

Attendance Policy

Rationale

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted. All children of school age must be enrolled at a registered school and attend school at all times when the school is open for instruction or seek enrolment for other approved tuition.

Consistent school attendance enables students to maximise their full potential and to actively participate and engage in their learning. (DET – School Policy & Advisory Guide)

Purpose:

- To promote in partnership with parents/guardians the regular attendance of students
- To support families of students who are regularly absent from school to understand that these students are at risk of missing out on fundamental aspects of their education and social development
- To ensure that school staff are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school
- To provide intervention processes to actively support full student attendance

Guidelines:

- Ensuring that students attending school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents/guardians and the school
- Students are expected to attend normal school hours every school day of each term
- The school will use CASES21 to record student attendance
- The school must monitor attendance and absences at least twice daily in order to satisfy school and ESOS attendance requirements
- Parents/guardians are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school and the school records the reason given by the parent/guardian
- Students who are absent due to extended family holidays must provide a written explanation before commencement of leave, including the date of expected return
- The school must maintain attendance records and develop processes to support and maintain attendance
- All students enrolled in the school are required to have their attendance recorded, even if they only attend the school part time. Attendance for the times the student is not expected to attend will be recorded, so it does not count towards the absences for the school (government schools will use code 602 Exempt in CASES21)
- Monitoring attendance to satisfy DET requirements

Implementation:

The class teacher must record:

- Attendance twice daily
- An absence as unexplained and if no excuse has been given
- A change in the attendance record once an excuse is provided or established
- When the student has attended at least two hours of instruction as being present for a half day

- If a student is not present but attending a school-approved activity. In this situation, the teacher or staff member in charge of the activity will record attendance and ensure parents/guardians are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school. i.e. sporting activities, camps
- The school will regularly refer to DET initiatives such as *'It's Not Ok to be Away'* as well as highlighting to families the importance of arriving at school on time
- Schools must advise parents/guardians of unexplained absences, on the same day, as soon as possible
- Parents are recommended to use the Wantirna Primary School 'Flexibuzz' notification system to inform the school of their child's absence
- Absence procedures to be included in Wantirna Primary School Information Booklet for all year levels

Intervention Strategies to Improve a Student's Attendance may include some or all of the following:

- Engaging with the family
- Meetings with parents/guardians
- Addressing individual student needs
- Attendance Student Support Group
- Attendance Improvement Plan and Return to School Plan
- Individual Education Plan if required
- Student Absence Learning Plan if required
- Referral to school community based wellbeing professional re-engagement programs
- Referral to School DET Attendance Officer
- Reporting concern: referral to Child FIRST or report to DHHS

Whole-school strategies

- Communicate attendance expectations to all members of the school community
- Adopt consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence
- Follow up student absences promptly and consistently
- Implement data driven attendance improvement strategies e.g. DET data
- Provide a safe, supportive learning environment where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning
- Identify early and provide supportive intervention for students at risk of non-attendance
- Provide a staged response to student absence
- Discussions on student attendance in staff meetings
- Implementation of effective transition programs including transitions within the school
- Individual Education Plans (when appropriate) including attendance and punctuality and attendance goals
- Structures and activities encouraging parents/guardians involvement in the school
- The principal must advise parents/guardians promptly of any unexplained absences
- It is the parent's responsibility to keep contact details up to date
- The school will keep records of all attempts to contact parents/guardians and any information obtained
- The school will take care to notify the parent who is responsible for ensuring the child's attendance on that particular day
- If contact cannot be made with the parent, the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school
- If upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent/carer/guardian reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school will

ensure they notify another parent/carer/guardian who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s)

- If **within three days** of the initial absence, the parents/guardians fail to provide an explanation, or the explanation is deemed unsatisfactory, the school must attempt to contact the parents/guardians (by telephone, letter or email) requesting a satisfactory explanation
- If following contact via phone, letter or email, the parent/carers/guardian explanation is deemed satisfactory, the accurate cause of absence must be recorded and entered into CASES21.
- If **within 10 days** of the initial absence, there has been no satisfactory explanation provided, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence in CASES21 and must also be noted in the student's file
- Attendance meetings with parents/guardians will be convened following initial contact with the parents/guardians, when a student's attendance pattern is of concern to the school

No reasonable explanation provided

- For all absences where the principal has determined that a parents/guardians has not provided a reasonable explanation, the school must notify the parents/guardians in writing, that the absences have been recorded as unexplained. The Principal will ensure that wherever possible, a letter or email is addressed to the parents/guardians who has been deemed responsible for the child's absence on the relevant day(s) and:
 - they may not have met their obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. an accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer
 - failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice

Reference: Part 2.1 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* as amended by the *Education and Training Reform Amendment (School Attendance) Act 2013*.

Attendance meetings with students, parents/guardians – are intended to:



- Review strategies initiated to support the student's attendance and examine why non-attendance has not been resolved
- Establish a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving the attendance of the student
- Focus on proactive solutions (rather than disciplinary) initiate transparent and immediate action (if appropriate) in response to any problems identified by the parents/guardians or the student

Student Support Group

- For on-going intensive support of students, a student support group will be convened by the Principal (or nominee) and attended by relevant school support staff, relevant teachers, relevant school student service support staff, parents/guardians and the student if appropriate
- Professionals from other agencies may also attend as appropriate, with the permission of the parents/guardians
- The purposes of this meeting are to:
 - Ensure that the parents/guardians are aware of the absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student
 - Identify the reasons for the student's absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student
 - Develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan and/or Individual Education Plan.
- The Student Support Group may also initiate referrals to community support agencies for specialist interventions delivered in partnership with the Student Support Group
- A Return to School Plan can be implemented to assist in the reintegration of the student after a prolonged absence. This plan will be developed with the parents/guardians and student (if appropriate)

Evaluation

Evaluation of this policy will be carried out by the Education Committee as part of the cyclic review process in three years' time or beforehand if a significant need arises.

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| Date Implemented | 2018 |
| Author | Education Committee: Sue Fergeus, Emma Gardner, Vicki Blundell |
| Approved By | School Council |
| Approval Authority (Signature & Date) |   |
| Date Reviewed | 2018 |
| Responsible for Review | |
| Review Date | 2021 |