

## Bev Facey Community High School Attendance Policy

### Overview:

- Students have an obligation to be diligent in pursuit of their studies while attending school regularly and punctually and to make up missed learning opportunities.
- Parents have a responsibility to take an active role in their child's education and to provide support for the student's obligation.
- Teachers will provide engaging learning opportunities and provide learning support when a student is absent from class.
- Administration will support students and families in educating them about the importance of being in school every day while offering intervention supports for individuals who demonstrate attendance concerns.

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

#### Rationale:

We believe regular attendance to be a significant determinant of success in our school. Despite all of our efforts to support and encourage students to be successful at completing their coursework and the meeting of learning outcomes, a student's choices and actions can negate these efforts. It is only through an effective partnership and clear communication between the school, the parents and the student that we can ensure success.

At Bev Facey Community High School, we believe that the essence of our educational programs occurs in the classroom with skilled teachers. Direct instruction, explanation, clarification, discussion, assessment, group tasks, practical experience and evaluation are all invaluable components of an effective learning environment. Students who miss class time are at a greater risk of missing key aspects of their learning, and by extension, will reduce their chances of meeting the required learning outcomes of their courses.

The process as outlined below is meant to define our procedures and prevent misunderstanding. Ultimately our goal is not to consequence or discipline students through the taking of their time, but to support students and families in reducing barriers to regular and punctual attendance.

#### Process:

#### Types of absences:

EXCUSED	VERIFIED – UNEXCUSED	TRUANT
School sponsored event	Sleeping in	Leaving class or school without permission
Student illness or health appointment	Transportation issue	Not returning to class after being given permission to leave
Verified community activity	Parental decision for any reason not considered excused	In or around school during the student's scheduled block

Significant family issue	Family vacation *See extended absence policy	Failure to verify an absence
Principal's discretion		Any absence not meeting 'excused' criteria

### Types of absences explanation:

## A. Excused absence:

### 1. School sponsored event:

Students have significant opportunity to be part of the extra-curricular programming provided by staff at Bev Facey. Participation in these programs is promoted and supported by our community. From time to time these programs may result in a student being absent from regularly scheduled classes. When this happens it is the responsibility of the student and the staff organizer to ensure that the other staff are aware of the planned absence and the process by which the student will engage in the missed learning. Students and staff sponsors will carefully monitor these absences.

### 2. Student illness or health appointment:

Ensure that a signed note or email to the office is provided with any other supporting documentation you feel important **within 24 hours after the return of the student to school. It is preferred to have notification on the day of the absence.** Students will need to make every effort to work with the teacher or resource room to catch up after a medical situation. Chronic medical conditions should have a doctor's note on file with the school office. Early dismissal from class for an appointment will require the student to obtain a dismissal slip from the office prior to the beginning of the block. Please provide notification to the office prior to the appointment.

### 3. Verified absence due to participation in a community activity:

Examples may include participation on a community team, club or program, religious activity, or other activities at the discretion of administration. It is requested that families provide this information prior to the event. Students are expected to have a 'study buddy' who can support the student in the missed learning. Please note that classroom time is valuable. Families should carefully consider participation in community activities that take their child from school. **A notice must be provided no later than 24 hours after the return of the student to school so that the absence can be considered excused.** Early dismissal from class for a community activity will require the student to obtain a dismissal slip from the office prior to the beginning of the block. Please provide notification to the office prior to the activity.

### 4. Significant family issue:

Unfortunate situations like death or critical illness in the family, personal safety issues, family emergencies or other unforeseen circumstances may occur during the school year. Like student illness, verification in writing, signed by a parent or guardian or email, will be required to excuse these absences. Students will need to make every effort to work with the teacher, administration, and counsellor to get support and catch up after this type of issue.

## **5. Principal's discretion:**

Situations that arise that are beyond the control of the student as determined by the administration will also be considered as excused absences.

### **Process for an excused absence:**

In the event of an excused absence or absences, the teacher will provide the student with the opportunity to make up missed work and complete assessments once they have received verification that the absence is excused. In the case of student illness, students may opt to make up this missed work on their own or in consultation with the teacher, under their supervision in a mutually agreeable time. Students should make every effort to minimize all absences. Under most circumstances, the review of a written note by school administration will determine whether the absence is a valid (excused) absence according to the criteria noted above, or whether the absence is unexcused. **It is preferred to have notification on the day of the absence. Notes from parents need to be submitted within 24 hours of the student returning to school. If a note is not received within the 24 hour period the absence will be considered truant.**

## **B. Verified – unexcused absence:**

Absences, even with parent awareness, which do not meet the criteria for 'excused absences', include the following:

- 1. Sleeping in**
- 2. Car trouble or missed bus**
- 3. Family vacations (see further details under Extended Absence)**
- 4. Parental or guardian decision to keep the student out of school for a reason that is not meet the criteria for an 'excused absence'**
- 5. Other circumstances as determined by administration**

### **Process for verified – unexcused absences:**

**Students who are absent for unexcused reasons may submit a signed note to the office from a parent or guardian within 24 hours of their return to class.** This note should state the reason for absence and indicate that the parent or guardian is aware of the reason. Failure to provide explanation for the absence will result in the absence being considered a truancy.

