

# Attendance Policy



## **Rationale**

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

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps them to develop important skills, knowledge and values, which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

This policy provides the framework to a whole-school approach to the engagement of students in their learning and school life.

It is to be read in conjunction with:

- Officer Secondary College's [Engagement and Inclusion Policy](#)
- Officer Secondary College's [Staged Response to non-attendance](#)
- [DET School Attendance Guidelines 2014](#)
- [DET Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014](#)

## **Implementation**

Students 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 for the student, or
- The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp), or where the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed to the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.

Home schooling in Victoria is a legally recognised alternative to attending a registered school. Parents who wish to home school their child must satisfy the requirements of the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority.

It is acknowledged that for some children and young people mainstream school environments may not always be the most appropriate settings. For the purpose of this document, participation in an approved re-engagement program is considered attendance at school.

# Attendance Policy



## Vulnerable Cohorts

We understand that at times, special consideration may need to be given to in-school procedures for students and their families from particular backgrounds or with particular living circumstances.

Officer Secondary College expects every student to be at school 100% of the time. Officer Secondary College's attendance policy aims to help support students and their families to meet the 100% attendance requirement.

## School community beliefs about attendance

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school. The Officer Secondary College's school community:

- Is committed to promoting the key messages of the benefits of regular school attendance
- Believes all children should be enrolled at school and attend school every school day, all day
- Successful students are well organised and start the day on time
- Believes it is in the best interest of students that family holidays/shopping trips/medical appointments are scheduled outside of school hours
- Believes non-attendance can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- Monitors, communicates and implements whole school strategies to improve regular school attendance
- Is aware that chronic absenteeism is commonly a sign of stress factors in a student's life outside and/or in the immediate learning environment. Our staged response to non-attendance allows us to respond quickly and work in partnership with students and their families
- Believes attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

## Responsibilities

**Classroom/Learning Community Teacher/Learning Community Leader/Sub School Learning Culture Leader responsibilities:**

- Staff to mark rolls accurately at the commencement of each lesson
- Monitor each student's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents if absence is unexplained
- Contact parents if a student is absent for more than 3 consecutive days
- Address attendance and punctuality concerns early through communication with parents/carers.
- Determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the student's education and wellbeing are supported following a school absence
- Coordinate Student Absence Learning Plan if absence is planned and approved
- Identify students who are at risk of disengaging from school
- Make DHS / Child FIRST notifications where appropriate and in consultation with school leadership
- Escalation of attendance concerns as per Staged Response to Non-Attendance

# Attendance Policy



## Student responsibilities:

- Attend school every school day
- Arrive at school and classes on time and prepared
- Talk to a teacher if you have issues that might impact on your ability to attend school/class

## Parent responsibilities:

- Ensure student attends school every day that instruction is offered
- Ensure student arrives at school by 8:40 am
- Provide a valid explanation for a student's absence/lateness via the appropriate channels e.g. Email, phone call
- Provide the school with advanced notice if there is a planned up-coming school absence
- Communicate openly with the school about a student's ongoing medical condition that may result in ongoing absence or medical appointments during school hours
- Alert the school early to issues that may impact on a student's attendance
- Work in partnership with the school to address attendance concerns

## Principal/Principal Nominee/School Leadership responsibilities:

- Use CASES21/eCASES21/Third party software (Compass) compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance
- Ensure student attendance is recorded in every class and reason given for each absence is recoded in writing
- Consider the explanation given for an absence and whether it is reasonable in accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- Report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at a whole school level
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at individual level in student's file e.g. phone calls, Attendance SSG's, SOCS referrals, DHS/childFIRST notifications
- Make a referral to the School Attendance Officer as required
- Ensure processes are in place to document further enforcement proceedings around non-attendance including, referral to the School Attendance Officer, issuing of a School Attendance Notice, infringement notice (and any appeal), and/or court proceedings

## Later years Curriculum attendance guidelines:

- Students will attend school from 8.45 a.m. until 3.10 p.m., except when illness or unavoidable circumstances prevent their attendance, or arrangements have been made as outlined below.
- It is expected that students will attend 100% of their classes, unless illness or personal circumstances prevent this happening. Where applicable a Medical Certificate will be provided by the student.

# Attendance Policy



- Students whose attendance falls below 90% are in danger of not gaining a 'satisfactory' result for unit/s and will be interviewed by the Sub School and Learning Community Leaders.
- It is expected that students will make appointments (e.g. medical, driving lessons etc) outside school hours or, if this is not possible, during lunchtimes and non-timetabled classes.
- Students will attend all timetabled classes, including Learning Community and designated study skills sessions.
- Unauthorised absence from class or school (including Learning Community & study skills sessions) will result in a catch up session and be registered as an unauthorised absence.
- Students will provide a note or medical certificate for all absences, the day they return to school. Any unexplained absences of more than three days will be followed up with home contact.
- Arrangements regarding notes for VCE students living independently must be made with the Wellbeing Team.
- Students are to report to the General Office if they are late to school to ensure appropriate roll marking. Late passes need to be given to the class teacher and recorded on Compass. Arrangements for long standing variations in attendance will be made with the appropriate Sub School Leaders.
- Students participating in College activities which affect class attendance must **complete the 'Out of Class Activities Form'** and have it signed by the appropriate teachers. VCE/VET Teachers may disallow students from 'out of class' activities.

## Excusing and not excusing absences:

The Principal can consider the excuse given for an absence and use his/her discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves a principal:

- Considering a request from a parent to approve an absence
- Exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse the absence
- Notifying the parent if the absences have not been excused.

In exercising their discretion, the principal should take the following considerations in to account:

- Whether the absence is explicitly covered in section 2.1.3 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Whether the student should do some learning activities during the absence (see: Student Absence Learning Plan)
- If this kind of absence is covered in the school's policy (e.g. shopping, birthday, visiting relatives)
- Whether or not the length of absence will affect the student's learning
- Whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so how recently and how many times
- Whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before

# Attendance Policy



- Cultural factors or details of the student and family's circumstances
- The implications for not approving the absence
- Whether an exemption would be appropriate, whereby the school should assist the parent apply for an exemption.

In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:

- Medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not 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, students will be required to be involved in a re-engagement plan with their parent to address these issues
- Cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:

- Approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy. The student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- The conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed)
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences

Clause 2.1.3(fa) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 allows principals to formally excuse absences in special circumstances where no other reasonable excuse exists. However, it remains at the principal's discretion to decide whether the excuse provided by a parent is reasonable.

## **Additional Resources**

[DET School Attendance Guidelines 2014](#)

[Click On Wellbeing - Improving Attendance Practice Guide](#)

[Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts](#)

# Attendance Policy



Office Use Only

<b>Date Implemented</b>	October 2018
<b>Author</b>	Officer Secondary College
<b>Approved By</b>	Michaela Cole
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Michaela Cole
<b>Date for Review</b>	2021
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Michaela Cole