

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Students need to maximise attendance at school to gain optimum benefit from education. Research shows that success in learning is directly proportional to regular attendance and participation in education programs. Non-attendance and irregular attendance can be viewed as early indicators of the potential for disengagement from the education program. Absence from school can limit a student's achievement of essential knowledge and skills required for effective participation in work, relationships and active citizenship.

Rationale

The Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) is accountable to the community, through the Minister for Education and Child Development, for ensuring appropriate attendance in government educational programs.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- Society has a responsibility to prepare young people for successful participation in learning and the broader community.
- Families, society, peers and educators and other significant adults influence the life choices of young people.
- Attendance has benefits and consequences that increase or decrease life choices
- Continuity of relationships and learning in an educational program is dependent upon attendance.
- Attendance is a shared responsibility between the staff of schools, parents/carers, children and students and members of the wider community.
- Attendance is critically linked to the quality of curriculum, teaching and learning and the development of relationships, which then foster improved learning outcomes and increased well-being for individuals and groups.

Responsibilities of Parents/Caregivers

Any child between the ages of 6 – 16 is required by law to attend school. The Compulsory Education Age legislation, which was implemented from the beginning of 2009, requires all young people between 16 and 17 participate full time in an approved learning program, which is education or training delivered through a school, university or registered training organisation, an apprenticeship or traineeship, employment or a combination of these. The compulsory Education Age legislation does not change the school leaving age which remains at 16.

Where a child fails to attend school as required by the Act, each parent/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a monetary penalty. Where a child's education program provides for off-site instruction it is a requirement that the child attend in line with the requirements of the education program. Prosecution for non-attendance by a child of compulsory age will be initiated only after all other intervention has been attempted and prosecution is considered to be in the best interest of the child.

The Act further provides for the Minister or a delegate to exempt any child conditionally, or unconditionally, from attendance. Such exemptions may provide for online learning, home schooling and other like programs. Exemptions are managed by the school principal.

If a student is going to be absent from school for any amount of time the parent/caregiver must inform the school a.s.a.p. the reason for the absence. If a child has been ill and has seen a doctor, a certificate from the doctor will assist in accounting for the absence.

Responsibilities of Students

Children and students enrolled in a school site have responsibility for their attendance. The level of responsibility will be determined by the individual circumstances of the child.

The expectations are that they:

- Attend school or other educational program as negotiated regularly on every day the program is offered.
- Be punctual in arriving at school or the other negotiated educational program.
- Sign in or out if arriving late or leaving early.
- Engage appropriately in the education program as negotiated.
- Provide the school with an explanation from their parent or caregiver for any absence.

Having trouble getting your child to school?

Here is what you can do to help!

First contact their school to talk about it. You can discuss your concerns with your child's teacher, wellbeing leader, year level manager, deputy principal or the school principal. If you do not cooperate with the school and your child to improve their attendance, you could face a penalty.

Create a daily routine

Children and adolescents respond positively to having a routine for all aspects of life, e.g. Bedtime, dinner time etc. This is also relevant to all aspects of schooling including getting ready for school, having breakfast, getting lunch ready, arriving to school, class etc. To encourage a routine can take some time but proves to be a successful tool in helping students improve and maintain good attendance.

Positive Encouragement for attending

Children and adolescents thrive off positive reinforcement. Developing a positive connection to attendance at school by rewarding your child is a sure way to see their attendance improve which will positively impact on their grades. Rewards can include; positive verbal acknowledgement, sticker chart which results in a reward at the end, an extra hour of internet use for the week etc. This is something you could discuss with your child and come to an agreed outcome. Always be sure to discuss all positive behaviour and show your child that positive actions generate positive environments.

Be actively involved in their schooling

A great way to keep on top of any decrease in attendance is to ensure you are involved in your child's schooling. This can be managed in a number of ways. For example, talking to your child daily about their day, asking questions, checking your child's diary regularly, accessing the Parent Portal on DayMap to read class notes and bulletins, check their daily attendance etc., and calling the school if you have any concerns you wish to discuss. This is a very powerful method. When students are aware that you are involved in what is happening in school, they become more vigilant and take more ownership on their behaviour.

Be aware of the signs of decreasing attendance

There are a range of different signs that can indicate that your child's attendance may be decreasing. Here are a few tips on behaviours to look out for.

- Sleeping in, refusing to get ready – often when a child is reluctant to get out of bed and get ready for school there are often reasons for this behaviour. Try talking to your child about this and offer help where needed. The option of speaking to a school counsellor is always there if you need.
- Giving short answers or getting defensive when asked about school – This could indicate that your child is not enjoying their schooling which could be for a range of reasons. In order to change this, we need to ensure that communication is occurring to make us aware of any situations.
- Grades dropping, receiving zero letters – It is very common for poor grades to relate to poor attendance. If you receive a zero letter from the school or they have failed classes on their reports, this could indicate that your child may be skipping classes.
- Other signs could include; suspensions, phone calls from the school, refusal to go to school etc.