



Mount Boucherie Senior Secondary School Staff Handbook

ATTENDANCE

All available information can be found in this document. If you have any questions, see one of the school administrators.

Details

Philosophy

Our mission is to do all that we can do to educate and support our students in realizing their unique and full potential, and in living purposeful lives. We recognize in order to achieve this we must establish a partnership with our students and their parents or care-givers. Despite all our best efforts to encourage success, a student's actions can severely impact this process. One area of concern is attendance.

We believe the essence of our educational programs occur in classrooms with skilled teachers. Explanations, clarifications, discussions, opportunities for feedback, and group tasks are invaluable components of an effective learning environment. That is why our policy regarding attendance is that students are expected to attend all classes each and every day.

The goal of our attendance policy is to:

- increase student success by promoting daily attendance, and
- help students develop responsibility in preparation for attendance expectations in their future careers

Developing effective attendance habits requires the cooperation of students, parents, the school, and the community. We must work together to promote, carefully monitor, and encourage regular attendance. Attendance is a necessary component of student success in school. A review of our data from previous years clearly indicates that poor attendance results in poor achievement. The best place for students to learn is in the classroom.

Attendance Policy

Ensuring good attendance rates is a shared responsibility between the student, parent, teacher, support staff and administration. If each person involved follows the established procedures and follows through on their responsibilities, our efforts will be rewarded.

Policy Summary – a summary of the research on response plans for attendance clearly shows that the response to the first and second unexcused absence is **crucial** to correcting the negative behavior. ***A discussion with the parent and a plan to correct the negative behavior is needed by the second unexcused absence.***

An absence is an absence regardless of the reason. Each absence results in a lost learning opportunity in the classroom, which is impossible to entirely regain. All absences require a phone call or a written explanation from parents/guardians.

This policy was developed with input from staff, students, parents and our School Planning Council.

Absences fall into three main categories:

EXCUSED	Explained UNEXCUSED	UNEXCUSED
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student illness 2. Medical “Specialist” appointments 3. Death in the immediate family 4. Observance of a religious holiday 5. Family emergency 6. Personal Safety Issues 7. Administrator’s Discretion 8. School sponsored event 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work related absence 2. Sleeping In 3. Transportation Issues 4. Baby sitting for parent 5. Trip or Holiday without a school approved plan 6. Non school sanctioned event 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Failure to substantiate absence within 2 days 2. Failure to attend assembly or Homeroom 3. In or around school but not in class 4. Any absence not meeting the criteria outlined for “Excused”

The reasons listed in the “excused” column are legitimate and make-up work will be provided by our teaching staff.

Note: Vacation time and work are not considered reasons for make-up work to be provided by our teachers.

Response Plan for Student Absences

Teachers will respond to unexcused absence as outlined below, and will keep accurate records of all actions taken. Teachers should print out an “*Emergency List*” for each of their classes. These lists, which can be obtained by navigating to “Reports” in *Teacher Assistant* and then by selecting “*Emergency List*” and the “print,” provide ALL the contact information you will need for each student (home number, work number, and email and cellular phone if provided by the parent). We suggest keeping a hard copy close by your telephone so you have quick and convenient access to this information when you need it (without having to log on to BCesis).

Keep a copy of each class handy and you’ll be able to contact a parent by phone quickly without having to rely on BCesis!

Unexcused Absences

The following procedures are in effect for unexcused absences:

