

# Wallingford's High School Attendance Policy

## Frequently Asked Questions

*This informational sheet has been designed to help parents and students alike understand the critically important and sometimes complex policies that govern student attendance at the high school level. In this way, we hope to promote students' welfare and to empower both students and parents to make informed, beneficial decisions. The administration would like to gratefully acknowledge the guidance of the Sheehan Parent-Teacher Advisory Committee (PTAC) in the creation of this document.*

### **What should I do when my son/daughter is absent?**

Please call the main office (203-294-5900) before 10:00 a.m. to notify us that your son/daughter will be out and to verify the cause of the absence. When reporting an absence caused by a chronic illness, please let the office staff know when you call that your son/daughter has a chronic medical condition for which documentation is on file. Please remember that such documentation must be submitted annually. In addition, you will need to have your son/daughter bring a note to the main office on his/her return to school verifying the absence.

### **What absences contribute toward loss of credit?**

Nearly all absences—including routine illnesses verified by a doctor (i.e. viral illness, strep throat, sinus infection), DMV or court appointments, etc.—contribute toward the loss of credit limit. The only exceptions are absences necessitated as a result of a chronic medical condition and absences resulting from a major medical procedure that are verified by medical documentation. Such documentation is to be submitted to the office within ten days of the student's return to school.

### **How does absence from school affect my son's/daughter's participation in extracurricular or athletic events?**

Students who are absent from school on the day of an extracurricular activity (prom, homecoming dance, concert performance, etc.) or athletic event (football or soccer game, etc.) are not allowed to participate in those events. Exceptions may be approved by the school administration under extraordinary circumstances.

### **When does my son/daughter lose credit in a course?**

Students lose credit in a course when they exceed limits set in Board of Education policy (5113a). Specifically, students at the high school level who are absent more than six times in a 0.5 credit course (i.e., a half year course), more than twelve times in a 1.0 credit course (i.e., a full year course), more than 16 times in a 1.5 credit course, or more than 18 times in a course that meets daily for the entire school year will lose credit for that course. Warning letters are mailed home to parents of students approaching these limits. Students who exceed these totals will lose credit and will receive information concerning the steps to follow to appeal that loss of credit. Absences due to suspension from school, participation in an authorized school activity, observance of religious holidays or as a result of the failure of sending towns to provide transportation for nonresident students enrolled in Wallingford schools shall not be counted toward the loss of credit.

### **How does the appeals process work?**

To initiate the appeals process, the student and/or parent(s) must submit a brief note requesting an attendance appeal. The appeal must be based on unusual mitigating circumstances. An Appeals Committee including the student's assistant principal, student's school counselor, and a teacher representative is formed. The appeals hearing is then scheduled, at which the student and/or parent(s) are allowed to present their case for why the student's credit should be restored. Typically, a brief discussion of the situation will follow, after which the student and parent(s) are notified in writing of the committee's decision. The committee's decision may be

further appealed directly to the principal by writing a letter presenting the arguments to be considered. The principal's decision is final.

**What is the difference between an excused absence and an unexcused absence?**

The Board identifies a number of reasons why a student may legitimately miss school, such as illness, a death in the family, religious holidays, mandated court appointments, provided that appropriate documentation has been submitted to the school. Absences resulting from these situations **do** count toward a loss of credit, **even though they are considered excused absences**. An absence due to an out-of-school suspension or expulsion is also considered an excused absence, but does not count towards loss of credit. A student is charged with an **unexcused absence** whenever the reason for the absence is not sanctioned as part of the Board's list of excused absences, **regardless of whether the parent knew of the absence**, or if documentation is not submitted within ten days of the date of the absence. Class cuts are also considered unexcused absences and will count toward the loss of credit limit.

**So what happens if I call or send a note to let you know my son/daughter is or was out sick?**

For absences one through nine, the absence will be considered excused when appropriate signed documentation has been received by the main office within ten school days of your son's/daughter's return to school. If the office only received a phone call, the absence will be considered unexcused. Both absence types (excused and unexcused) will be counted toward the loss of credit limit.

