



Student Attendance Procedures

Aim

Education is recognised as a fundamental human right and an important building block in the development of children and society (United Nations, 1948). Those who do well in the early and elementary stages of education tend to do better in subsequent stages and develop the critical skills and abilities needed to become productive and responsible adults (Keating & Hertzman, 1999; Zubrick et al., 2006). Attendance at school is not only a fundamental human right; it is also mandated by law.

School is compulsory from Pre-Primary until the end of secondary schooling. The School Education Act (1999) requires compulsory aged students to participate in the educational program of a school. Under Section 23 of The School Education Act 1999; A student must attend on the days on which the school is open for instruction.

The impact on a child's learning when they continually miss school is quite significant. For example:

- The attendance habits set by children when they first start school continues throughout their school life.
- Missing half a day of school each week equates to one month of missed learning each year (87% attendance).
- If children miss half a day of school each week between Pre-Primary and Year 10, they will miss almost one full year of learning.
- Learning is cumulative - if children miss a day it is harder for them to catch up

Scope

All students from Kindergarten to Year Six.

School is compulsory from Pre-Primary until the end of secondary schooling.

Definitions

Authorised absence (EXPLAINED) - A Principal can record an absence as 'Authorised' if there has been a reasonable explanation for a student's absence. A reasonable excuse for the purposes of explaining a school absence can include;

- Medical or dental appointments
- Bereavement or attending a funeral (including Sorry business)
- Illnesses and accidents
- Unforeseen and unexplained circumstances
- If the absence was a result of complying with another law
- The child is receiving distance education through a registered school
- The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment
- The child has been suspended, and/or
- The child is attending or observing a religious event, cultural observance or obligation.

Unauthorised absence (UNEXPLAINED) - A Principal can record an absence as 'Unauthorised' when there has been no reasonable explanation provided for the absence. If a reason is given to the Principal and it is not approved, then the school will notify the parent/carer in writing. In general, it is expected that these absences would not be excused:

The parent did not seek approval beforehand, or in accordance with school policy

- The student was absent due to leisure or social activities without approval
- The conditions of an authorised absence was not met e.g. a student absence learning plan during a family holiday was not completed
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences

Procedure

All school staff are vital in supporting regular student attendance, the principal is responsible for:

- Keeping accurate attendance records for every child enrolled in the school; these can be stored electronically but must be able to be reproduced in written form.
- Maintaining records for the appropriate period of time under the School Education Regulations 2000.
- Managing alternate attendance arrangements.
- Implementing plans and strategies to encourage regular attendance.

Records must include:

- If the student was physically present or not.
- If the student was attending a different approved activity (the teacher running that activity must also record attendance).
- Any reasons given for an absence.
- If the reason for the absence is reasonable (see examples).
- A flag for unexplained absences (removed if a reason is given later).
- Information about any unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes.
- A mark for half-day attendance if the student is present for at least two hours of instruction.

Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction. Parents/guardians must provide an explanation for any absence their child has and work in partnership with the school to support attendance.

The Parent/guardian of the student is required to:

- Ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless complying with an arrangement under section 24.
- Provide an explanation for any absence their child has within three days.