

Policy Name:	Student Attendance Policy
Date Adopted:	1 st September 2016
Review Date:	1 st September 2018
Referred Documents:	

RATIONALE:

International research demonstrates a strong correlation between students' learning, long-term life outcomes, attendance at school and appropriate participation in education programs. For this reason, the Department of Education and Training (DET) has very clear policies and guidelines in relation to student attendance at school.

These policies are the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 and the Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013. The Victorian Government's 'Everyday Counts' initiative promotes the fact that regular school attendance enables students to maximise their full educational potential and to actively participate and engage in their learning. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age. Students who are regularly absent from school are at risk of missing out on fundamental aspects of their educational and social development. Children with attendance of 80 per cent or less may be significantly disadvantaged in their learning.

Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to meet the National Youth Participation Requirement agreed by the Council of Australian Governments in July 2009. The agreed participation requirement includes a mandatory requirement for all young people to participate in schooling (meaning full time attendance at a government or registered nongovernment school or an approved equivalent such as registered home schooling or through the Victorian Distance Education Centre until they complete Year 10).

AIMS:

To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that children required to attend school, do so regularly and without unnecessary absences.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Parents:

Information will be clearly conveyed to parents that it is their obligation to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence. Parents will be encouraged to notify the school in advance of any absence, where practicable. Where there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a student, prompt communication will occur with the parents/guardians/caregivers. Parents of students will contact the school via the absence phone line or Tiqbiz. Legislation in Victoria allows for the prosecution of parents for the regular truancy of their children.

Teachers:

Will accurately mark the rolls in the morning and update late comers/early leavers on the school's database and keep records (notes) of all absences, including lateness. Both the roll and notes are legal documents. Teachers to encourage students to bring notes to school explaining absences.

School:

- Rolls are collected daily and the data collated for Sentral/CASES 21.
- Computer generated notes to parents of students who have had 4 or more unexplained absences/late arrivals for the month will be sent home.
- Leadership will contact the families either by phone or letter whose children's attendance is of concern.
- All notes held by classroom teachers will be collected at the end of the school year and stored for 12 months.

Procedures:

- Roll is to be marked by 9:00am and updated with late comers/early leavers.
- If students are absent then the classroom teacher is to inquire about the whereabouts of an individual. (A note signed or verbal from parent/guardian is required).
- Student absences will be reported on students School Report.

The following steps are to be followed if no reason is given for Absence:

- Contact with parents/guardian within 2 days of absence. (Phone or personal contact is acceptable).
- If the student's absence remains unresolved after the initial contact, the school will convene a meeting with parents/guardians and the student (if appropriate). The purpose of the meeting is to:
 - ensure parents are aware of absence and its implications.
 - examine the reasons for non-attendance.
 - identify whether further assistance will be needed.
- If communication with parents/guardians has not been possible or a meeting does not sufficiently resolve the attendance problem, a school plan will be developed to support the student's attendance.

Normally this will involve a formal meeting convened by the principal or nominee and attended by the parents/guardians, student (if appropriate) and a relevant teacher. The school may also seek support from regional student service support staff, community or other government agencies.

The school plan should result in the establishment of an ongoing attendance support process. This should develop and monitor an appropriate program of assistance and support for the student. It will draw upon any special skills and resources needed, for example from external support personnel.

The plan could involve such action as:

- modification of the curriculum
- increased supervision of the student
- personal support and counselling for the student
- referral to other support agencies.
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It is important that wherever possible, the plan is developed in consultation with the parents/guardians and the student to ensure their active cooperation. The plan should be documented to confirm arrangements to assist the student.

Where the action taken through the school plan does not lead to a resumption of satisfactory attendance, the principal should determine if it is necessary to convene an attendance conference in the interest of the education of the student.

The Attendance Conference:

The purpose of the attendance conference is to:

- review strategies initiated to support the attendance of the student
- examine why resolution of the non-attendance has not been possible
- make recommendations to the school and parents/guardians on further action.

The attendance conference has no disciplinary connotations but rather aims at effectively retaining the student at school. Action considered at the attendance conference can include:

- the use of wider resources and expertise available in the Department of Education and elsewhere.
- transfer to another educational setting.

The attendance conference should be convened by the principal or nominee. Participants should include:

- principal or nominee
- parents/guardians
- the student (if appropriate)
- parent advocate (if required by the parent)
- appropriate staff member
- consultants as required.

The school will promote the DET policy of 'Everyday Counts'. The school will continue to promote a minimum attendance rate of 95% for all students to ensure that core teaching and learning is not missed throughout the year. Attendance Awards will be given at the end of each month for grades and individual students.

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