

RIVER VALLEY CHARTER SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Attendance

Regular punctual attendance at school is critical to a student's academic and social success. At River Valley Charter School we expect every student to arrive at school every day on time and prepared to learn. We also expect every student to remain at school for the entire school day. Only a partnership between the school, parents and students will allow us to develop a culture that values the importance of education, and regular attendance is an essential element of this culture.

The RVCS school day begins at 8:30am and ends at 3:10pm. Students are expected to be in their classrooms by 8:30 am.

State law requires all public schools to collect and report student attendance data three times each year. This attendance information becomes a part of a child's permanent record. Students with excessive unexcused absenteeism or tardiness may be considered truant and in violation of the school's attendance expectations. State law defines truancy as unexcused absences totaling more than 7 full days or 14 half days in a 6 month period, or 18 full days in a school year (Massachusetts General Law 76: 1-2).

Absences from school will only be excused for the following causes:

- Personal illness
- Medical appointments
- Family bereavement or emergency
- Religious holidays
- Absences as approved by the Director

If your child is ill or contagious, we encourage you to keep them home for the day.

RVCS is responsible to account for every student on a daily basis. All parents or guardians must notify the school office (978-465-0065) before 8:30 if their child will be absent or tardy. The answering machine is available 24 hours a day. When calling, parents should give their name as well as the name and classroom of the student who is absent or tardy, and the reason for the absence or tardy. If you do not notify the school of your child's absence you will be contacted by the school to inform you of your child's absence and determine his or her whereabouts.

Students who are absent from school may not attend or participate in school events on the same day as the absence unless permission has been granted by the school principal or designee prior to the absence. This includes, but is not limited to, rehearsals, practices, athletic events, concerts, enrichment activities, and school sponsored social events.

Family Vacations

We strongly discourage family vacations when school is in session!

In addition to compromising the attendance law, family vacations interrupt the educational process in each subject area in ways that make-up work cannot reverse. Teachers are not required to provide work in advance of a family vacation. Students should plan to complete all missed assignments on their own time upon their return.

Tardiness

Arriving to school on time is as important as regular school attendance. Tardiness results in an interruption of the learning process, often for the entire class. Morning routines and classroom meetings set the stage for what will occur throughout the day. A tardy student who is forced to play catch up begins the day at a disadvantage.

Please allow sufficient time for your child to arrive at school on time and not feel rushed. The feelings of the child as s/he enters class can set the tone for the day. Between 8:10 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., River Valley staff will greet the students as they are dropped off from their cars and busses. Carpool and bus students will use the main school entrance.

Children arriving at school *after 8:30 a.m.* are tardy, and they *must be signed in at the front office* immediately upon arrival. Late arrivals are recorded in a student's permanent files and are shared with the DESE three times each school year. Students will not be marked tardy when the bus is late or there is a documented travel or traffic issue in the area immediately surrounding the school.

Tardiness caused by family emergencies, illness, religious or unavoidable circumstances needs to be accompanied by a note signed by the student's parent or guardian. Tardiness caused by an appointment needs to be accompanied by a note from the respective doctor's/dentist's office. ***Students must be in school by 11:00am to receive credit for the day.***

Dismissals

Please make every effort to have your child remain at school for the entire day. Doctor's appointments and other outside obligations should be scheduled during out-of-school hours wherever possible.

Should you need to change your child's dismissal time, or method of dismissal, RVCS must receive notification prior to 2pm on the day of the change in plans. This ensures that the office has enough time to get notification to the classroom teacher and your child.

Excessive Absence or Tardy Procedures

When excessive absences or tardiness occur, the following procedures will be followed:

- When a student is absent seven times, a meeting with parents will be held to evaluate what impact the absences are having on the child's learning progress, and what efforts can be made to improve student attendance.
- When a student is tardy or dismissed early five times in a 30 day period, a meeting with parents will be held to evaluate what impact the absences are having on the child's learning progress, and what efforts can be made to improve student attendance.
- For any student who is absent eighteen times or more at year end, a meeting will be held with parents to determine whether the student should repeat the grade and/or should be required to attend summer school.
- Massachusetts General Law provides public schools with options to address chronic absences and tardiness. Should a case of chronic absence or truancy occur at River Valley, the school reserves the right to pursue corrective action to the full extent of the law.

Advance communications with the school may prevent the necessity for these actions in most cases.