If a student will be absent for more than ten (10) school days, the student will be removed as a full-time student. The family will need to reenroll the child upon return.
* Parents will be responsible for making sure that missed schoolwork is completed by the child before returning to school.
* Students referred to the magistrate for attendance issues may not be granted approval. This permission will be at the principal’s discretion.

**ILLNESS DURING SCHOOL HOURS**

A student’s claim of illness does not necessarily justify being excused from class or school. Students who claim to be ill must:

* Ask the teacher’s permission to see the nurse, who will determine the degree of illness. If the nurse is not present, the student should report to the office. If a student is sent home from school by the nurse, that day is counted as an attended day of school.
* If necessary, the nurse or member of the office staff (NOT THE STUDENT) will contact the home to arrange for transportation.
* If the parent, near relative or designated person cannot be contacted, the student will remain in school.
* Parents may request the child’s homework assignments during an extended absence, and should plan for the work to be picked up, after a 24-hour notice.

**TARDINESS**

**Highlands High School (HHS)**

A written excuse is required for all tardiness. If an excuse is not provided to the school, the tardy will become illegal.

* Students who arrive between 7:40 AM and 9:30 AM will be marked Tardy.

Any student arriving between 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.

Students who arrive after 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for the whole day.

* Students who leave school before 9:30 AM will be marked Absent for the day.

Students who leave school between 9:30 AM and 11:00 AM will be marked Absent for half a day, and students who leave after 11:00 AM will be given full credit for the day.

* Four unexcused tardies to school will be recorded as one unexcused illegal absence.
* Up to 5 tardies within one month will result in a referral to the Student Assistance Program and the implementation of a Student Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP).

**TARDY TO CLASS**

**NOTE:** Period Attendance (Absent/Tardy) will be taken daily.

The definition of “Tardy” to class is if the student arrives after the class has begun. However, a student will not be considered tardy to class if another staff member has written a pass for that student (EXCLUDING HALL SWEEPS). For any tardiness over 3, the following consequences will be issued:

* 4th Tardy = After School Detention
* 5th Tardy = After School Detention
* 6th Tardy = 1 Day of In-School Suspension
* 7th Tardy = 3 Days of In-School Suspension

*Habitual tardiness will be addressed by the administration.*

* Four unexcused class tardies, less than 20 minutes, will be recorded as one absence from that class.
* Tardiness of 20 minutes or more to class will be considered an unexcused class absence.

**Highlands Middle School (HMS)**

* Students who arrive between 8:10 AM and 10:00 AM will be marked Tardy.

Any student arriving after 10:00 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.

Students who arrive after 11:30 AM will be marked Absent for the whole day.

* A request for early dismissal before 11:30 AM will be marked as a half day Absent.

**TARDY TO CLASS**

Students are considered tardy if they arrive after the class has begun, without a pass.

* After three tardies, students will earn an after-school detention and a parent/guardian will be notified.

*Teachers will work with parents and students with chronic tardiness concerns.*

**Highlands Elementary School (HES) and Highlands Early Childhood Center (HECC)**

* Students who arrive between 8:55 AM and 10:35 AM will be marked Tardy.

Any student arriving after 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a half day.

Students who arrive after 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for the whole day.

* Students who leave school before 10:35 AM will be marked Absent for a whole day.

Students who leave school between 10:35 AM and 2:05 PM will be marked Absent for half a day.

After five tardies during a school year at HMS, HES and HECC, a warning letter will be sent to the parent/guardian. After a student has accumulated 10 tardies, he/she is given a half day illegal absence. For every five tardies following the ten tardies, an additional one-half day of illegal absence will be charged against a student’s record. After 3 days of illegal absence, a notice will be served to the parent/guardian.

As previously stated, all notices served thereafter during a student’s entire period of enrollment in the Highlands School District, shall result in a truancy citation. All truancies will require the parent/guardian to attend a hearing before the magistrate.

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