

## Attendance Policy

Bright Star Schools (“Bright Star” or “School”) currently operates nine public charter schools in Los Angeles County. Parents and guardians are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly. Bright Star Schools expects all students to be in attendance every day that school is in session. Students who have excellent attendance do better academically, socially and emotionally compared to their peers who have poor attendance. Excellent attendance will be celebrated. Below are the requirements and procedures by which students will be held accountable.

The purpose of this Attendance Policy (“Policy”) is to provide School staff, parents, guardians, and students an understanding of the School’s Policy and ensure that all students attend school in accordance with California’s compulsory education laws and take full advantage of the educational opportunities provided by the School. This Policy shall apply to all of Bright Star’s schools.

## No-Show Policy

At the beginning of the school year, if a student is absent during the entire first week of the year without any parent communication, the student will be marked as a no show. The office will make several attempts to verify the student’s enrollment status before dropping the student; however, if no communication can be established, the student will be dropped from the school roster in accordance with the due process procedures specified in the school’s involuntary removal notice below, and another student will be admitted from the waitlist.

## Excused Absences

A student’s absence shall generally be considered “excused” for any of the following reasons:

1. Personal illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil’s mental or behavioral health (if more than two days consecutive, must be accompanied by doctor verification)
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer.
3. Medical, dental, optometrist, or other similar health-related appointment. However, families are encouraged to schedule such appointments outside of school hours.
  - a. Students in grades 7-12, inclusive, may be excused from school for the purpose of obtaining confidential medical services without the consent of the student’s parent or guardian.
4. For the purpose of attending the funeral services or grieving the death of either a member of the pupil’s immediate family, or of a person that is determined by the pupil’s parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil’s immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than five (5) days per incident. “Immediate family” means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.
5. For any of the following reasons, if an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil’s parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil’s immediate family, has died:

- a. To access services from a victim services organization or agency.
- b. To access grief support services.
- c. To participate in safety planning or to take other actions to increase the safety of the pupil or an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, including, but not limited to, temporary or permanent relocation.

Absences under this section shall not be excused for more than three (3) days per incident, unless extended on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the school administrator. "Immediate family" means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.

- 6. Due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent, including absences to care for a sick child. (The school does not require a note from the doctor for this excusal).
- 7. Authorized at the discretion of the Principal, based on the facts of the student's circumstances, are deemed to constitute a valid excuse.
- 8. A student who holds a work permit to work for a period of not more than five (5) consecutive days in the entertainment or allied industries shall be excused from school during the period that the student is working in the entertainment or allied industry for a maximum of up to five (5) absences per school year subject to the requirements of Education Code section 48225.5.
- 9. In order to participate with a not-for-profit performing arts organization in a performance for a public-school student audience for a maximum of up to five (5) days per school year provided the student's parent or guardian provides a written note to the school authorities explaining the reason for the student's absence
- 10. For the purpose of participating in a cultural ceremony or event. "Cultural" for these purposes means relating to the habits, practices, beliefs, and traditions of a certain group of people.
- 11. To spend time with a member of the student's immediate family who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position, for a specific number of days as determined by the student's Principal or designee.
- 12. Attendance at the student's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen.
- 13. Authorized parental leave for a pregnant or parenting student for up to eight (8) weeks, which may be extended if deemed medically necessary by the student's physician.
- 14. Middle school and high school students will be excused from school for one school day long absence per school year for participating in a civic or political event. Includes, but is not limited to, voting, poll working, strikes, public commenting, candidate speeches, political or civic forums, and town halls.
- 15. Participation in religious instruction or exercises as follows: The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four (4) school days per month.
- 16. Upon advance written request by the parent or guardian and approval by the student's Principal or designee, for justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Appearance in court;
  - b. Attendance at a funeral service other than as stated above;

- c. Observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion (not to exceed one schoolday per semester).; or
- d. Attendance at religious retreats.
- e. Attendance at an employment conference.
- f. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization

For the purpose of the absences described above, "immediate family" means the student's parent or guardian, sibling (biological, adoptive, or step-sibling), grandparent, or any other relative living in the student's household.

A student who is absent due to an excused absence will be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the excused absence that can be reasonably provided and will receive full credit upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time. The teacher of the class from which a student is absent shall determine which tests and assignments are reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the excused absence.

Please schedule appointments and family vacations during out of school time. A student can only leave school for a partial absence if a parent or designated guardian who is listed on the student's emergency contact information comes to the front office in person and signs the student out. Identification will be checked prior to release of the student. If a guardian not listed on the student's emergency contact needs to check out a student, previous permission must be granted through administrative staff or the student's Counselor. All students are expected to return to school within a reasonable time after the appointment ends, and they must sign back in at the front office upon returning to campus.

