



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

The *Education Act* requires that children of school age (six to sixteen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult, contributing significantly to the student's lack of opportunity to achieve their potential.

Aim

To maximise student's social, emotional and learning opportunities by ensuring that children attend school regularly, are punctual and value their learning time at school.

Implementation

- Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult. Contributing significantly to the student's lack of opportunity to achieve their potential.
- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- Illness is reasonable grounds for an absence - shopping excursions or birthday parties are not.
- Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- Parents have a further responsibility to provide a written note or return a completed absence form to the school explaining why an absence has occurred.
- The principal has a responsibility to ensure that attendance records are maintained and monitored at school.
- All student absences and late arrivals are recorded in both the morning and the afternoon by teachers, are aggregated on our CASES database and communicated to the Department of Education.
- The Department of Education and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- The principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences and late arrivals are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism and punctuality are adequately explained.
- A 'Strike Three' policy will be implemented across the school to target late arrivals to school. Teachers will notify parents when their child has accumulated three late arrivals to school within a term. A fourth late arrival will result in principal contact.
- The principal will ensure parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences and late arrivals are contacted, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.

- Class teachers and office staff are to record any actions taken in regard to monitoring students absences using the Student Absence Action form
- If a student returns to school after an absence which is unexplained, the teacher will send home a Student Absence Reminder Form.
- Parents are to notify the school *prior* to taking their child on a family holiday. Parents may use the Student Absence Prior Notification Form or put this in a letter.
- For students going on an extended (more than one week) family holiday, a Student Absence Learning Plan will be developed, with the expectation that the student completes the work while they are away.
- Ongoing unexplained absences and late arrivals or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised.
- Unresolved and prolonged attendance issues may be reported by the principal to Child First, the Department of Human Services or to the School Attendance Officer as deemed appropriate.
- The school will promote DET's campaign of "Every Day Counts" in the newsletter, at assemblies and with students.
- Posters encouraging school attendance will feature prominently, as well as newsletter articles.

Ongoing Monitoring:

- Newsletter articles and posters will be created and displayed by the Student Voice on the school website.
- Positive recognition of students and classes with high attendance and low lateness will be recognised and acknowledged at assemblies and in the Newsletter.
- Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year reports.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Department of Education and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.
- *In general, it would be expected that the Principal would excuse absences for:*
 - Medical and dental appointments, where an out of hours appointment is not possible
 - Bereavement or attendance at a funeral of a relative or friend of the student
 - School refusal, if a plan is in place with the parents to address causes
 - Cultural observances, if the parent notifies the school in advance
 - Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, parent and student.
- *In general, the Principal would not be expected to excuse absences where:*
 - Approval had not been sought in advance
 - The student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
 - The conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed).
 - The parent has provided no explanation of the absence

Ratified by School Council: 19th February, 2019

Due for Review: 2022

Reference: The School Attendance Guidelines are available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx>

