



ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

References

- *School Excellence Policy 2016*
- *Wellbeing Framework for Schools 2015*
- *School Attendance Policy 2017*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Disabilities Standards for Education 2005*

Rationale

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

Parents are responsible for:

- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the NSW Board of Studies for home schooling.
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly.
- explaining the absences of their children promptly to the school.
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.
- providing a reason for absences within 7 days of a student being absent from school.

School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of belonging to the school community.
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance.
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance.
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.
- providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled in line with the requirements set out in *Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation Policy (1997)*.
- attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.
- attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director and the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO).
- the HSLO is informed of attendance problems and issues. This includes providing the Director with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue.
- school staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures.
- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements.
- cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.

The class teacher will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly after any unexplained absences occurring. If a child has 3 consecutive unexplained days absent, the teacher will phone the parent and document this call.

Principals may:

- grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness.
- grant leave to students of compulsory school age totalling not more than 50 days per school year in addition to sick leave.
- decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. Parents are regularly reminded through the newsletter of what constitutes an unacceptable explanation.
- request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent and prolonged or there is concern that the illness may affect other students.
- delegate responsibility for the maintenance of attendance registers to other school personnel. In such cases, the these staff:
 - ✓ know procedures before marking the attendance register using the approved codes and following up absences.
 - ✓ seek verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences.
 - ✓ retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. If teachers receive verbal explanations from parents, a record of these must be kept with written and printed electronic explanations.
 - ✓ alert the stage supervisor and/or principal when a student's patterns of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer.
 - ✓ report chronic non-attendance, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the stage supervisor and/or principal.

Home School Liaison Officers (HSLO) and other department personnel conduct regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to principals in maintaining these documents.

School Attendance Records Requirements

School attendance records must include:

- a register of admission to be retained permanently.
- notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt.
- an attendance register to be retained for three years. In a case where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 24
- The student's record card listing the number of absences each year to be retained for seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 24.

Attendance Registers (rolls)

Attendance registers must be maintained on all days which the school is open for instruction including school sport days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.

The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all schools. Only the codes listed in the appendix document *Student Attendance Register Codes* are to be used.

School attendance must be recorded on the attendance register in the school day (first 15 minutes). Students involved in off-site activities organised by the school or Department of Education must not be marked as absent. They are marked as 'on school business.'

If access to the electronic roll is not available, a paper roll will be completed and sent to the front office for entry by the School Administrative Staff.

Staff responsible for maintaining attendance registers must be acquainted with requirements of this document and correct procedures. Advice and further information may be obtained from regional home school liaison personnel. A hard copy of the electronic record is to be generated weekly for the previous two-week period. The principal must endorse this hard copy, certifying its accuracy. Once signed, this hard copy becomes the record of attendance.

Codes to be used on electronic attendance registers are found in the appendix document *Student Attendance Register Codes*. Additional codes are not to be used.

In the case of **late arrival or early departure**, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded.

Attendance registers must be maintained each day the school is open with the exception of:

- days on which there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers.
- approved school development days.
- days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. Principals should consult with Department personnel prior to deciding that a school is not in operation.

Special circumstance registers should:

- specify the dates and times of the variation.
- indicate the reason for the variation.
- list students attending on that day.
- be signed by the teacher maintaining the register.
- be permanently attached to attendance registers.

Removal from Register

A student's name must be removed from an attendance register if:

- the student is enrolled in another school.
- advice has been received from parents that the student is to be enrolled in a non-government or other registered school, or is registered with the Board of Studies for home schooling.
- the student has been expelled from the school in accordance with the *Department's Suspension and Expulsion of School Students-Procedures*.
- the student is between the ages of six and fifteen years, their whereabouts is unknown and the student has not attended school for a continuous period of 10 weeks in which the school was open. In such circumstances, the advice of Police and Department personnel will be sought and a home liaison officer must undertake a full investigation into the whereabouts of the student. Department personnel will advise the officer responsible for maintaining the database of missing students.

Enrolment and Attendance

Students may attend a NSW government school if they are enrolled at that school or attending in the short term. Requirements and procedures for enrolling students in NSW government schools are located in *Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools*.

Short-term Attendance

Students may be enrolled in one school only at any given time. However, for a variety of reasons, a student enrolled at a NSW government school may need to attend another NSW government school for a short period of time. Short term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables. Prior to agreeing to the short term attendance of a student, the principal of the host school should gather the necessary information to permit a risk assessment to be conducted.

Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents, will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligation under the Education Act 1990, the welfare of the student must be the focus of this consultation.

The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this. Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:

- student and parent interviews.
- reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program.
- referral to the school counsellor, chaplain or outside agencies.
- support from school based personnel.

If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support may be requested referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Home School Liaison Program. Police Officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act 1990. During school hours police officers may approach a student who is above six years of age and less than fifteen years of age, who is not at school. They may request the student's name and address and the name and address of his/her school. They may approach a student who is accompanied by an adult. Police officers may accompany the student either to the school or home to verify the information.

Failure to Enrol

Legal action in such matters is a last resort and must only be considered when all other reasonable avenues have been explored without success. If interventions by school and Department personnel fail to satisfactorily restore attendance of students or compulsory school age Section 23 (5) of the Act requires that the parents attend a conciliation conference. Conciliation Conferences are convened by senior Departmental officers, usually a director or nominee. The objective of conciliation conferences is to resolve non-attendance matters in an informal, non-threatening atmosphere.

