

# RHODE ISLAND

## Non-Public School Requirements

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### Accreditation/ Registration/Licensing/Approval:

- No requirement for *Accreditation*.
- *Registration* is mandatory.
- Registration for a directory **is required for all private schools**. The directory must show: location, name, director or principal of school, grade span, enrollment, and school approval status. [RIGL §16-40-11](#).
- No requirement for *Licensing*.
- *Approval* is mandatory.
- Approval by the Rhode Island Department of Education is required for private schools. [RIGL §16-19-2](#).
- The Rhode Island Department of Education approves private schools that comply with requirements for curriculum, teacher quality, and attendance to the length of school year and instructional time, student health and safety, record keeping, and compliance with state and municipal school site regulations. The Commissioner of Education will grant a hearing to private schools that are denied approval. On appeal, the decision of the Board of Education is final. [RIGL §16-19-2](#), [§16-22-1 et.seq.](#), [§16-40-4](#).

### Teacher Certification

- Certification is not required, but all teachers in non-public special education schools must be certified. All teachers must have a bachelor's degree, a criminal records check, and demonstrated competency in the content area or grade levels they teach. Teachers are expected maintain and develop up to date competencies with appropriate professional development. [RIGL §16-2-18.1](#), [§16-19-2](#); [Regents Regulations L-6-4.4](#).

### Length of School Year/Days

- The period of attendance for private schools must be substantially equal to that required in public schools. The period of attendance, calculated from an approved school calendar and the hours of core instruction must be substantially equal to that required in public schools. Five and one half hours per day, totaling 180 days or the equivalent is required for approval. [RIGL §16-19-2](#); [Regents Regulations L-6-4.4](#).

### Curriculum

- A full curriculum for all grades and subjects must be submitted and be substantially equivalent to that taught in the public schools. Instruction must be provided in reading, writing, geography/social studies, mathematics, and science, the history of the United States and Rhode Island, civic education, and the principles of American government. These subjects must be taught in the English language substantially to the same extent as required in the public schools. Instruction in the principles of popular and representative government under the Rhode Island and United States constitutions must be provided as

well as instruction in health and physical education similar to that required in public schools. [RIGL §16-19-2](#), [§16-22-2](#), [§16-22-4](#).

- Each school shall have a carefully planned program of study and activities consistent with its policy and objectives, which shall be approved by the Commissioner of Education. [RIGL §16-19-2](#).

### **Recordkeeping/Reports**

- Private school teachers must keep a register of the names of all students, their sex and age, names of parents or guardians, the time when each student enters and leaves the school, and their daily attendance. Private schools are obligated to prepare reports required by the school committee or Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. [RIGL §16-12-4](#).
- Whenever a K–9 pupil fails to report to school and no indication has been received by the private school that the pupil's parent/guardian is aware of the pupil's absence, the school must make a reasonable effort to notify the parents of the child's absence. School personnel or volunteers organized for this purpose are immune from any civil or criminal liability in connection with the notice to parents. [RIGL §16-19-10](#).
- Private schools that provide multiple kindergarten sessions must make every effort to give written notice to parents which session their child has been placed 30 days before the start of the school year. [RIGL §16-2-28.2](#).

### **Health & Safety Requirements**

- Students entering private schools must furnish evidence of immunization as prescribed by regulation of the Director of Health and the Commissioner of Education, or a certificate from a licensed physician stating the student is not a fit subject for immunization for medical reasons or a certificate signed by the parent/guardian stating that immunization is contrary to their beliefs. [RIGL §16-38-2](#).
- Private schools must comply with building code standards established by the state building code standards committee. By August 1 of each year, the local fire chief, local building inspector, the director of the State Department of Health and the director of the State Labor Department must determine and notify the private schools as to whether the schools conform to state law and regulation. Private school officials must ensure that schools are not opened until notification is received; neglect is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine not exceeding \$500. [RIGL §16-21-3, 3.1](#).
- Private schools must instruct and train the pupils by means of drills to leave school buildings and/or be locked down in an emergency in the shortest possible time and without confusion or panic. Fifteen drills are required annually, including fire, lockdown, and evacuation drills. At least one drill shall be conducted each month, and at least one out of every four must be obstructed drills, i.e. at least 1 or more exits and stairways blocked. As part of the required 15 emergency drills, each school must conduct two evacuation drills and two lockdown drills. One lockdown drill shall occur in September and one in January. Neglect by a private school to comply is a violation punishable by a fine not exceeding \$200. [RIGL §16-21-4](#); [§16-21-5](#); [§23-28.12-15](#); [§23-28.12-36](#); [S2629](#).
- In residence facilities in private schools, there shall be at least four (4) drills or rapid dismissals during the academic year for each school building or residence facility, at least two (2) of which shall be held between the months of September through December

inclusive. The remaining two (2) drills shall be held between the months of January through June inclusive. At least one drill or rapid dismissal shall be obstructed so that at least one or more exits or stairways in the school building or dormitory are blocked off or not used. For purposes of this section “residence facility” shall mean dormitory, fraternity, sorority, or any other type of residence hall, whether on campus or off campus, owned or leased by a college, university, post-secondary institution, public schools, or private school with accommodations for twenty (20) or more students. For purposes of this section “residence facility” shall mean dormitory, fraternity, sorority, or any other type of residence hall, whether on campus or off campus, owned or leased by a college, university, post-secondary institution, public schools, or private school with accommodations for twenty (20) or more students. Neglect by a private school to comply is a violation punishable by a fine not exceeding \$200. [RIGL §16-21-4](#); [§16-21-5](#); [§23-28.12-15](#); [§23-28.12-36](#); [S2629](#).

