



Frequently Asked Questions about the New Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol

Why is Bryan County Schools concerned about Student Attendance?

Bryan County Schools' Students with 6 or More Absences		
School Year	Percentage	Number of Students
2016-2017	57%	4,933
2015-2016	54%	4,546
2014-2015	60%	4,968

School attendance is very important to the learning process. The good work habits students develop now will be beneficial to them later in life. Attendance also correlates strongly with test results. The greater a student's attendance in class, the more success they will have in school. Student attendance is a specific indicator on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI). Student attendance impacts all additional areas of CCRPI as well.

Georgia law requires compulsory school attendance for all students between the ages of 6 and 16 residing in Bryan County. Any parent, guardian or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who violates the law shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not to exceed \$100 or imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, or both, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction. (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-690.1). In addition, a child under six years of age who has attended more than 20 days in public school will be subject to the compulsory attendance law. {(O.C.G.A. § 20-2-150 (C)}.

Any child subject to the compulsory attendance, who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences, shall be deemed truant per the Georgia Department of Education State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10 STUDENT ATTENDANCE and Bryan County Schools Board Policy JB STUDENT ATTENDANCE.

In addition, Children in Need of Services (CHINS) is a new approach to dealing with status offences including truancy as created by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (House Bill 242) and went into effect January 1, 2014. It promotes early intervention and effective alternatives to low risk offenders and uses juvenile courts as a last resort for discipline. CHINS defines a truant student for court purposes as having 10 or more days of unexcused absences from school in the current academic year. For more information about CHINS, please visit <http://www.legis.ga.gov/Legislation/20132014/130097.pdf>.

For more information about student attendance please visit the following sites:

Georgia Department of Education

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Student-Attendance-Improvement.aspx>

<https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Policy/Pages/Student-Attendance-Guidance.aspx>

Attendance Works

<http://www.attendanceworks.org/>

Do I have to take my child to the doctor if they are too sick to attend school?

Whether the absence is excused or unexcused, students have five school days after returning to school to complete make-up work. The Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol does not require parents/guardians to take students to the doctor. The parent/guardian of a student must determine when to take their children to a healthcare provider. In terms of the Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol, if a student does not attend school and does not have appropriate documentation from a healthcare professional, then the absence will be unexcused. If a student is seen by a healthcare professional, the parent/guardian has five school days after the student returns to school in order to turn in the medical documentation to excuse the absence(s).

How do I know if my child is too sick for school?

It is difficult to make those early morning decisions. Please use this to help when you are making the decision to stay home or not.

The main reasons for keeping your child at home are as follows:

- If he/she is too sick to be comfortable at school
- If he/she will spread a contagious illness/disease to another child

For more information visit: <https://www.choa.org/medical-services/wellness-and-preventive-care/parent-resources/all/too-sick-for-school>

Are handwritten or typed notes signed by a parent/guardian going to be accepted at all to excuse absences under the new Bryan County School Attendance Protocol?

No, only official documentation (i.e. healthcare provider notes, court papers, etc.) will be accepted to excuse an absence from school and it will only be accepted if received by the school within five school days from the student's return to school.

What options do I have, as a parent/guardian, if my child has concerns with attendance?

All Bryan County Schools have Student Attendance Review Committees (SARC) that meet after a student has accumulated 5 unexcused absences. The committees are comprised of the parent/guardian, student, school counselor, and other personnel that are necessary including but not limited to the teacher, school social worker, and school administrator. The purpose of the SARC is to examine individual student attendance data with parents/guardians to develop interventions and ensure that the proper supports are in place to support student achievement.

If a child is sent home by a school administrator or a school nurse, is the child marked with an excused or unexcused absence?

When a child is ill and sent home by a school administrator or a school nurse, the absence is considered excused for that day. If the child continues to be absent from school, the absences beyond the day sent home will be marked unexcused until a healthcare provider's documentation is received by the school. The documentation from a healthcare provider must be submitted to the school within five school days from the student's return to school.

What if my child has regular healthcare appointments during school time and leaves school early multiple times a week?

The situation would be an early check out. Early checkouts occur when a student is removed from class and leaves school prior to the official end of the school day with a parent or legal guardian. An early checkout can be marked as excused if it is aligned to the excused absences guidelines. Please note that according to the new Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol after any combination of 10 early checkouts and/or tardies, a residency letter will be sent home to verify that the student lives in the district. If residency documents are not produced within 10 school days, then a withdrawal letter will be issued. The residency verification process will be triggered for excused or unexcused early checkouts and tardies.

What happens when my child is tardy to school?

Tardies occur when a student is late to school. A tardy can be marked as excused if it is aligned to the excused absences guidelines. Please note that according to the new Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol after any combination of 10 early checkouts and/or tardies, a residency letter will be sent home to verify that the student lives in the district. If residency documents are not produced within 10 school days, then a withdrawal letter will be issued. The residency verification process will be triggered for excused or unexcused early checkouts and tardies.

What happens after any combination of 10 early checkouts and/or tardies?

A residency letter will be sent home to verify that the student lives in the district. If residency documents are not produced within 10 school days, then a withdrawal letter will be issued. The residency verification process will be triggered for excused or unexcused early checkouts and tardies. For example, if a child accumulates 6 tardies (2 excused and 4 unexcused) and 5 early checkouts (5 excused) then a residency letter will be sent home to verify that the student lives in the district.

If my child has a disability under Section 504 or receives special education services, is he or she exempt from the Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol?

No, the Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol is in place for all students including students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities require frequent healthcare appointments for their disabling conditions. Healthcare provider notes will continue to be accepted to excuse absences from school if received by the school within five school days from the student's return to school.

Where can I go if I still have questions about the Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol?

School administrators, school counselors, and school social workers are available to address questions related to the new Bryan County Schools Attendance Protocol.