## **Unexcused Absences**

All absences that do not fall under the excused absence list above shall be considered "unexcused". Examples of unexcused absences include missing class or other mandatory School activities due to a family trip or vacation, caring for siblings, lack of transportation to school, or otherwise skipping class.

## **Method for Verification of Absences**

Verification of absences is necessary for purposes of enforcing compulsory education laws. Parents or guardians must notify the School, within 24 hours, of the reason for any absence, excused or unexcused. When reporting a student absent, the parent or guardian must call the student's respective School's campus office each day the student is absent. If the School does not receive a call, School staff will attempt to contact the parent or guardian to verify the absence.

For all absences, the parent or guardian shall, upon the student's return to School following the absence, provide a satisfactory written explanation verifying the reason for the absence. Unless otherwise provided in this Policy, the following forms of documentation can be used to verify excused absences:

- Written note or email from the parent or guardian.
- Physician's note verifying the reason for the absence should it be due to a personal medical appointment or illness.

Verification of absences must include the date of the absence, reason(s) for the absence, and must be signed by the parent, guardian, or physician, as appropriate. All absence notes must be submitted within 10 calendar days of the original date of absence. Email verifications may be checked by telephone confirmation with parent or guardian. If a student shows a pattern of chronic absenteeism due to illness, School staff may require physician verification of any further absences. An absence not properly verified will be considered unexcused. The Principal or designee, at his or her discretion, may require additional documentation to verify whether an absence is excused.

## Attendance Panel

Regular school attendance is fundamental to learning. In order to effectuate the goals of this Policy, Bright Star utilizes an Attendance Panel ("Panel"). Key objectives of the Panel are to help work with families to ensure school attendance, and to make determinations at attendance-related parent conferences and hearings. The Panel shall consider and determine whether a student's unexcused absences constitute a voluntary withdrawal from the School. There is no appeal from the Panel's determination in that regard.

The Panel shall consist of at least three members of the School's administration, which may include School Administrators, selected by the Executive Director. The school principal for any particular student should not participate as a panel member for conferences and determinations for that student, but may participate in a non-adjudicatory role.

## Consequences for Excessive Unexcused Absences

The School shall implement the following procedures and interventions with regard to unexcused absences that occur in one school year:

- **2 unexcused absences:** The School Office Manager will be calling home to verify the reason for the absence.
- **4 unexcused absences:** The School Counselor will be calling home to determine barriers to attendance and provide resources. Additionally, the student's School Administrator may also call home.
- **Upon the 6th unexcused absence:** An Attendance Warning letter will be sent home. A meeting will be conducted by the principal or designee, student's counselor and one other school staff member to determine what resources may be needed to ensure the student's improved attendance at school and notifying the parent/guardian of the student's absentee status and to review the student's records and develop an intervention plan. Parents will also be reminded of this attendance policy.
- **After the 8th unexcused absence:** the Principal or designee will contact the parent or guardian by telephone to discuss the reason(s) for the absences. The School will send the parent or guardian a second Attendance Warning Letter and schedule a mandatory attendance meeting with the Panel to determine how the School can help improve the student's attendance.
- **After the 10th unexcused absence:** the School will interpret this as the parent's or guardian's expression of an intent and desire to voluntarily withdraw their child from the School. The Principal or designee will contact the parent or guardian by telephone and send the third and Final Attendance Letter/Involuntary Removal Notice acknowledging the parent or guardian's desire to voluntarily withdraw their student from the School. The

letter will provide an opportunity to the parent, guardian or Educational Rights Holder to request a hearing regarding the child's unexcused absences and voluntary withdrawal from the school. The hearing shall occur not less than five school days before the effective date of the withdrawal. The parent or guardian will have the opportunity to present testimony and evidence. If the parent or guardian does not request a hearing within five (5) school days of receiving the Final Attendance Letter/Involuntary Removal Notice, or fails to appear at this hearing, the School will acknowledge the failure to request or appear as the voluntary withdrawal of the child from the School. On the effective removal date indicated on the Final Attendance Letter/Involuntary Removal Notice, the School shall drop the student from its roster and notify the District Superintendent of the student's last known District of Residence.

## **Involuntary Removal**

As charter schools are schools of choice and as a charter school student who fails to attend school is potentially depriving another student of their opportunity to enroll, a student may be involuntarily removed as described within the Charter School's Board adopted Attendance Policy for truancy and only after the Charter School follows the requirements of the Attendance Policy and only in accordance with the policy described above which requires notice and an opportunity for a parent, guardian, educational rights holder to request a hearing prior to any involuntary removal. Students who are involuntarily removed for truancy will be given a rehabilitation plan and will be subject to the readmission procedures set forth herein.