

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION DOCUMENT

STUDENT ATTENDANCE - 2021

Implementation Procedures

The Department of Education (DoE) attendance policy provides information for the community on their mandated requirements. The policy can be found at:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2005-0259>

Section 22 of the Education Act 1990 requires students between the ages of six and seventeen to be enrolled at a government or registered non-government school and to attend that school whenever instruction is provided, or to be registered with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for home schooling. All students who are enrolled at school, regardless of their age, are expected to attend school whenever instruction is provided.

Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if students are to achieve their potential, and increase their career and life options. Schools, in partnerships 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 their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences. Schools, in providing a caring teaching and learning environment, which addresses the learning and support needs of students, including those with additional learning and support needs or complex health conditions, foster students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.

There are also significant legal requirements of principals and school staff associated with the management of student attendance. Adherence to the school attendance procedures will ensure that we fulfil both our professional and legal responsibilities.

Responsibilities

Parents and Carers:

Parents and carers are responsible for enrolling their children of a compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school, or for registering them with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for home schooling.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their children who are enrolled at school attend every day the school is open for instruction.

Parents and carers are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence within seven days from the first day of any period of absence. This can occur via a written note, phone call, email or Compass adjustment.

Parents and carers are responsible for taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children. They work in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance, including communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school.

School Staff:

School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of a students on a number of levels.

School staff are to provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of belonging to the school community. Recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance will contribute to meeting this responsibility. The Principal issuing 'Post Cards' recognising excellent attendance is one such strategy.

School staff are responsible for maintaining accurate records of student attendance and implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise. This includes teachers following up fractional truancy and contacting home. Head Teachers take responsibility when this misbehaviour becomes a pattern.

Schools are required to provide clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance. This includes NESA "N Award Warning" letters.

While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part and whole day absences.

Principal:

The principal is responsible for ensuring that students are enrolled in line with requirements set out in the policy noted previously.

The principal, through the delegation of duty to the Deputy Principal and School Administrative Officers (SAOs), is responsible for ensuring that procedures outlined in this policy are followed.

The principal must ensure that school personnel are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school.

Section 3 of the aforementioned DoE policy outlines more specific responsibilities of the principal.

School Attendance Records Requirements

A Register of Admission is to be retained permanently. A SAO records the admission and departure monitoring the completion of documentation.

Explanations of absence are recorded on the school's attendance software program (Compass). Explanations can be provided by written note, phone call, email or Compass adjustment.

Attendance records are automatically uploaded by DoE from Compass to their attendance data system on a daily basis.

School Attendance Procedures

Class teachers are to mark the roll for each lesson of teaching during the day using the school's attendance software program. Class teachers are to investigate any cases of suspected class truancy and report concerns to their Head Teacher or Deputy Principal.

Students who are late for school must provide a signed note stating the expected time of arrival and an explanation. A previous email, phone call or Compass notification can also be used. Failure to produce a note will result in the student having an unexplained absence recorded. Persistent lateness will result in the Deputy Principal sending a letter home and may also lead to detention(s) being issued.

Students requiring a leave pass must provide a signed note stating the time of absence and reason. The note should be forwarded to the front office by 8.50am. A previous email, phone call or Compass notification can also be used. The SAO will issue a leave pass which the student must produce upon request.

When parents collect their student from school the SAO records this on the school's attendance software program with an accompanying notation. This applies to sick students and those on approved leave.

Students have seven calendar days to provide an explanation for their absences to the front office. The school can be notified via written note, phone call, email or Compass adjustment. The notification must contain a brief explanation for the absence and date(s) of absence.

Students are expected to be at school by 8.50am. Teachers are to mark their first period / check-in roll by 9.05am. At 9.30am an SMS for partial (late) absences is sent to the parents of those students marked as unexplained absent. Compass notifications are updated throughout the school day.

The parents / caregivers of students who have an unexplained whole day absence will have an email sent to them on the next school day.

The principal may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged.

Attendance Registers (Rolls)

The registration of student attendance is maintained electronically using the school's attendance software program. Attendance will be recorded on all days the school is open for teaching using the exception method. Only the codes specified by the department are to be used. Students involved in off-site activities organised by the school or DoE are recorded with appropriate codes.