1 – 3 unexcused absence		4 – 7 unexcused absences		8 - 10 absences	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher meets with the student privately to review this attendance policy and consequences for further absences. 2. Teacher directs student to bring in a note from a parent, clarifying the absence, by next class. If student does not comply, teacher is to phone home and notify parent. A message on the parent's voicemail is sufficient at this stage. 3. <i>SynerVoice</i> automated message will reinforce, not replace, the teacher's contact. 4. Missed class time made up with teacher upon request. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Teacher makes contact and has an actual conversation with parent/guardian. 6. Teacher reviews attendance policy with the parent or care-giver and outlines the consequences for further absences. 7. Teacher posts a message on the "Attendance" icon on MBS Staff and copies it to the Behavior Support Teacher (BST) as an "FYI. 8. Teacher refers student to our Behavior Support Teacher (BST) 9. Work ethic mark may be lowered at teacher's discretion. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consequences for further absences will be reviewed with student by Behavior Support Teacher or Counsellor 2. 1 day disciplinary workstation may be assigned in The Den by BST 3. Parent contacted by Behavior Support Teacher or Counsellor. 4. Student is referred to the appropriate Vice Principal by the BST. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Student not permitted to return to any classes until a meeting to develop a plan with the parent/guardian has occurred. 6. Plan/agreement will be established between parent and school with clear conditions and consequences. 7. This plan is to be distributed to student, parent and appropriate staff members. 8. Student will be assigned a 2-day in-school suspension. 9. An "N" may be assigned for Work Ethic mark. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students missing more than 7 days may be referred to <i>School Success Team (SST)</i> 2. SST will consider referral to <i>Hospital Homebound Program</i>, alternate program, IEP, or if further disciplinary action is required. 3. Student is placed on <i>Academic Probation</i> which will be a contract stating clearly what is expected and what the consequences will be for further absences. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Administration will discuss contract with the student and parent and provide a copy to each of the student's teachers and his/her counselor. 5. Student may lose the opportunity to continue with the affected course(s) 6. Counselor and Administrator to review with teacher whether or not course should be dropped.

Lateness

It is expected that students will be in class on time. The classroom teacher through student-teacher conferences and phone calls home will deal with occasional tardiness. Students who are late must report to the office to sign in.

A consequence will be arranged in consultation with the Behaviour CEA, the teacher and the administration. This may involve a lunch hour detention to make up for the lost instructional time. Habitual lateness should be referred to our *Behavior Support Teacher* who will design an action plan with the student and the teacher, and administration where necessary. As always, parents/guardians must be kept informed through parent-teacher conferences and phone calls home. Teachers must continue to provide a student's educational program.

General Information for Teachers

1. Teachers will send home interim reports on all students at the mid-point of the first term of each semester. Staff will include attendance on each of their interims.
2. Daily assessment will be part of a student's overall evaluation. Daily assessment also assists in designing future educational activities and benefits students who are in class participating, learning, and engaging.
3. *SynerVoice*, our automated computer callout, will also phone home daily for unexplained absences. Students who are late or excused for being absent will not receive a call through *SynerVoice*. Teachers should be aware that this automated message does not replace teacher-parent contact. It is merely a supplemental measure to promote good attendance.
4. Teachers must comply with the attendance procedures as outlined in this document. Our attendance record is viewed as a legal document, and it is imperative that it be kept up to date and accurate. **Note that students are not considered dropped from a course until their name no longer appears on your BCesis class list.** Continue to mark students absent until they drop the class.
5. It is important that teachers follow the procedures outlined for unexcused absences. **DO NOT REFER A STUDENT WITHOUT TAKING THE NECESSARY PRELIMINARY STEPS.**
6. Positive Attendance Strategies for Teachers:
 - Ensure that all students realize the importance of good attendance.
 - Make every class count.
 - Follow up on all absences.
 - Reward good attendance (by individuals or the class).
 - Keep in contact with parents.
 - Discuss importance of attendance with students.

General Procedures - Parents

Parents/Guardians are responsible for calling the school (250-712-7040) if the student(s) in their care is going to be away, and clerical staff will record accordingly. Students may be required to bring a note from a parent/guardian confirming his/her absence upon their return. Communication between parents, students, and teachers is critical when a student is absent from class. Students are ultimately responsible for this direct communication and for the work they miss during an absence.

Helpful Hints For Parents

- If you receive a call from our automated *Synrevoice* system reporting an unexcused absence, follow up with your child AND the school. Investigate! Get the facts!
- Phone the office and ask to speak to one of our secretaries. Teachers are usually teaching a class and can't always get back to you right away, but our office staff can find out immediately if your child is where he/she is supposed to be.
- Keep a copy of your child's timetable, master timetable and bell schedule and school contact information handy. If you're at work and need to contact the school to follow up on an attendance issue, you're one step ahead.

