



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

- In accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.
- Parents/carers must enrol a child of compulsory school-age at a school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction or seek enrolment for other approved tuition.
- Children are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance or attendance and enrolment for the student or the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.
- A Principal or Regional Director (depending on the circumstances) may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.
- For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must provide an explanation on each occasion and the school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.
- Schools must maintain attendance records and develop policies to support and maintain attendance.
- Exemptions from school attendance may be granted in some circumstances. All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis, with the child's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the child's educational progress, wellbeing and development are also considered.
- Additionally, schools enrolling international students are required to effectively monitor student attendance and implement a documented intervention strategy where attendance is at risk of failing to meet the minimum Student Visa requirement (attendance of a minimum 80% of the scheduled course contact hours during each study period).
- Schools should avoid practices that have the effect of restricting admission.

Aims

- To ensure students of school age are enrolled and attend every day the school is open for instruction.
- 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 ensure the Northern School for Autism complies with DET policy and guidelines.
- To ensure the school complies with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.
- To discharge the school's duty of care for all students.
- To assist in the calculation of the school's funding.
- To enable the school to report on attendance annually through the Annual Report.

Implementation

- The school has developed the mandatory prerequisite Admission and Enrolment policies.
- Children are expected to attend school every day during normal school hours unless there is an approved exemption.

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- The school will record attendance twice daily.
- The school will advise parents/carers on the same day or as soon as practicable of unexplained absences.
- Using an automated messaging solution (SMS) is an efficient and effective method of notifying parents/carers of unexplained absences. The school can utilise the CASES21 SMS service or there are a range of third party software products (compatible with CASES21) that provide SMS functionality.
- The school will record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent/carer and will determine if the explanation provided is reasonable.
- The school will develop a strategy for following up immediately when unexplained absences exceed a set number of days.
- The Principal will ensure parents/carers of children with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences are contacted, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- Ongoing unexplained absences or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance may result in a formal attendance conference being organised. Unresolved attendance issues may be reported to the Department of Health & Human Services.
- For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. The school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.
- Children with excellent attendance records will receive certificates of achievement.
- Posters encouraging school attendance will feature prominently, as well as newsletter articles.
- Please refer also to the school’s *Student Engagement Policy, Admission Policy, Enrolment, Promotion of Children and School Hours Policies, the Home Schooling Policy and the Reporting to Parents Policy*.
- Please refer also to DET’s webpage regarding exemption from attendance and other resources to support attendance.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle or if guidelines change (latest DET update late July 2018).

When Developed – DET School Policy Advisory Guide – A-Z Index:
May 2015

Updates were ratified by School Council May 2015 and on 18 February 2016

This update was ratified 06.12.2018

References:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx
www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/attendanceexemption.aspx