- Private schools must provide students, teachers, and visitors, approved eye protective devices for specified vocational or industrial arts classes and chemical laboratory classes. Students and teachers are required to wear protective devices at all times while participating in the courses. [RIGL §16-21-15](#).
- Retail licenses to sell alcoholic beverages are restricted in areas within 200 feet of any private or parochial K–12 school. [RIGL §3-7-19](#).
- Willful disturbance of a private school is a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment not exceeding one year or a fine not exceeding \$500. [RIGL §11-11-1](#).
- It is a criminal offense to willfully trespass on private school property after being suspended from attendance or forbidden by a police officer, guard or school official, punishable by incremental fines for repeated offenses. [RIGL §11-44-26.1](#).
- Possession of a firearm on private school grounds, except for educational purposes, is a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment for not less than one year nor more than five years, or a fine not less than \$500 nor more than \$5,000. [RIGL §1-47-60](#).
- Each student, staff member, teacher, and administrator has a right to attend and/or work at a school which is safe and secure, and which is conducive to learning, and which is free from the threat, actual or implied, of physical harm by a disruptive student. [RIGL §16-2-17](#).
- Private schools are subject to RI Safe School Act [RIGL §16.21.33](#); [§16.21.34](#) on bullying - a statewide bullying policy, ensuring a consistent and unified, statewide approach to the prohibition of bullying at school.
- Private schools are subject to the RI Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs. One of these regulations, Section 2.5 in Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs, requires all LEAs and nonpublic-school authorities to submit to the Commissioner of Education and to the Director of Health on an annual basis a report pertaining to the school or district health program. [RI Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs](#), promulgated pursuant to the authority conferred under [RIGL Chapters 16-21](#), [35-4](#), and [23-1-18\(4\)](#).

## **Transportation**

- Rhode Island is divided into five regional transportation areas. Districts must provide transportation for private school students within the district and within the region if no other similar school operates within the district. School committees must provide

transportation to and from school for elementary and high school pupils attending private schools if the pupil resides so far from the school as to make the pupil's attendance impractical, or if a student's physical disability or infirmity would make attendance impracticable. Private schools operated for profit are not eligible. [RIGL §16-21-1](#).

### **Textbooks**

- Rhode Island loans textbooks free of charge to all pupils of elementary and secondary schools including private schools. Local school districts must loan textbooks in reading/language arts, history/social studies, science, math, and modern foreign languages, as well as texts for some other subject areas. However, the only books that can be loaned are books being used in the public schools of Rhode Island as published on a state approved textbook list. Other instructional materials will have to be purchased. [RIGL §16-23-2](#).

### **Testing**

- Private school students' participation in state testing is voluntary. [RIGL §16-22-9](#).

### **Special Education**

- Notwithstanding any other federal or state law or regulation, the school committee where a parentally placed child who has or develops a disability in private school resides, shall provide the child with the same free and appropriate education as it provides to children in public schools. These children shall have the same rights and remedies in the regulations of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education governing the education of children with disabilities as children in public school relative to initially determining eligibility, implementation and/or any other rights and remedies relative to any special education services the child may be eligible or receive from the public school district. [RIGL §16-24-1](#).

### **Nursing and Health**

- Private schools are required to have a comprehensive health and physical education program. All private school students must participate in health screening requirements. Private schools have regulations for the investment of school nurses that ensure students quality services. [RI Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs](#).
- Private schools may participate in the federally funded school lunch program operated in the state. [RIGL §16-8-7](#) et seq.
- Private schools are subject to the [RI Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs](#).

### **Technology**

- There is no state policy at this time.

### **Professional Development**

- Private school faculty is encouraged to continue professional development throughout their careers. Opportunities for professional development may be sent to private schools by the state through the private school list serve.

### **Reimbursement for performing state/local functions**

- There is no state policy at this time.

### **Tax Exemption**

- Rhode Island has a state policy that recognizes tax-exempt status for private schools.  
[RIGL §44-3-3.](#)

### **Public Aid for Private Education**

**Constitutional Provisions:** No person shall be compelled to frequent or to support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatever, except in fulfillment of such person's voluntary contract.

[Rhode Island Constitution Art. I, §3.](#)

**Programs for financial assistance for attendance at private schools:** In 2007, Rhode Island began the *Corporate Scholarship Tax Credit Program*, which provides tax credits to corporations that contribute to Scholarship Organizations (SOs). Corporations received a credit valued at 75 percent of the contributions made or 90 percent if the second-year donation is worth at least 80 percent of the first year's donation, with a maximum credit of \$100,000. The state has capped the amount of credits available to be \$1 million. In order for students to be eligible for these corporate scholarships they must be from families whose income does not exceed 250 percent of the federal poverty level. [RIGL §44-62.](#)