On days where there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers, a list of students attending on that day is recorded on Compass.

The attendance registers will automatically display a 'School Development Day' message on relevant days.

Students participating in accredited overseas student exchange programs for periods of up to 12 months are to remain on the school attendance register. They are to be marked exempt for the duration of the exchange.

The attendance of senior students participating in flexible timetables are to be recorded in the same manner as other students.

In the case of students participating in course work or school activities away from the school site (such as work placements), an accurate record of their attendance is required. At the conclusion of the activity the attendance register is amended accordingly. The "B" symbol is to be used on those occasions

The exclusion symbol "E" is used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension. Students who fail to return to school following the suspension period have the "A" symbol used for that period.

Students who have successfully applied for exemption by the Director Educational Leadership have the "M" symbol used to explain the absence.

Students will only be removed from the attendance register if they have enrolled in another school, successfully applied for home schooling with NESAs, or have been expelled.

Students (aged between six and seventeen) will be removed from the register if their whereabouts is unknown and the student has not attended school for periods exceeding a total of 10 consecutive days over a three-week period, where the school has been open for instruction, and the student is believed to have left the school. The advice of regional support personnel must be sought beforehand and an application to the Home School Liaison Officer must be forwarded

A student's name will be removed from the attendance register if they are seventeen years of age or older and their whereabouts is unknown and the student has not attended school for periods exceeding a total of 10 consecutive school days over a three-week period, where the school is open for instruction, and the student is believed to have left the school.

If a student's name has been removed from the roll because they are missing, absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included and the electronic roll is amended.

Unsatisfactory Attendance

Students who the Deputy Principal determines to have had a partial or whole day absence due to truancy will be placed on an attendance monitoring program. The Deputy Principal will send a letter home or make a phone call informing the parent of the truancy. Any subsequent truancy will lead to the student being placed on a 'Behaviour Management Program.' Further trancies may then lead to the student being placed on an in-school suspension.

On a monthly basis, the Deputy Principal produces a list of students that have an attendance rate of less than 85%. The printout is provided to the student welfare team. The Year Advisor takes a pastoral care role in seeking information from the student to explain their absences and offer any relevant school support.

The Deputy Principal and/or Year Advisor of chronic non-attenders are to contact the parents of those students. Phone calls, letters and personal interviews are strategies that are used and recorded appropriately. An intervention plan will be devised by the Learning Support Team to address the needs of the student and implemented.

If intervention from the Deputy Principal and Year Advisor fails to improve the attendance of compulsory age students, the Home School Liaison Officer located at the DoE office, is to be informed. When necessary, the Deputy Principal will refer the student to the Child Wellbeing Unit. Under extreme circumstances the Deputy Principal will contact Police to conduct a Welfare Check. For students of post-compulsory age, the Principal interviews the student and makes a decision as to whether the student continues to be enrolled.

Enrolment and Attendance

Enrolment procedures are described in the school's 'Enrolment Policy'. This document complies with the DoE policy that can be accessed through the link below:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/enrolment>

Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. The school has a responsibility to help resolve problems of non-attendance.

Resolution of attendance difficulties will involve some or all of the following strategies:

- regular posting of letters (designated SAO)
- student and parent interviews (Deputy Principal, Year Advisor)

- reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program (Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Advisor, Learning Support Team)
- referral to the School Counsellor or outside agencies.

If the range of school-based interventions has been unsuccessful, the student's case is to be referred to the Home School Liaison Officer using the appropriate forms.

Common Leave Pass

The school will use the DoE Leave Pass for students who wish to leave school premises during normal school hours. The student needs to provide the front office with a note explaining the reason for the absence and specify the time of day of the absence. The SAO will issue the student with a pass and record the absence.

Exemption from Attendance at School

In the case of students of compulsory school age, applications for student leave in excess of fifteen days in a twelve month period must be considered as applications for exemption from school attendance.

The Director Educational Leadership may grant exemptions due to:

- health of the student, where sick leave or alternative enrolment are not appropriate
- engagement in full time education offered by an accredited provider
- age, where the student turns seventeen years of age in the first four weeks of Term One
- employment.

A copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be provided to the school and included in the student's file.

Students Attending Lessons Outside School During School Hours

Where attendance at a private lesson during school is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, the principal may use 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 will be recorded.