

Frequently Asked Questions About Attendance

1. How can I tell if my child is absent or late from school?

The school will telephone or send mailings to your home when your child is absent from school. In addition, report cards and parent-teacher conferences will provide you with information about your child's attendance in school. You may also contact your child's school for this information.

2. Who can I speak to in the school if my child is not attending and I need support or advice?

Ask to speak to your child's guidance counselor. If the school does not have a guidance counselor, ask to speak to the assistant principal in charge of attendance or the attendance coordinator. If your child is not attending a subject class, speak to the teacher.

3. Must I send a note to school when my child is absent from school?

Yes. In addition, if your child visits a doctor, provide the school with a doctor's note.

4. Can my child fail a subject for non-attendance in class?

Promotion is not based on attendance alone. Your child's academic progress, class work and test scores along with attendance are considered in the evaluation of your child's work.

5. Can I get attendance records for my child?

Custodial parents, legal guardians or students who have reached the age of 18 may obtain attendance records.

6. What can I do if my child was marked absent erroneously?

Contact the school directly and ask to speak to the attendance office or the person in charge of attendance.

7. Can I take my child on vacation when school is in session?

No. If you take your child on vacation while school is in session, it is considered an unlawful absence.

8. How do I determine which school my child should be attending?

The Office of Zoning may be contacted at (212) 374-5426 if you need information concerning your child's zoned school or the Regional office.

9. Must I escort my child when registering him/her for school?

Yes. It is necessary for you to provide and complete important documents upon enrolling your child.

10. What documents can be used for proof of address?

A utility bill (gas, electric or water), deed to a house, documents from City Housing Authority, documents from Human Resources Administration, letter of introduction from the Department of Education for students living in temporary housing, notarized letter from lease holder or deed holder along with any of the documents listed above, letter from an employer or community agency (on letterhead), medical insurance card.

11. Must I present a court order when registering a child for school if I am not the parent or legal guardian?

If you are not the child's custodial parent or legal guardian, but you regularly provide the child with food, clothing and shelter, a court order is not required. You must provide the school with a letter which includes your name, home address, telephone number, the name(s) of the parent/ guardian of the child, their home address and telephone numbers, the circumstances under which the student came to reside with you and the duration of the child's stay.

12. Can my child watch my younger children when I go to work?

No. If your child is of legal school age, 17 years old during the current school year, (s)he must attend school.

13. Can I keep my child home during religious observances while school is in session?

If a specific religious observance requires your child to be absent from school, a request in writing to the school must be made prior to the date of observance. Your child will be recorded absent for the day, but it is considered to be an excused absence.

14. Under what circumstance will my child be excluded from attending school?

Your child can be excluded from school for medical reasons such as lack of immunization, tuberculosis examination or a highly contagious disease.

15. If my child will be absent from school for a long period of time because of physical/mental reasons, what must I do?

If a child is medically, physically and/or emotionally/behaviorally/psychologically unable to attend the customary school placement for an anticipated duration of several weeks or more, home instruction may be requested. Contact the Home Instruction Office at (718) 794-7200 for general questions or inquiries.

16. Under what circumstances can my child be discharged from high school?

New York State Education Law requires that children in New York City attend school until they complete the school year in which they turn 17 years of age. Students who are 16 or 17 years old may be discharged from school for full time employment by obtaining a full time Employment Certificate. A pledge of full time employment along with written consent from the parent is required. Students over 17 years of age may be discharged from school following a planning interview with a school counselor. Reasons for discharge may include: entry into military service; admission to a business or trade school; or admission into an approved high school equivalency program (GED). Students may also transfer to a parochial school, private school, or be admitted to college prior to high school graduation.

17. How old must my child be to enter kindergarten?

Children who turn 5 years old by December 31 are entitled to register for kindergarten.

18. What can I do if I am not satisfied with the school my child is attending?

If you are not satisfied with the school your child is attending, request a meeting with your child's guidance counselor to discuss your concerns and possible options. Parents may also contact their local Regional office to inquire about other New York City Department of Education schools and programs.

19. How may I begin the home schooling process?

To begin the home schooling process contact your local Regional office and ask to speak to the Home Schooling Coordinator. If you do not know your Region, contact the Office of Zoning at (212)374-5426.

20. Who can I contact if I am having transportation difficulties?

If you are having transportation difficulties contact your child's school directly.

21. How can I get information about school closings and/or delayed school openings?

Listen to the television or radio announcements, call 311 or call your local Regional office to get information about school closings and delays.

22. If my child is suspended from school, can (s)he be sent home for that time period?

No. Your child must either remain in the current school or be placed in an alternative educational setting if (s)he is suspended.

23. What can I do if a gang prevents my child from attending school?

Contact the principal of your child's school if your child experiences any gang-related issues.

24. Is summer school mandatory?

Summer school is provided as an opportunity for additional instruction for students who have not successfully completed standards-level academic coursework as exhibited by student work; teacher observation and grades; or minimum credit accumulation and/or Regents credit by grade and attainment of satisfactory attendance for the year.