

Yarrabah School

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.
- Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.
- School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.
Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of disengaging from education. This may have later implications for employment and a range of health and social risks including homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system. For more information, see: [Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts](#)

Aims:

- To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that children required to attend school do so regularly, and without unnecessary or frivolous absences.
- To identify a staged response to non-attendance is part of a whole-school approach to the engagement of students in their learning and school life. It is to be read in conjunction with: DEECD School Attendance Guidelines 2014 and [DEECD Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014](#)
- Our attendance policy/student engagement policy sets out our shared responsibilities in promoting attendance and encouraging engagement and participation at a whole school level – See [Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance](#) and on an individual level – See [Strategies to Improve a Student's Attendance](#). Our policies recognise that effective monitoring and early intervention is crucial in managing non-attendance. We are aware that chronic absences are commonly a

Implementation:

- Education is important to our students' progress and development.
- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- 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 notify the school explaining why an absence will occur or has occurred via telephone, email, communication book or FlexiBuzz.

- The principal has a responsibility to ensure that attendance records are maintained and monitored at school.
- All student absences are recorded in both the morning and the afternoon by teachers, are aggregated on our CASES 21 database and communicated to the DET.
- The DET and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- The principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism are adequately explained.
- The principal will contact parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- Ongoing unexplained absences or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised. Unresolved attendance issues may be reported by the principal to the Department of Human Services and Department of Education and Training.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Department of Education and Training and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.
- The school will follow a staged response

STAGE ONE – Unexplained/unauthorised absence

- Is this student part of an identified vulnerable cohort that is targeted for specialised intervention? If so – refer to cohort-specific staged response. Phone contact made with parent/guardian/or emergency contact by classroom teacher.
- Generate Cases 21 absence letter
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

STAGE TWO – three - five days unexplained absences

- Phone contact made with parent/guardian and/or emergency contact by classroom teacher
- Stage 2 Letter home (see example)
- Use informal contacts to investigate situation
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

STAGE THREE – five days or more of unexplained absences

- Phone calls as per level one and two
- Increase offer of, or re-offer, support
- Stage 3 Letter (see example) to parent/guardian regarding absences. The letter to be signed and sent by the PLC leader. The letter might include a summary of unexplained absences (CASES 21 Printout), dates of prior phone contact/attempts, a paragraph outlining specific concerns and offer of support for the individual student, may request medical certificates or other documentation supporting absences if appropriate (eg VCE attendance requirements), offer of a parent meeting
- Consider attaching general parent information flyers:
 - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/everydaycountsprimary.PDF>
 - <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/everydaycountssecondary.PDF>
 - In community languages:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx>
 - Anxiety information for parents:
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/everyday.aspx>

- How can I get my teenager to school?

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

- Request secondary consultation with SSS staff or school Wellbeing Team/specialist teams : Koorie Team (KESO), CALD Community Liaison, MIPS/Pathways and Transitions worker/Careers Teacher
- Home visit as per school's procedures
- Liaise with existing family service / seek support for family
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

STAGE FOUR – ongoing unexplained absences

- Phone calls as per previous levels
- Increase offer of, or re-offer, support
- Stage 4 Letter (see example) to parent/guardian regarding continued unexplained / unauthorised absences formally requesting presence at an Attendance SSG. To be signed and sent by Assistant Principal
- Hold Attendance SSG: establish causes of non-attendance, develop Student Absence Learning Plan and/or Attendance Improvement Plan or Return to School Plan to support attendance as per [DEECD School Attendance Guidelines 2014](#)
- Letter to be sent registered post
- Present the case to **attendance team** for discussion
- Allocate Case Management responsibility to a staff member
- Request secondary consultation or direct intervention from SSS staff /school Wellbeing Team/specialist teams : Koorie Team (KESO), CALD Community Liaison Officer, MIPS/Pathways and Transitions worker/Careers Teacher
- Referral to external agency e.g. Youth Connections/ CYMS/CAMHS/ChildFIRST
- Explore Flexible Learning Options/Re-engagement programs at a school level or in the community. Consider an individual tailored program.
- Initiate individual Check In/Check Out system
- Liaise with existing family service / Seek support for family
- Allocate a Mentor
- Continue to support the students education with the development of a Student Absence Learning Plan
- Home visit as per school's procedures
- CASES21: DEECD Excusing non-attendance due to school refusal
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/managingabsence.aspx>
“ in general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:.....school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes.....”
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

STAGE FIVE – unresolved on-going non-attendance

- Stage 5 Letter (see example) to parent/guardian summarising all intervention and support offered. To be signed and sent by **Principal**. The letter is to offer an opportunity to meet with the school for an Attendance Student Support Group Meeting and advising the parent/guardian unless there is improvement the matter may be referred to SAO. Parents required to respond within 7 days.
- Letter to be sent registered post
- Continue with secondary consultations/phone calls/home visits
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

STAGE SIX – Referral to SAO

- A principal ***does not have to make a referral for all absences that meet the criteria*** but may continue to manage the absences at a school level (p24 DEECD School Attendance Guidelines)
- Stage 6 Letter (see example) from the **Principal advising parents that the matter has been escalated to the School Attendance Office**
- Referring a student attendance matter to a School Attendance Officer may be appropriate where the principal determines that:
 - Intervention strategies have been unable to secure parental engagement and improvement in school attendance (or engagement in another educational program); and
 - Requiring the parent to respond to the notice will convey the seriousness of the matter and is likely to elicit an improvement in attendance
- Principals should be certain they have evidence to demonstrate the parent has not been meeting their responsibilities under the Act. This will be important in the event the School Attendance Notice leads to an Infringement Notice being sent to the parent and the parent wishes to appeal the decision or elect to have the matter heard in court.
- *Principal* may contact DEECD Regional Office – Wellbeing and Engagement Team for policy and process advice and secondary consultation
- Principal completes appropriate referral documentation and forward to the regional office as per local arrangements **Attn: School Attendance Officer**
- Continue to monitor attendance as per school's requirements
- Record actions on *the student tracking tool*

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...

April 2018

STUDENT ABSENCES notice

Date.....

Dear Parent / Guardian,

It has been brought to my attention that your child
has been absent from school recently and to date we have not received a written note
explaining the reason for the absence.

The date/s of the absence/s are:

Notes regarding Absence:

It is a DET requirement that students provide a note from parents explaining all
absences.

Therefore, you are required to provide a note covering the above absence/s from school
as soon as possible.

Staff Signature.....