

***Student success depends on consistent attendance in school. As a result, Willard Intermediate School will enforce the rules, regulations, and expectations listed below. Any violation of these rules may result a range of disciplinary actions, including detention, loss of privileges, Friday School, or in-school restriction.***

**Attendance:** Virginia's compulsory attendance law states:

*Except as otherwise provided in this article, every parent, guardian, or other person in the Commonwealth having control or charge of any child who will have reached the fifth birthday on or before September 30 of any school year and who has not passed the eighteenth birthday shall, during the period of each year the public schools are in session and for the same number of days and hours per day as the public schools, send such child to a public school or to a private, denominational, or parochial school or have such child taught by a tutor or teacher of qualifications prescribed by the Board of Education and approved by the division superintendent, or provide for home instruction of such child as described in § [22.1-254.1](#).*

**Excused Absences:** There are circumstances that may prevent a student's attendance in school. Such absences, when justifiable, are classified as excused absences for which there is no penalty. Principals shall excuse students who are absent for any of the following reasons:

- Personal illness
- Death in the family
- Medical or dental appointments
- Court appearances
- Religious holidays

In addition, principals may excuse students who are absent for any of the following reasons:

- Illness in the immediate family that requires the student to be absent
- Emergencies that require the student to be absent
- Trips or activities that enhance or extend the student's education  
(when approved by the principal in advance)

**Procedures for reporting a full day absence:**

- 1) Parents may use the following link to report change in attendance: <https://www.lcps.org/domain/24455>
- 2) Student may bring a note from parent to the school on the day of return. The absence note must include the following:
  - Student's name
  - Date(s) of absence
  - Reason for absence(s)
  - Parent's signature
  - Parent's phone number

**Unexcused Absences:** All absences not excused by the Principal or caused by a student's suspension from school are classified as unexcused absences, which shall result in appropriate disciplinary measures.

**Early Dismissal:** Once a student enters school property, he/she is not allowed to leave the property prior to the end of the school day without proper permission. Students needing to check-out during the school day must bring a note from their parent/guardian to their house office secretary prior to the start of the school day to receive an early dismissal pass. To request an early check-out, parents should include in their note the following information:

- Student's full name
- Reason for the absence(s)
- The person who will retrieve student
- Parent/guardian signature
- Your relationship to the student
- Time student will be leaving school
- Phone number for verification

**Late Arrival:** Parents must write a note with pertinent information (listed above) that the students bring to the front office. Notes without parent/guardian signatures will not be honored. Students who are tardy to school with an approved excuse will receive a tardy slip marked excused. Students who do not have an acceptable excuse as outlined in SR&R, will receive a tardy slip marked unexcused. Unexcused tardies include the following:

- Oversleeping
- Missing the bus
- Car trouble
- A ride that did not show up
- Traffic

**Observance of a Religious Holiday:** Any student excused for observance of a religious holiday, and for whom verification is received, shall not be deprived of any award or of eligibility or opportunity to compete for any award, or of the right to take an alternate test or examination, for any the student missed due to such absence. The parent or guardian of such student shall provide written verification to the principal of the need for such absence and the participation of such student in the observance of the religious holiday.

School Board policy further stipulates that the parent is required to contact the school to provide the date/s and corresponding reason for the student's absence/s in order for the school administration to determine the excused or unexcused nature of the absence/s (or tardy).

**Prearranged Absence:** Students should pick up a pre-arranged absence form from the attendance office at least one week (five school days prior to the first day of the absence). Parents must complete and sign the form detailing the reason for the absence. This form will then be submitted to the principal for approval. Once approved, the student must carry the form to each teacher for signature and assignments.

**Parental Responsibility:** School Board Policy 8-14

*A student is entitled to a free, public education under the laws of the Commonwealth. To obtain the benefits of this free education, however, a student must be in regular attendance. The School Board fully endorses the concept of compulsory attendance, in a free, public system of education where the cost of a student's education is borne by the general citizenry. The Board has therefore adopted an attendance policy which sets forth absences which may be excused by a Principal and provides that appropriate disciplinary action be taken when students have unexcused absences, are truant, or are tardy. The Board also provides an attendance officer to investigate violations of the compulsory attendance law and enforce its provision. Parents, guardians, or other persons having control of the child are charged with the duty of causing the child to attend school or receive instruction as provided by the law.*

**Tardies:** A student is tardy when he or she arrives at an assigned place after the time his or her schedule requires him or her to be there. Tardiness may be caused by many things, teachers and administrators should always determine the reason for tardiness. Occasional tardiness for valid reasons is not a serious offense and should not be dealt with harshly. Repeated or habitual tardiness, however, disrupts the orderly instructional process of the school. Therefore, corrective action may be required and the principal and/or teacher should employ appropriate disciplinary measures.

