



ATTENDANCE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

SCHOOL'S IN – DON'T BE OUT!

The goal of the Student Services Department is to ensure that every student attends school regularly. Student absences result in lack of instruction time and contribute to gaps in learning. **Parents please write a note if your child is sick. All excuses must be provided to the school within 5 days of your child's absence.** The Pickens County Parental Responsibility Act (Truancy Ordinance Section 42-7) allows for a child to miss (5) unexcused days. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** All excuses, including medical and dental may be faxed directly to the District Attendance Office at (706) 253-1712, with the exception of PHS excuses.

If you have any questions about school attendance, please contact the Student Services Department at (706) 253-1700.

- Shelley Cantrell – Director of Student Services – shelleycantrell@pickenscountyschools.org
- Whitney Carnes – School Social Worker – whitneycarnes@pickenscountyschools.org
- Cindy Pope – Student Services Administrative Assistant – cindypope@pickenscountyschools.org
- Rita Nolan- District Attendance Clerk (HCES, JMS) – ritanolan@pickenscountyschools.org
- Becky Prescott- District Attendance Clerk (TES, HES, PJHS) – beckyprescott@pickenscountyschools.org
- Sharmon Martin – Pickens High School (706) 253-1800 – sharmonmartin@pickenscountyschools.org

GEORGIA'S COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW

Georgia's compulsory attendance law (20-2-690) requires that all children under the age of 16 who are at least 6 years old must attend school (i.e. public, private, or home study). Any kindergarten student (age 5) who enters school and remains in school for 20 school days is subject to the Compulsory School Attendance Law. Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in this state who has control or charge of a child or children and who shall violate this Code section (20-2-690) shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction.

KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER

- ✓ If your family is under an Attendance Support Team Contract, please remember it is enforced for one (1) full calendar year (from initial date signed). Medical or school nurse excuses must be provided.
- ✓ If your child is sick and you cannot get a doctor's appointment, you may bring your child to their school to be seen by the school nurse. Please do not put your sick child on the school bus.
- ✓ If your family is under an Attendance Support Team Contract and your child misses the bus (in the morning or afternoon), contact the Student Services department at (706) 253-1700 and emergency transportation will be provided. This is not to be used on a regular basis, in place of normal bus transportation.
- ✓ Write a note if your family has an emergency or death in the family.
- ✓ Keep the school informed if your child is going to be out for several consecutive days and send a note referencing the reason.
- ✓ Remind your child to turn notes in to the school, and check with the school employee in charge to verify the notes have been received.
- ✓ If you email your child's teacher about an absence, please send a note once the student returns to school (teachers are not responsible for printing emails to turn in to the front office).
- ✓ If you check your child out early for a medical appointment, you must provide a medical excuse once your child returns to school the next day.

- ✓ If your child remains in school for half the school day, he/she will be counted present for the day. Half-day times are:

Elementary School	Middle School	Pickens Jr High	High School
12:00 noon	12:00 noon	11:15	2 class periods

- ✓ If you have a change of address or phone number, please notify the school immediately.
- ✓ Please access the online tool “Infinite Campus” to verify your family’s contact information and communicate with your child’s teacher:
 - You will be given an ID by your child’s school
 - Go to www.pickenscountyschools.org
 - Click on the “Parents & Students” tab for a drop-down menu to appear and select “Infinite Campus” and complete login. This will allow parent access to see grades and attendance.
- ✓ The Student Services Department may ask for a physician’s written explanation if persistent systematic patterns of absences has been established (e.g., absent every Monday, more than 10 absences were recorded the prior school year, etc).

ATTENDANCE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q. How many unexcused days can my child miss each school year?

- A. The Pickens County Local Truancy Ordinance allows a child to miss 5 unexcused days. State law allows a student to miss 10 unexcused days.

Q. What happens once my child has missed 5 unexcused days?

- A. A referral is made to the School Social Worker and/or Attendance Officer. The Student Services Department will contact parents to schedule a meeting.

Q. If my child is out sick for a few days, how many days do they have to turn in a medical note to the school?

- B. Board Policy allows a student 5 school days to bring a note in once they return after an illness.

Q. What happens once a child misses 6 unexcused days?

- C. If parents have already met with the School Social Worker or Attendance Officer the parent will be issued a ticket for truancy by one of our county resource officers and will be required to attend Magistrate Court.

Q. What can happen to parents at Magistrate Court?

- D. Parents may admit or deny the truancy charges (these are not criminal charges and do not appear on record). If parents admit to charges, then they are placed on 180 days of probation and must pay a probation set up fee. The judge may sentence parents to fines, community service, and jail time, which is all suspended if the child does not have any more unexcused absences. Parents may also deny charges and request a bench trial.

Q. What happens at 10 unexcused days?

- E. At 10 unexcused days the parent and student (middle and high school level) must appear in Juvenile Court. In Juvenile Court the Judge closely monitors a student’s attendance, grades, and discipline. During this time a student monthly review is initiated, until improvements are made with attendance. The Judge may order counseling for the student and family, community service, tutoring, and in some cases a student may be placed on probation with the Department of Juvenile Justice. Referrals may be made to the Department of Family and Children Services.

Q. What is the purpose of the court and my child attending school every day?

- F. Statistics show that truancy or unexcused absences from school has been linked to serious delinquent activity in youth and to significant negative behavior and characteristics in adults. The purpose of the court is not to punish parents or students, but to offer support and resources in improving attendance for all students.