



October 3, 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

This letter is to draw your attention to the new **“Provincial Student Attendance and Engagement Policy,”** which became effective on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. *(Please find the full Policy at [ednet.ns.ca/document-depot](http://ednet.ns.ca/document-depot)).*

First of all, we want to recognize that most of our children have excellent attendance and punctuality records and we want to applaud you for maintaining these high standards and encouraging your children to attend school consistently.

This up-dated policy starts from the important premise that, “...as per the Education Act, students are required to attend school regularly and punctually. All students are expected to be present and prepared for the beginning of class.”

“This [new] policy recognizes that regular attendance at school supports greater student success and achievement. Attendance supports student learning and promotes a sense of responsibility that students will need as they transition from the school system to post-secondary studies and/or the workforce.”

Encouraging regular school attendance and punctuality is one of the most powerful ways you can prepare your child for success—both in school and in life. While it may seem less important at Elementary level to not miss school, setting habits at this age, good or bad, have shown to have critical impact as they grow and develop into young teenagers and adults. When you make school attendance a priority, you help your child get better grades, develop healthy life habits, avoid dangerous behavior, and have a better chance of graduating from high school. You place an importance on commitment, resilience, and teaching the skills that are critical for success in the workforce. Even at this early stage, children need to be taught the importance of consistent involvement in their own learning, where their responsibility rests so, as they become older, they continue to take even more responsibility for themselves.

The new Policy also states that, under the Teachers’ Professional Agreement, “...teachers are not required to prepare additional materials prior to their release to the class.” This means any ‘avoidable’ long term absence does not mean teachers will create ‘work packages’ for your child. Any missed work can be given to the student after the event, on their return, if requested by the Principal. If a child is off on a long term sickness, then we can provide work, if requested,



after the first day of absence, but we also recognize that they may not be 'fit enough' to complete any work.

#### Reasons for being absent

The Education Act and accompanying regulations provide for a temporary absence from school for 'unavoidable' reasons, such as illness, injury, or observance of a cultural or religious holiday/event. There is not a defined list of circumstances which may result in a student being absent from school, recognizing that students can face a variety of situations that prevent them from coming to school. However, absences from school should be a rare occurrence.

As a parent, you can prepare your child for a lifetime of success by making regular school attendance and early arrival a priority.

Just a reminder, also, that for late arrivals/early departures, at the Elementary School level, parents/related adults are required to come to the office and sign their child(ren) in if they are late, which is after 8:10am at TES, or leaving early, which is before 2:30pm.

Please find attached to this letter a document which summarizes the benefits of regular attendance.

Yours sincerely,

B Holmes

## **Attendance - FAQ**

### Why is it so Important to attend every day?

- Learning is a progressive activity; each day's lessons build upon those of the previous day(s).
- Reading the material and completing work independently does not compensate for the loss of insight gained during class discussion or the loss of competency acquired through explanation or supervised drill.
- Many classes use teacher-led activities, discussions, demonstrations, experiments and participation as part of the daily learning activities, and these cannot be made up by those who are absent.
- Regular student participation in daily classroom activities plays a significant role in a student's school success.

### Are there other benefits to my child?

- Students with good attendance records generally achieve higher grades and enjoy school more.
- Regular school attendance patterns encourage the development of other responsible patterns of behavior.
- Students who develop an "on the job" attitude toward school will be more desirable to future employers.

### What are the risks of frequent absences?

- A child who does not attend school regularly will be unlikely to keep up with the work.
- The more students miss school, the lower their grades; the lower their grades, the less they want to stay in school; the less they want to stay in school, the more disruptive it will be later on in school.

### What can parents do to help?

- Parents must model the value of education, including the importance of regular attendance.
- Make sure that your child goes to school regularly and arrives on time. This will help establish a good habit that will carry through life.
- Try to limit the amount of time that your child misses school due to medical appointments that could be made after school or other 'avoidable' times, such as shopping trips. We recognise that because of our location this isn't always possible, for example if your appointment is in Halifax or Truro, but even taking just a half day is better than a whole day. *(We recognise there are instances when we encourage you to keep your child at home for the benefit of the other children in school, e.g. if your child has any contagious illnesses or transferable conditions, that could impact others in the school, but there may be other times when your child could come to school if you feel they are able).*
- If your child is ill or must miss school for some other reason, contact the school immediately. We also recognise there may be family emergencies or events like funerals that need to be attended. Please contact school to let us know.
- Whenever possible, arrange family vacations during school holidays or weekends, so that children miss as little school as possible. In the case of family emergencies, or unexpected trips, talk to your child's teacher as far in advance as possible and let us know.
- Take an interest in your child's school work and be involved in the school as much as possible. Your child will value school more if you do.

### Who else benefits from good school attendance?

- Other students: less classroom time is spent re-teaching and reviewing for students who have been absent.
- Teachers: lesson plans are more likely to be completed when all students are present. Teachers must sometimes postpone tests or other important activities until all students are present.
- The office staff: less time is spent calling to verify reasons for absences.