



## Northern School for Autism

*"Learning for Life"*

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Please note: For attendance recording please refer to:

[Attendance Recording Advice – Term 3 mainstream schools from 5 August](#) (login required)

Updated attendance recording advice for Term 4, 2020 will be made available on the DET webpage soon.

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is not only to ensure that Northern School for Autism School adheres to the Department of Education's guidelines regarding attendance, but to outline the key procedures, practices and expectations regarding attendance at the school. This includes:

- ensuring all children enrolled at the school attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensuring students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explaining to school staff and parents/carers the key practices and procedures the school has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences

#### **SCOPE**

Daily attendance is important for all children to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation 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 that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

This policy applies to all families at the school.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of the school, parents/carers and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

#### **DEFINITION**

*Parent/Carer* – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* of the commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

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### **POLICY**

The school has developed the mandatory prerequisite Enrolment Policy.

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Students are expected to attend the school during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Northern School for Autism Primary School or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Northern School for Autism Primary School for particular activities

The school believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Both the school and parents/carers have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents/carers to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Parents/Carers are expected to communicate with the relevant staff at the school about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents/Carers must provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

The school will provide active support (including targeted responses and effective intervention strategies) for full student attendance and retention and will respond to individual student circumstances when regular attendance is not consistent.

The school promotes student attendance by:

- providing recognition for high attending students
- following up on unapproved non-attenders by communicating to parents/carers on the day of an absence
- publishing newsletter articles outlining the importance of school attendance
- articulating high expectations to all members of the school community by:
- regularly communicating with parents/carers about expectations for attendance
- promoting awareness that absence results in quantifiable lost learning time and opportunities
- modelling punctuality across the whole school

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## Northern School for Autism

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- creating a safe, supportive learning environment where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning

### **Recording attendance**

The school records student attendance twice daily. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge the school's duty of care for all students

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present. This information is then sent to the office where the Admin staff enter in the appropriate code i.e. Camp, Excursion or Special Event.

### **Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent/carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school, preferably between 8.30 am and 9.00 am.

Parents/Carers should notify the school of absences by:

- contacting the school office via phone, email or SMS
- informing the classroom teacher in writing of an absence

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent/carer, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, the school will notify parents by email or SMS by 10:30 am on the day of the absence, requesting notification.

The school will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent/carer meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If the school considers that the parent/carer has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**Explained**' and the reason given is recorded.

If the school determines that the excuse provided is not reasonable the absence will be marked as '*Parent Choice Unauthorised*'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a valid reason given by a parent/carer for a student's absence. The Principal generally will excuse:

- illness
- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent/carer to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent/carer notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent/carer within 10 school days of an absence, it will remain recorded as 'Unexplained' on the student's file.

Parents/carers will be notified if an absence has not been accepted as excused.

### **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**

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Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, the school will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, possibly including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff in the school.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

As a last resort, and if the student has been absent for **at least five full days in the previous 12-month period** without an excuse, the school will contact the Regional Office to arrange Attendance Officer involvement.

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Please refer to the school’s *Student Wellbeing & Engagement Policy, Enrolment and School Hours Policies, the Reporting Student Achievement & Progress Policy* and the *Annual Report to the School Community Policy*.

Please refer also to DET’s webpage regarding exemption from attendance and other resources to support attendance.

Reference:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance>

### REVIEW CYCLE

This policy, first developed in this format in May 2019 and updated in September 2020, will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-yearly review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update mid-September 2020).

A mandatory policy as part of the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

Also mandatory for VRQA purposes

Presented to School Council for Noting on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2020

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