- Email your child's teachers. If you have Internet access, set your browser to: www.mbs.sd23.bc.ca, click on "Staff Directory," then click on the name of the teacher you want to contact. Please put your child's name in the subject line.
- Check the *MBSS Parent Handbook*, containing our school calendar, for important dates. If you know when our report cards are issued, ask your son or daughter for them when they get home from school.
- Provide updated and accurate contact information to the school.
- Monitor your child's daily school attendance.
- Maintain contact with your son/daughter's teachers re performance and attendance
- Attend parent/teacher/student conferences as needed.
- Have a good understanding of the school's attendance policy, specifically the difference between an excused and a non-excused absence.
- Contact the school within 30 minutes of start time if a student is going to be absent.
- If requested, send a note that briefly explains the absence, when your student returns to school.

When Should Parents be Concerned About Their Child's Attendance?

Attendance and truancy problems do not usually occur without warning signs. You, as parents/guardians, should be aware of signs that youth often exhibit when they are truant. If one or more of the following circumstances is an observation or concern of yours, truancy may be a contributing factor and should be examined as a possible cause:

- unable to share any details about his or her daily school activities;
- not bringing home any communication in writing or by telephone from the school;
- not motivated to be successful in school;
- having learning difficulties and may be unable to keep up with the rest of the class;
- failing multiple classes;
- arriving home from school earlier or later than the expected time;
- staying out late at night without permission,
- refusing to get up for school or is engaging in prolonged dawdling;
- hanging out with others who are known to skip school;
- showing signs of depression;
- afraid of being bullied, harassed, or fears physical harm;

Extended Absences Policy

Each year we are approached by an increasing number of parents who wish to take their child out of school for extended periods of time. Usually this is for reasons associated with family plans 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 families 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, however, when parents wish to have some sort of reassurance that their child will not be "behind" in their work when they return. If your child misses school for extended periods of time, he or she will be "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. Missed instructional time cannot be "made up" unless lessons are re-taught.

Although teachers will do their best to help students get "caught up", they are, generally speaking, not in the position to provide make-up assignments for children who have extended absences due to family vacations. The decision to provide "make-up" work will depend greatly on the student's attendance, work habits and effort prior to the date of the extended absence. It is up to the student to make arrangements with each of their teachers well in advance of the date of the

absence. In most cases, this arrangement will consist of the student attending tutorials outside of instructional time when the teacher is available to meet with students.

Students who are away for extended periods due to medical, social or emotional issues are referred to our School Success Team for support. In most cases, students are referred to the *Hospital-Homebound Program* where their needs can be met in a much more effective way.

Administration Responsibilities for Good Student Attendance

- Establish attendance goals and oversee the school attendance program.
- Monitor daily student attendance and ensure accurate attendance data collection. Our behavioral CEA will track students with inconsistent attendance on behalf of teachers, School Success Team, our behavior Support Teacher and administration.
- Promote attendance incentives.
- Recognize parents and community partners.
- Respond to chronic truants (follow the established procedures).
- Implement and maintain a successful school attendance program.

Things School Staff Can Do To Improve Attendance

- Make students and parents/guardians feel welcome. Make a point to say hello to every parent, guardian, and/or student you see in the halls and outside. Make it your business to know their names.
- Create an environment that helps students feel successful in something, no matter how small it may seem.
- When students are absent, immediately talk to their parents/guardians -- not their answering machines. Make a personal phone call in the evening, or call parents or guardians at work during the day.
- When students are absent, immediately talk with them about why they were gone. Let them know you are aware, and that you care that they are at school.
- Reward and recognize good attendance, not just perfect attendance. Post large signs announcing the daily attendance for the day. Find ways to publicly reward individuals, classes, or even the whole school when student attendance increases or meets set goals.
- Make your class a place where kids feel safe and respected. Adopt a character education program that is planned and implemented by students.