



Attendance Policy

Our goal is for every scholar to attend school every day. Every minute of every day counts and is a learning opportunity. The more time a scholar is in school the more they can learn. Regular attendance in classes is of vital importance if a scholar is to succeed in school and be prepared for college. Absences for any reason hinder learning and should be avoided. The only “excused” reasons to miss school are religious observances, illness, a death in the family, or a family emergency. Scholars must be in attendance four hours of the school day in order to be counted present. Attendance will be taken at 7:45 AM by each scholar’s homeroom teacher. Scholars arriving after this time must check in at the office.

ARKANSAS SCHOOL LAW GOVERNING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Arkansas Code §6-18-202, Ark. Code Ann 6-18-207

The Arkansas Lighthouse Academies Public Charter Schools shall be open and free through completion of the secondary program to all persons in this state between the ages of five (5) and twenty-one (21) years whose parents, legal guardians, or other persons having lawful control of the person under an order of a court that want to attend and to all persons between those ages who have been legally transferred to the district for education purposes.

Absences

Chronic absenteeism is missing so much school for any reason that a scholar is academically at risk. It means missing 10 percent or more of the school year (10 days a semester) for any reason - excused, unexcused and suspensions.

Research reveals that chronically absent scholars are on the fast track to failure. However, studies show that when districts, schools, communities and policymakers recognize and address factors leading to chronic absenteeism, trends to failure can be reversed. The report *Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Scholar Success* reveals that:

- Poor attendance in the first month of school can predict chronic absence for the entire year.
- Absenteeism in kindergarten can affect whether a child develops the grit and perseverance needed to succeed in school.
- Absenteeism in preschool and kindergarten can influence whether a child will be held back in third grade.
- Absenteeism in middle and high school can predict dropout rates.



- Absenteeism influences not just chances for graduating but also for completing college.
- Improving attendance is an essential strategy for reducing achievement gaps.
- When scholars reduce absences, they can make academic gains

The Arkansas Department of Education defines a “state reported” absence as:

“A scholar is absent if he or she is not participating in instruction on school grounds unless the scholar is participating in a district approved activity at an off-grounds location for the school day.”

All absences both excused and unexcused must be reported in the state data system (Eschool).

ARKANSAS SCHOOL LAW GOVERNING COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE

Arkansas school law pertaining to compulsory attendance age is as follows:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code 6-18-201(a) (Amended by Act 570 of 1999) and Act 462 of 2007 is hereby amended to read as follows:

(a) Every parent, guardian, or other person residing within the State of Arkansas having custody or charge of any child or children age five (5) through seventeen (17) years on August 1st (August 2011) of that year, both inclusive, shall enroll and send the child or children to a public, private, or parochial school or provide a home school for the child or children as described in 6-15-601 et seq. under such penalties for noncompliance as shall be set by law with the following exceptions:

(1) Any child who has received a high school diploma, or its equivalent as determined by the State Board of Education, is not subject to attendance requirement.

(2) Any parent, guardian, or other person residing within the state and having custody or charge of any child or children may elect for the child or children not to attend kindergarten if the child or children will not be age six (6) on August 15 of that particular school year. If such an election is made, the parent, guardian, or other person having custody or charge of the child must file a signed kindergarten waiver form with the local district administrative office. Such form shall be prescribed by regulation of the State Department of Education. On filing the kindergarten waiver form, the child or children shall not be required to attend kindergarten in that school year.

(3) Any child enrolled in a post-secondary vocation/technical institution, a community college or a two-year or four-year institution of higher education, is not subject to this attendance.





Military Family Absentee Policy

Arkansas Lighthouse Academies understands the tremendous contribution of military members and their families to the defense of this great nation. Military members must be ready at a moment's notice and often times can affect the children drastically. Those military parents whose child/children must miss one to several days due to a deployment should write an Official Memorandum explaining the circumstances and provide a copy of their orders. Arkansas Lighthouse Academies will excuse any absence incurred and provide class work prior to the parent's official deployment date.

Excused Absences

AR code 6-18-201 Excused absences are those where the scholar was on official school business or absent from school with the parent or guardian's permission and knowledge. A parent may excuse a total of four days per semester by contacting the office of the child's school by a phone call or parent note, provided the note and/or the phone call is made or sent no later than the next school day. AR Code 6-18-222(a)(1)(A).

Other examples of excused absences are: when the absence was due to one of the following reasons and the scholar brings a written statement upon his/her return to school from the parent of legal guardian stating such reason.

- Death or serious illness in their immediate family;
- Observance of recognized holidays observed by their faith;
- Attendance at an appointment with a government agency (court or other legal proceedings);
- Attendance at a medical appointment (doctor, dentist, counselor, etc.)
- Exceptional circumstances with prior approval of the principal
- Participation in a school sanctioned/sponsored activity

Additional excused absences shall be granted to allow a scholar to visit his/her legal guardian who is a member of the military and been called to active duty, is a leave from active duty, or has returned from deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting. The number of additional excused absences shall be at the discretion of the superintendent or designee.