### **Student responsibilities for unexcused absences:**

With the exception of extended absences due to family vacations or trips, students will be responsible for making up missed work and time in a formal setting. Students will have to make up 25 minutes for each block they miss in our resource room – serving a study hall. After the 24 hour grace period has elapsed, for notification to be provided to the office, the student will be called to the office and assigned the appropriate number of study halls by an administrator. Students are expected to make up missed work and learning time in this formalized setting either before school, during lunch, after school or during a spare (if applicable). The teacher will provide that work for the student to complete. Failure to appear at the scheduled time will result in behavior intervention support and/or further administrative discipline.

Once a student has accrued 4 verified but unexcused absences, from a particular block, a meeting with administration may be required, which may include parents/guardians, to understand barriers preventing regular attendance. An attendance plan will be created and further administrative consequences may be required. Additional verified but unexcused absences may require additional supports and discipline.

### **\*Extended absence policy:**

Each year we are approached by parents or guardians who wish to take their child out of school for an extended period of time (defined as three school days or more). Usually this is for reasons associated with family travel or family business. We do not have a procedure for granting students a leave of absence. Rather, it is assumed that parents will make decisions in the best interests of their own child. We are respectful of the fact that many of our students have family members far away, and spending time with them is important. We also encounter parents who wish to excuse their child from school for extended periods of time due to emotional or medical issues. Regardless of the reason, difficulties arise when parents wish to have some sort of assurance that their child will not be behind in their work when they return. **If a child misses school for an extended period of time, he or she may be significantly behind in classroom work.**

Students may well have other cultural and travel experiences that contribute to their overall development, but the many varied daily classroom activities they will miss cannot be duplicated through worksheets or workbooks. **There is no true substitute for missed instructional time with a teacher.** It is also unrealistic for teachers to have to re-teach key elements missed due to a family choice to miss school. Although teachers will do their best to help students get caught up, they may not be, generally speaking, in a position to provide make-up assignments, or detailed packages in advance for children who have extended absences due to family vacations or work. **It is up to students to provide notification to each of their teachers well in advance (at least two weeks) of the date of the absence.** If less time is given, teachers will not guarantee that they will have make up work prepared. We strongly encourage all parents and guardians to contact the school to discuss potential extended absences with administration and classroom teachers. This will give both parents and students a clear understanding of the potential impacts of these absences and student responsibilities upon return to classes. **In case of an extended absence, the student will have to make up the missed work and assessments on their own. Formalized time in study hall will not be expected.**

### **C. Truancy:**

Truancy is cause for disciplinary action. Students will be considered truant if they:

- 1. Leave the class or school without permission from the teacher or administration**
- 2. Leave class with teacher permission and fail to return in a reasonable time**
- 3. Are in or around the school but not in their scheduled class**
- 4. Fail to have a parent/guardian verify absence within 24 hours of their return to school or if the student is absent from school without parental permission**
- 5. Are absent from school for reasons that are not considered excused or verified unexcused as outlined above**

Students who make a conscious decision to skip their classes are not adhering to The School Act and most importantly, are sabotaging their learning. School administration reserves the right under the above mentioned policy and provincial legislation to suspend any student who displays repeated disregard for school and district policy, including truancy. If efforts to curb truant behaviour prove unsuccessful, in cooperation with parents and guardians, the student may be requested to withdraw from one or all scheduled classes for the remainder of that semester. The student may also be suspended with referral to the Board of Trustees for expulsion.

## **Process for Truant Absences:**

Students will be responsible for making up missed work and learning time in our staff supported resource room during an in-school suspension. As the student is unable to make good choices for the use of their time, administration will control the student's time in an in-school suspension. If the student has accrued more than four truant absences and the school has followed the intervention steps outlined below or the student has not complied with the procedure, as presented in a meeting with parents/guardians, another meeting will be required to determine if the program at the school is in the best interests of the student.

If a student is found to be truant, the following intervention process will be followed:

**First Step:** The first time a student is truant from a single class period administration will contact parent/guardian and the student will serve a half day in-school suspension which includes the lunch period. If the student is absent from two or more classes on a single day, the in-school suspension will be for a full day beginning at the start of classes, through the lunch hour and finish at the end of formal class time.

**Second Step:** The second time a student is truant, be it one class or more, the student will again be referred to administration as well as to the counsellor for further discussion. A plan will be established with the student to eliminate barriers which are causing the student to be truant. Administration will contact a parent/guardian and the student will serve a full day in-school suspension which will begin at 8:15am and end at 3:45pm.

**Third Step:** The third time a student is truant, be it one class or more, the student will again be referred to administration as well as to the counsellor for further discussion and an evaluation of the attendance plan previously established. Administration will contact a parent/guardian and the student will serve a full day in-school suspension which will begin at 8:15am and end at 3:45pm. A meeting will be scheduled with parents/guardians and administration to go over the student's attendance plan.

**Fourth Step:** The fourth time a student is truant, be it for one class or more, the parents/guardians will be informed that the student is on an out of school suspension for a minimum of one school day or until a meeting is scheduled with parents/guardians and administration. At this point a family supported attendance plan will be put in place. Upon return to school the student will serve a full day in-school suspension to continue to be provided assistance with missed learning opportunities. Further truancy may result in the student being suspended with referral to the Board of Trustees for expulsion.