

OBERON PRIMARY SCHOOL (STUDENT) ATTENDANCE POLICY



Rationale

In accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6–17 years, unless an exemption has been granted. 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 or seek enrolment for other approved tuition. Consistent school attendance enables students to maximise their full potential and to actively participate and engage in their learning. Students who are regularly absent from school are at risk of missing out on fundamental aspects of their education and social development.

Policy Statement

Oberon Primary promotes, in partnership with parents, the regular attendance of students at school. The school will ensure staff are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school. Oberon Primary School will provide processes to actively support full student attendance.

Guidelines

- Oberon Primary School students are expected to attend the school during normal school hours, every day of each term, unless:
 - a) there is an approved exemption from school attendance or attendance and enrolment for the student (including attendance reduced to less than full-time). This exemption may be authorised by the Principal or the Regional Director (depending on circumstances).
 - b) the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.
- Ensuring students attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents/carers and the school.
- The school must maintain attendance records and develop processes to support and maintain attendance.

Implementation

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance is recorded at the beginning of the day and immediately after lunch. The school must monitor attendance and absences at least half-daily in order to:

- meet legislative requirements.
- discharge the school's duty-of-care for all students.
- assist calculation of the schools' funding.
- enable School Council to report on attendance annually.

The school will use CASES21 (or other DET approved software) to record student attendance. Parents/guardians are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school and the school must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent/carer. For absences where there is **no exemption** in place, the parent/guardian will provide an explanation on each occasion and 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*. The Principal will use their discretion in making this decision.

The principal or their nominee will record:

- student attendance twice per day for every student enrolled at the school; and 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.
- that 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 will 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 will record attendance and ensure parents are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school e.g. curriculum days and camps.

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

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

Strategies used to improve an individual student's attendance include:

- Addressing individual student needs
- Engaging with the family
- Meetings with parents
- Attendance Student Support Group
- Attendance Improvement Plan and Return to School Plan
- Individual Education Plan
- Student Absence Learning Plan
- Referral to school community based wellbeing professional
- Re-engagement programs
- Referral to School DET Attendance Officer
- Reporting concern: referral to Child FIRST or report to Child Protection

Whole-school strategies include:

- Communicate attendance expectations to all members of the school community
- Adopt consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence
- Follow up student absences promptly and consistently
- Implement data driven attendance improvement strategies e.g. DET data
- Provide a safe, supportive learning environment where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning
- Identify early and provide supportive intervention for students at risk of non-attendance
- Link with local community groups and agencies to maximize program and individual support e.g. Kids' Hope Program.
- Provide a staged response to student absence
- Whole school modeling of punctuality: e.g. The Golden Ten Minutes
- Regular discussions on student attendance in staff meetings
- Implementation of effective transition programs including transitions within the school
- Individual Student Learning Plans (when appropriate) including attendance and punctuality and attendance goals
- Structures and activities encouraging parents'/carers' involvement in the life of the school
- Collaboration with other schools, community groups and agencies

Attendance follow up

- The principal must advise parents/carers promptly of any unexplained absences.
- It is the parents' responsibility to keep contact details up to date.
- The school will keep records of all attempts to contact parents and any information obtained.
- The school will take care to notify the parent who is responsible for ensuring the child's attendance on that particular day.
- If contact cannot be made with the parent, the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.
- If upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school will ensure they notify another parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).
- If **within three days** of the initial absence, the parents/carers fail to provide an explanation, or the explanation is deemed unsatisfactory, the school must attempt to contact the parents/carers (by telephone, letter or email) requesting a satisfactory explanation.
- If following contact via phone, letter or email, the parents'/carers' explanation is deemed satisfactory the accurate cause of absence must be recorded and entered into CASES21
- If **within 10 days** of the initial absence, there has been no satisfactory explanation provided, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence in CASES21 and must also be noted in the student's file.
- Attendance meetings with parents will be convened following initial contact with the parents/carers, when a student's attendance pattern is of concern to the school.

No reasonable excuse provided

For all absences where the principal has determined that a parent has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school must notify the parent in writing that the absences have been recorded as unexplained. The Principal will ensure that, wherever possible, a letter or email is addressed to the parent who has been deemed responsible for the child's absence on the relevant day(s) and:

- they may not have met their obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.
- an accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer.
- failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice: e.g. a fine.

Attendance meetings with students, parents/carers – are intended to:

- review strategies initiated to support the student's attendance and examine why non-attendance has not been resolved.
- establish a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving the attendance of the student.
- focus on proactive solutions (rather than disciplinary).
- initiate transparent and immediate action (if appropriate) in response to any problems identified by the parents/carers or the student.

Student Support Group

For on-going intensive support of students, a student support group will be convened by the Principal (or nominee) and attended by relevant school support staff, relevant teachers, relevant school student service support staff, parents/carers and the student if appropriate. Professionals from other agencies may also attend as appropriate with the permission of the parents/carers.

The purposes of this meeting are to:

- ensure that the parents/carers are aware of the absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student.
- identify the reasons for the student's absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student.
- develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan and/or Individual Learning Plan.

The Student Support Group may also initiate referrals to community support agencies for specialist interventions delivered in partnership with the Student Support Group.

A Return-to-School Plan can be implemented to assist in the reintegration of the student after a prolonged absence. This plan will be developed with the parents/carers and student (if appropriate).

Student Attendance Exemptions

An exemption will be sought by parents if the attendance expectation is reduced for a particular child. Exemptions from school attendance may be granted in some circumstances. All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis with the child's best interests as the guiding principle. The Principal or Regional Director (depending upon the circumstances) may authorize an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance to be exempt or reduced to less than full time with reference to DET guidelines.

Home Schooling

Home schooling in Victoria is a legally recognised alternative to attending a registered school during the compulsory years of schooling. Parents/carers who decide to educate their child from a home base assume overall responsibility for their child's educational program. Principals will inform parents/carers in such situations of their legal responsibilities and ensure that the information about the child/children is recorded on CASES21 as an exit destination.

Related Policies

- Duty of Care Policy
- Mandatory Reporting Policy
- Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy
- Student Wellbeing Policy

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of Oberon Primary Schools three-yearly review process.

This policy was ratified by the School Council on: 25/10/2016

NEXT REVIEW DATE: October 2019

Policy prepared by Genefor Walker-Smith — October 2016