**Do I need to submit doctor's notes even though routine illnesses still count toward loss of credit?**

Per Wallingford BOE policy 5113a, for the tenth absence and all others thereafter due to illness, documentation by a medical professional is required, regardless of the length of the absence. Such documentation is to be submitted within ten school days of the date of the absence. For absences one through nine due to absence, medical documentation should be submitted if available. Keeping school staff apprised of your son's/daughter's medical status enables us to do a better job caring for him or her. Also, in the event that a student or parent chooses to appeal a loss of credit, such documentation, while not automatically eliminating absences, may help to establish mitigating factors for the Appeals Committee.

**Will excessive absences result in my son/daughter being identified as a truant?**

A student is identified as "truant" when he/she has four (4) unexcused absences in any one month or ten (10) unexcused absences in any school year. The school administration will make a concerted effort to prevent and remedy truancy in its early stages for students who are found to be truant. These efforts will include holding a meeting with appropriate school staff and the student's parent. Please note that the Superintendent will be notified, as well as Youth and Social Services and the Wallingford Police Department's Youth Division, if the parent fails to attend the required meeting with school personnel or fails to cooperate with the school administration in trying to solve the student's truancy problem. If you are finding it difficult to remedy the truancy with your student, you may file a Family with Service Needs (FWSN) document with the Superior Court. The following links provide the information you may need:

[www.jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/JM120A.pdf](http://www.jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/JM120A.pdf) and <http://jud.ct.gov/webforms/forms/jm120.pdf>.

**How does tardiness to class affect my son's/daughter's attendance?**

Arriving to class late creates serious disruption and is therefore discouraged. If a student misses a class and is in school, such absence will be considered a class cut, unless such class absence has been authorized by a school official. On the high school level, students who arrive to school after 8:10 a.m. will be assigned a cut in their period 1A/1B class. Further, students who arrive 25 minutes or more late to class (period) without a pass are given a cut. Class cuts are considered unexcused absences and count toward the potential loss of credit.

**If my son/daughter has first period study hall, can I give my permission for he/she to arrive late to school?**

Only students in grades 11 and 12 are entitled to a late arrival privilege if they have a study hall period 1A and/or period 1B, are in good academic standing, and have a permission form on file signed by a parent. These students must report to school in time for the second period of the day which begins at 8:59 a.m. Failure to do so would result in disciplinary action. Students in grades 9 and 10 may not report to school late even if they have a first period study hall and parent permission. Students in grades 9 and 10 who arrive late to school face disciplinary action.

**What happens when my son/daughter arrives late to school?**

Students who arrive to school after 7:30 a.m. are to report directly to the main office. The office staff records students' tardies, and consequences are imposed based on the number of tardies accrued. The assistant principals contact students' parents as needed. Students who arrive to school after 8:10 a.m. are assigned a cut in their period 1A/1B class.

**How do I arrange for my son/daughter to be dismissed early from school?**

When students need to be dismissed early from school, they are to bring a written note signed by a parent or guardian to the main office prior to the start of school. The office staff will verify the authenticity of the note by contacting the parent or guardian by phone and will issue the student a dismissal pass.

**If my son/daughter is dismissed early from school, can he/she return to school on the same day?**

Students who are dismissed from school before the end of the school day at the request of their parent will not be permitted to return to school on that same day unless the dismissal is for a medical/dental appointment, or a court appearance and such appointment is validated in writing by the doctor/dentist or a court official. Students who become ill during the school day may be excused by the school nurse and are not permitted to return to school until the following day.

**If my son/daughter has last period study hall, is he/she entitled to early dismissal privilege?**

Seniors may take advantage of this privilege provided that their last period is a study hall, they are in good academic standing, and they have parent permission on file in the office. Any student who has early dismissal privilege and parks his/her vehicle on school grounds must register the vehicle in the main office. Students in grades 9 through 11 are not entitled to this privilege. If students in grades 9 through 11 leave school early, even with parent permission, they will not be permitted to return to school, nor will they be permitted to attend any club, athletic, or other school function held on that day.

**Who should I speak to if I have further questions?**

If you have any questions regarding this or any other policy, please contact your son's/daughter's assigned assistant principal (Mr. Marciano, A-K, Mr. Dirkson, L-Z).

**The attendance policy is published in the student handbook  
and on the district's website, [www.wallingford.k12.ct.us](http://www.wallingford.k12.ct.us).**

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