**Make-up Work Missed Because of Absence(s):** Whenever a student is absent, whether an excused or unexcused absence, if the principal requires make-up work, a reasonable amount of time, consistent with the length of the absence, will be given the student to make up the work missed. Upon return from absence, the student is responsible to initiate immediate action to make up the work. Upon such request of the student, the teacher is responsible to provide assignments, tests, and other work that must be made up and to inform the student clearly when make-up work for which grades will be given is due. Failure to complete such make-up work within the time allowed will result in a failing grade for those assignments, tests, or other work. Make-up work turned in within the time allowed will be graded on the same basis as other work.

**Truancy:** Truancy is the willful action of a student to absent himself or herself from school or from an assigned class or other required activity. Truancy is an unexcused absence but should be distinguished from other unexcused absences that are due to circumstances that may cause a student to be absent but which are not allowable excuses under this policy. Truancy is a serious offense that warrants stern corrective action on the part of the school and the parents or other adults having control of the student. All cases of truancy shall be reported to parents.

**Excellent Attendance Certificates:** If a school awards certificates for excellence in attendance, that school must present such a certificate to any child having no unexcused absences and no more than five excused absences, exclusive of any properly verified excused absences for observance of a religious holiday as herein provided, in a regular school term.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q: Why is regular school attendance important?**

**A:** It is the law, [Code of Virginia, 22.1-254](#). Seventy-five percent of students that do not attend school regularly do not graduate. There are many benefits of regular school attendance:

- academic learning and success
- social learning and development
- ensure completion of graduation requirements
- development of skills to become a responsible member of society
- development of strong work ethics that carry over into the workplace

Additionally, students who are frequently absent from school:

- Miss educational and social learning opportunities
- Exhibit “gaps” in their learning
- Distance themselves from their peers
- Create patterns which follow them as they progress in school and life
- Drop out more frequently than students who attend
- Seventy-eight percent of those who end up in prison had a first arrest for school truancy.

### **Q: Will the school notify me if my child is absent from school?**

**A:** Whenever possible the parent/guardian should notify the school if an absence occurs. In the event that no contact is made with the school, to ensure the safety and well-being of the student, the school will attempt to verify the absence by calling the phone numbers on file at the school for a parent or guardian on the day of the student’s absence. If contact is not made, a phone message will be left.

### **Q: What happens if I fail to call or send in a note for my child’s absence from school?**

**A:** If a parent fails to verify a student’s absence by link, <https://www.lcps.org/domain/24455> and accompanied by a required note from the parent, the absence will be considered “unexcused.” Students may receive disciplinary sanctions by administrative staff for unexcused absences.

### **Q: Can my child’s school require a physician’s note for absences?**

**A:** Yes, schools can require doctor’s notes for absences based on a student’s prior attendance history. Once a doctor’s note has been required and then not provided, the student’s absence will be considered unexcused.

### **Q: If I take my child on a vacation during the school year, are the absences excused?**

**A:** School board regulation §8-17, provides a list of circumstances in which a principal shall excuse a student's absence. This list includes personal illness, death in the family, medical and dental appointments, court appearances, religious holidays, illness in the immediate family that require a student to be absent, emergency that requires a student to be absent, and trips or activities that enhance or extend the student’s education, when approved by the principal in advance.

### **Q: What can I do if I am having difficulty getting my child to attend school regularly?**

**A:** You should contact a school administrator, your child’s school counselor, and/or teacher with your concerns. The school will work with the family in attempt to resolve attendance issues and concerns. If warranted, an attendance referral may be made and an attendance conference scheduled.

**Q: What happens if my child is considered withdrawn for non-attendance?**

**A:** If your child is considered withdrawn, this is the result of consecutive absences. You will be notified by your child's school and ultimately an Attendance Officer if your child's enrollment status is not resolved. If notified by an Attendance Officer, you may be given three days to resolve the matter with the possibility of court intervention if not in compliance with the Compulsory Attendance Law.

**Q: Why would the school withdraw my child if I have not moved?**

**A:** If a student is absent for 15 consecutive days, regardless of the reason, state law requires that the student be dropped from the attendance roll and marked "Withdrawn."