When school or Department personnel believe that a parent has failed to enrol a child of compulsory school age at school or register them with the Board of Studies for home schooling, the matter will be referred to student wellbeing personnel. Prosecution may occur if a parent declines to comply with the requirements of the Act regarding enrolment in school.

Exemption from Attendance at School

In the case of students of compulsory school age, applications of student leave in excess of fifty days in a twelve month period are considered as applications for exemption from school attendance. Exemption would only be granted where conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable that a certificate of exemption be granted. Directors may grant exemptions due to:

- domestic necessity, including but not limited to participation in family holidays during school term
- health of the student where sick leave or alternate enrolment are not appropriate.
- engagement in full time education offered by an accredited provider.

The Certificate of Exemption must state that the exemption may be withdrawn if these conditions cease to apply. The certificate will specify a period for which the exemption had been granted. The original Certificates of Exemption will be provided to the parents or carer. A copy of the certificates of Exemption will be provided to the school and attached to the student's record card.

Students Attending Lessons Outside School During School Hours

Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities will usually be limited to outside school hours. Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, principals may use their discretion in granting short leave. This provision must not be used on a regular basis. If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.

Definitions

Parent includes a carer or other person having the care or custody of a child or young person.

An unexplained absence is one where a parent provides no acceptable reason from a student's non-attendance.

Truancy is the absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent or carer.

A parent condoned absence occurs when a parent or carer permits a student to be absent from school without acceptable reason.

Regular School Attendance

Information for parents and carers



Did you know? If students miss as little as eight days in a school term, by the end of primary school they will have missed a year of education.

Why must I send my child to school?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory. This means all children from six years of age and up to the minimum school leaving age are legally required to attend school.

Principals are legally responsible for keeping accurate records of student attendance. Principals are also responsible for deciding if the reason given for an absence is justified. For this reason, Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences explained by parents as being due to illness.

If Principals don't consider an explanation to be satisfactory, they will record the absence as unjustified.

It is important to understand that the New South Wales Department of Education may prosecute parents (including carers) if children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unjustified absences from school.

Must I send my child every day?

YES. It is a condition of enrolment that you send your child to school every day it is open for instruction.

A small number of absences may be justified if your child:

- * has to go to a special religious ceremony
- * is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (eg a funeral)
- * is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.
- * having an unavoidable medical appointment

Head lice infestations can be a common occurrence, particularly in primary schools. Parents should check their child's hair regularly for head lice and undertake treatment where eggs or lice are identified. Information about head lice and how to treat them can be found at:

www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/language-support/headlice/infosheet/english.pdf

Why is regular attendance at school important?

Regular school attendance will help your child to succeed later in life.

Attending school every day makes learning easier for your child and helps children to build and maintain friendships with other children.

Attendance is critical to ensure your child learns basic skills to avoid possible learning concerns.



Education

Why is arriving at school on time important?

Arriving at school and class on time:

- * ensures that your child doesn't miss out on the important learning activities scheduled early in the day when they are most alert.
 - * helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine.
 - * gives your child time to greet their friends before class and therefore reduces the opportunity for classroom disruption.
- Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained to the school the same way as other forms of absence.

What should I do if our family is going on holiday in school time?

Parents and carers are encouraged not to withdraw their children from school for family holidays. Families should try to arrange holidays during school vacations. If your family holiday is during school time, inform the school in advance and request an 'Application for Extended Leave' form. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year. In some circumstances students maybe eligible to enrol in distance education for travel periods over 50 school days. This should be discussed with your child's school principal.

Must my child attend all activities, including daily fitness and sport?

YES. Sport and other physical activities help to keep your children healthy. Children are expected to attend all regular school activities, including sport.

Do not keep your child away from school for the following:

- * birthdays
 - * shopping
 - * minding other children
 - * routine check ups or care such as hair cuts
 - * minor family events
 - * sleeping in
- Medical and other health appointments for your child should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

What should I do if my child has to stay away from school?

If your child has to be absent from school, it is important to tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence within 7 days. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- * send a note to the class teacher.
- * use the App to text details of absence.
- * telephone the school.
- * visit the school office.

The principal of the school has the right to question parent or carer requests for their child to be absent from school. The principal may also question any explanation given for a child's absence from school.

My child won't go to school. What should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. The principal may seek support from the school counsellor, a home school liaison officer or Aboriginal student liaison officer.

Who are home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers?

Home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers have been specially trained to help you with your child's attendance.

They work with school communities to encourage all students to attend school regularly.

For further information about the Home School Liaison Program you should contact the program manager at Gosford office of the Department of Education on the phone number 4348 9100.

Do you have problems with getting your child to school, for some of the following reasons?

- * won't get out of or go to bed.
- * can't find their clothes, books, homework, school bag...
- * school lunches not ready.
- * slow to eat breakfast.
- * homework not done.
- * watching television late at night or when they should be getting ready for school.
- * assessments or presentations at school.
- * birthdays.

Here are some suggestions which are based on setting regular routines:

- * have a set time to be out of bed.
- * have a set time to go to bed.
- * have uniform and school bag ready the night before.
- * make lunches the night before.
- * have a set time for starting / ending breakfast. A routine is important.
- * set time for daily homework activities.
- * turn the television on for a set time and only if appropriate.
- * be firm, children must go to school.
- * provide lots of positive encouragement.
- * be firm, a birthday is not a holiday.
- * time arrival at school to coincide with bell time and leave quickly.