Unexcused Absences

AR Code 6-18-201 an unexcused absence is defined as one in which the scholar is absent without the parent/guardian's permission or knowledge. Any absences not defined as excused are unexcused. Other absences considered to be unexcused absences include absences such as:

- Absences as a result of suspension from school
- Absences from which documentation is not provided by the required time frame.
- Absences in excess of the four days, per semester, allowed by parents.

Scholars in grades 9 through 12 with more than (10) ten unexcused absences in any class during the semester may possibly lose credit in that class. As a preventative measure, parents will be notified and called in for a conference when the scholars has missed five (5) unexcused days, seven (7) unexcused days and nine (9) unexcused days in any class period. At this time, the parent has a right to appeal the school or district administration before reaching the maximum number of days.

Steps:

Scholars with five (5) or more absences per semester: Notification in writing will be sent home via certified mail and the school will arrange a conference (Scholar Support Team Meeting) to discuss the absences with the parents/guardians and to inform them that their child's attendance is not satisfactory and may result in their being retained at the end of the school year.

Upon the 7th absence the school will conduct another conference (Scholar Support Team Meeting) and at this time an attendance contract is put in place.

Scholars with 9 or more absences: The school will conduct a final conference (Scholar Support Team Meeting) and the scholar may not be able to advance to the next grade and will face additional consequences such as additional time required at school (including summer school).

Before the truancy officer can be notified the steps for the 5th, 7th and 9th absence must occur by the school.

Course credit will also be denied when a scholar has 10 or more unexcused absences and when the administrative conferences have been held, unless the principal finds there are extenuating circumstances such that to deny credit would be unfair.

A voluntary withdrawal will occur when a scholar misses 20 total absences or 10 consecutive days without approval from the principal.



Please notify the school office via phone, email, voicemail, or letter by 8:30AM if a scholar must be absent from school for any reason. Upon return to school, the scholar must submit to the teacher a note of explanation signed by a parent/guardian. All absences must be documented at the school through a written/typed, signed letter from a parent/guardian, or if the absence is three days or more due to an illness, a doctor's note may be required. Any absence for any reason will be documented.

In the case of an absence in excess of three (3) days and in all cases of contagious diseases, a doctor's note may be required for re-admittance to the classroom. If you suspect or a staff member reasonably believes your child may have a contagious disease, the scholar may not come to school until he/she has been examined by a doctor. This is in consideration of other scholars and staff.

If you have questions about absences, please contact the School Office Manager.

Scholars with five (5) or more absences per semester will be notified in writing that their attendance is not satisfactory and may result in grade retention, referral to authorities, and /or home/school visits and meetings. Scholars with ten or more absences per semester may not be able to advance to the next grade and may be required to forgo after school team opportunities, attend after school work sessions, or enroll in summer school to get caught up on missing work. The school will arrange a conference to discuss the absences with the parents/guardians.

In certain circumstances, the law may require us to report to the government social services agency that the scholar is not attending school (after 10 absences per semester).

Excessive Absences

When a scholar exceeds the number of absences allowed according to the district's scholar attendance policy per semester (10 days), the school district shall notify the prosecuting authority, the Drivers Control Office, the Truancy Officer and the scholar's parents, guardians or persons in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty, not to exceed \$500 plus court costs and fees. However, excessive absences shall not be a basis for expulsion or dismissal of a scholar but schools can report excessive absences to the Child Maltreatment Hotline.

Tardies

Good school attendance often starts with smaller steps, such as arriving and leaving on time. Some of the most important learning opportunities for scholars occur in the morning where they often participate in morning meetings, morning announcements, and develop relationships with their peers.

Late Arrivals/Early Departures

All scholars are expected to be at school promptly for the beginning of classes at **7:45 AM** and to participate in learning and school activities until **3:45PM**.

Truancy can result in sanctions and legal prosecution of responsible parents/guardians by state authorities.





A scholar will be released for an early dismissal only to an authorized parent/guardian or other person/agency designated in writing by the parent/guardian to be authorized to pick up the child. Parents/guardians must make such arrangements in advance. Upon arriving at the school, the parent/guardian must go to the school office to sign out the child. A parent/guardian may never go directly to a classroom.

Steps and Documentation needed to check out a scholar:

1. Report to school office and request scholar(s).
2. **Office staff will review IDs and documentation/statement signifying you are approved to check out scholar.** Parent and/or guardian will be contacted if there is any discrepancy in the documentation provided.
3. After approval to check out you will need to sign the scholar out by putting the time and scholar's name and grade on the sign/in out log along with your signature.
4. No scholar is allowed to be checked out after 3:15 PM.

Steps for Agencies to check out a scholar:

1. Agency must contact the school via telephone 30 minutes prior to picking up the scholar(s) with a list of the scholars being checked out.
2. Upon arrival the agency must provide a signed permission slip/release agreement from the parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian has information in the scholar's permanent file at school that provides permission to check out their child from the agency, this will be permissible.
3. After approval to check out you will need to sign the scholar out by putting the time and scholar's name and grade on the sign/in out log along with your signature.

If a parent or guardian does not have legal rights to pick up or visit a child, the school must be given a copy of legal documents attesting to this fact. Without such valid legal documents, all parents/guardians are assumed to have equal rights to make decisions regarding their child's education, to pick up the child, and to participate in school activities.