

PLENTY PARKLANDS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale:

- The *Education Act* requires that children of school age (six to seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

Aims:

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

Reporting and Recording attendance

Parent responsibilities

Parents are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Parents should inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- determine if the child's absence needs to be excused by the principal, in line with school policy and these guidelines
- determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported
- record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day.

Where possible, parents should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences.

School responsibilities

The school must record student attendance twice per day in primary schools and in every class in secondary schools and record, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge schools' duty of care for all students
- assist calculation of the school's funding
- enable the school governing body (school council in government schools) to report on student attendance annually
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above. Government schools must use only CASES21, eCASES21 or third party software which is compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance.

Accurate and comprehensive student attendance records, including the reasons for any absences, also allow schools to monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and measure achievement against attendance targets. It also provides evidence for any further enforcement proceedings including issue of an Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school.

All schools must report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year. Schools are also required to report information about student enrolment and attendance for funding requirements.

The Department collects information on student attendance through extraction of data from CASES21 and publishes attendance rates in its annual report.

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the enforcement system, the Department will collect information about the use of School Attendance Notices and School Enrolment Notices.

Principal responsibilities

The principal will determine if the excuse provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. A principal should use their discretion in making this decision.

The principal or their nominee must record:

- student attendance twice per day in primary schools and in every class in secondary schools for every student enrolled at the school
- the excuse given for an absence and whether this is reasonable in accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- an absence as unexplained if no excuse has been given and change the attendance record once an excuse is provided or established
- a student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.

To meet duty of care responsibilities, the school attendance records should indicate whether the student was physically present in a classroom, or not present but attending a school-approved activity. In the latter situation, the teacher or staff member in charge of the activity should record attendance and ensure parents are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school.

All students enrolled in the school are required to have their attendance recorded, even if they only attend the school premises part time. Attendance for the times the student is not expected to attend should be recorded so it does not count towards the absences for the school (government schools should use code 602 Exempt in CASES21).

The attendance of students at curriculum programs outside school premises needs to be recorded by the provider and reported back and recorded by the school. Schools manage absences in conjunction with the provider of re-engagement programs or approved education provider.

Monitoring attendance

In addition to accurately and consistently recording student attendance and absence, principals should ensure school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns on a school, class and individual basis.

The Student Mapping Tool is available to all government schools and can be used for early identification of students at risk of poor attendance and possible disengagement from school. Once identified as being at risk of poor attendance, students should be provided with timely targeted support to improve attendance or address underlying issues. Referral to Student Support Services, a Student Wellbeing Coordinator or a Primary Welfare Officer is recommended.

Exemptions from attendance

Where a student:

- has reached 6 years but has not started school and will be enrolled in a second year of kindergarten; or
- has not reached 17 years but will leave school; or
- is absent from school due to employment in the entertainment industry and certain conditions are met, an exemption from attendance can be sought.

The process for applying for these exemptions is outlined in the School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG).

An exemption is not required for these absences, but if there is no exemption the student's absences will count towards the school's absences for reporting purposes. For example, a student with an exemption from attendance for one day per week, who attends the four days per week they are expected to attend, would have 100 per cent attendance, whereas if no exemption was in place the student would have 80 per cent attendance.

Schools should advise parents when an exemption from attendance is required and support parents to apply for the exemption. Schools and parents may also agree to seek an exemption so that a student's absences do not count towards the school's total absences for reporting purposes.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed in line with best practice and DEECD guidelines.

STUDENT ABSENCE FORM

Form 1

Student Name: Class:.....

Date of Absence:

Reason for Absence:

Parent Signature:

PLENTY PARKLANDS PS

Form 2

STUDENT ABSENCE

Date.....

Dear Parent / Guardian,

It has been brought to my attention that your child has been absent from school recently and has not yet provided a written note explaining the reason for the absence.

The date/s of the absence/s are:

It is an Education Department requirement that students provide a note from parents explaining all absences.

Therefore, you are required to provide a note covering the above absence/s from school as soon as possible.

Staff Signature.....