



# Attendance Policy

## **Rationale:**

As attendance is intrinsic to educational opportunity, the Department of Education and Training (DET) policy is that all students enrolled in government schools must attend on a full-time basis unless absent with the authority of the school. This policy acknowledges that attendance depends on active cooperation between the school, parents/caregivers and the student.

## **Purpose:**

Research into school attendance has identified factors that facilitate effectiveness in this area and we aim to provide:

- a supportive school environment;
- a curriculum that provides for all students;
- structures and approaches that facilitate the success of all students;
- effective record keeping;
- prompt follow-up of absences;
- close liaison with parents/caregivers;
- guidance and support for those with attendance problems; and
- a cooperative community/interagency approach to the area.

## **Policy:**

- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- Parents are required to advise the school of the reason for all absences.
- Parents will be required to provide the school with a reason for unexplained absences at the end of each month.
- Illness is a reasonable ground for an absence – shopping excursions or birthday parties are not.

## **Implementation:**

### **Parents:**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children are attending school during normal school hours every day of each term unless they are ill or if absolutely necessary due to a reasonable excuse.

Parents are also responsible for:

- phoning the school to advise the reason for the absence if the absence is for 1 or 2 days; or
- providing a written note or return a completed Student Absence Notice (available on the School website) to the school explaining why an absence has occurred if an absence is for 3 days or more.

Information will be clearly conveyed to parents that it is their obligation to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence. Parents will be encouraged to notify the school in advance of any absence, where practicable. Where there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a student, prompt communication will occur with the parents/guardians/caregivers. Parents of students will contact the school office on 9772 3471 and leave a message stating the name of their child, the child's class **and the reason for the absence**. If the reason for the absence

is not provided, the absence is recorded as unexplained. This means it will show on CASES the school database as an unexplained absence. Legislation in Victoria allows for the prosecution of parents for the regular truancy of their children.

**Teachers:**

Are responsible for accurately marking rolls twice daily using CASES and keep records (notes) of all absences, including lateness. Both the roll and notes are legal documents. Teachers are to encourage students to bring notes to school explaining absences. Morning rolls are to be entered onto CASES by 9.15am.

**School:**

Rolls entered into CASES are reviewed daily. At the end of each month, a monthly summary report of each grade is given to the Assistant Principal for checking.

**Assistant Principal:**

The Assistant Principal is responsible for ensuring:

- that attendance records are maintained and monitored;
- unexplained absences are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism are adequately explained.

The Assistant Principal highlights the names of students who have been late or did not attend school for four or more days during the month without reason. The Assistant Principal will send computer generated notes to parents of students who have had 4 or more unexplained absences for the month; a note will also be sent home for those students who are late 4 or more times during the month.

The Assistant Principal will contact the families either by phone or letter whose children's attendance is of concern.

All notes held by classroom teachers will be collected at the end of the school year and stored for 12 months.

**Procedures:**

Roll is to be marked twice daily both am. (9:00) and pm. (2:40pm).

If students are absent then the classroom teacher is to inquire about the whereabouts of an individual. (A note signed or verbal from parent/guardian is required).

Student absences will be reported on student half year and end of year reports.

**The following steps are to be followed if no reason is given for Absence:**

1. Contact with parents /guardian within 3 days of unexplained absence. (Phone or personal contact is acceptable.)
2. If the student's absence remains unresolved after the initial contact, the school will convene a meeting with parents/guardians and the student (if appropriate). The purpose of the meeting is to:
  - ensure parents are aware of absence and its implications;
  - examine the reasons for non-attendance; and
  - identify whether further assistance will be needed.Grade teacher and Assistant Principal/Welfare Officer will be involved.

3. If communication with parents/guardians has not been possible or a meeting does not sufficiently resolve the attendance problem, a school plan will be developed to support the student's attendance.

Normally this will involve a formal meeting convened by the principal or nominee and attended by the parents/guardians, student (if appropriate) and a relevant teacher. The school may also seek support from regional student service support staff, community or other government agencies.

The school plan should result in the establishment of an ongoing attendance support process. This should develop and monitor an appropriate program of assistance and support for the student. It will draw upon any special skills and resources needed, for example from external support personnel.

The plan could involve such action as:

- modification of the curriculum;
- increased supervision of the student;
- personal support and counselling for the student; or
- referral to other support agencies.

It is important that wherever possible, the plan is developed in consultation with the parents/guardians and the student to ensure their active cooperation. The plan should be documented to confirm arrangements to assist the student.

Where the action taken through the school plan does not lead to a resumption of satisfactory attendance, the principal should determine if it is necessary to convene an attendance conference in the interest of the education of the student.

#### 4. The Attendance Conference

The purpose of the attendance conference is to:

- review strategies initiated to support the attendance of the student;
- examine why resolution of the non-attendance has not been possible; and
- make recommendations to the school and parents/guardians on further action.

The attendance conference has no disciplinary connotations but rather aims at effectively retaining the student at school. Action considered at the attendance conference can include:

- the use of wider resources and expertise available in the Department of Education and elsewhere; or
- transfer to another educational setting.

The attendance conference should be convened by the principal or nominee. Participants should include:

- principal or nominee;
- parents/guardians;
- the student (if appropriate);
- parent advocate (if required by the parent);
- appropriate staff member; and
- consultants as required.

#### **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed annually taking into account:

- Analysis of Attendance Records; and
- Student Absence trends in the Annual General Report

**Approved by School Council on: 13 December, 2016**