

ATTENDANCE POLICY



PURPOSE

Newmark Primary (the school) is committed to ensuring the school, students and parents/carers comply with their legal obligations in relation to school attendance. The school believes that high levels of school attendance are essential for learning. This policy sets out the principles and framework governing the school's behaviours and activities that enact the school's legal responsibilities and which support students in attending school.

The policy should be read and understood by parents/carers and staff.

PRINCIPLES

- The school places a high priority on student attendance in the belief that attendance is essential for learning.
- The school understands that attendance is impacted by the partnership that is formed between the family and the school.
- The school keeps and retains accurate records of school attendance that comply with its regulatory requirements.
- The school, in discharging its duty of care, is committed to ensuring unexplained and unexcused absence is communicated promptly and followed up with parents/carers and students.

AIMS

- To encourage and set high expectations in relation to attendance.
- To eliminate unexplained or unexcused absence.
- To develop strong partnerships with parents/carers in which the importance of attendance and punctuality is a shared goal.
- To comply with the requirements of *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*, to monitor attendance, to maintain an attendance register and to report on attendance data to parents/carers and to the authorities as required.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Duty of Care
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)*
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards
- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) School Attendance 2014 Guidelines – applies to all registered schools in Victoria, including non-government schools
- Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

KEY DEFINITIONS

The **Enrolment Register** records the students admitted to the school. The school is required to maintain an enrolment register that is accurate, up-to-date and contains the information

required by the minimum standard. The school will implement processes and procedures to ensure the register is up to date.

Children of **compulsory school age** (six years and up) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at school or in registered home schooling.

Under certain limited conditions, parents/carers may apply for an **exemption from attendance**.

The **Attendance Register** is the record of the attendance of all students. The school is required to record the attendance at the school at least twice on each school day and to note any reason given or apparent for the absence of the student from the school.

In addition, the school will **monitor the daily attendance** of each student, identify absences of a student from school, follow up any unexplained absences from school on the day of a student's absence and notify parents/carers regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. The school will also identify the staff members with responsibility for monitoring daily attendance, maintain current contact details for parents and accurately record attendance on student files.

Principals are able to 'use their discretion to decide if the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence')'.

The school's **Annual Report** will include information on student attendance.

The school will **retain** student enrolment and attendance records for seven years in line with *Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s 37)*. Student attendance records may be **audited** by either state or commonwealth authorities in order for the authorities to monitor payments made on the basis of student numbers or on the basis of particular categories of students.

Records of enrolment and attendance are required for annual data returns for the Australian Government non-government schools and the Victorian school **census** under *Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s 77)*.

SCOPE

The application of the policy is relevant to the principal, school staff, students and parents/carers.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **school board** is responsible for:

- reviewing and endorsing the Attendance Policy.

The **principal** is responsible for developing:

- strategies that ensure the culture of the school is one in which attendance is given high priority;
- strategies to respond to poor attendance, persistent absenteeism and school refusal;
- strong partnerships with families so that the importance of school attendance is a shared commitment;

The **principal** is responsible for ensuring:

- that an Attendance Register is maintained that accurately records student attendance twice per day;
- procedures are implemented so that parents/carers are promptly informed of any absence, including absence from any school-approved activity;
- procedures are in place to follow up all unexplained absences;
- school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns; and
- the school has clear requirements, guidelines and procedures relating to long, frequent or repeated family holidays.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. If their child is absent from school for all or part of a school day, parents/carers are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence.

Teaching staff, including Casual Relief Teaching staff, are responsible for keeping accurate and timely attendance records following the school's procedures.

Front Office staff are responsible for ensuring daily attendance is recorded into the PC Schools Student Management System. This includes:

- monitoring student attendance data; and
- recording verbal phone messages and emails, and passing them on to teachers.

PROCEDURES

Term dates are provided during the previous year and published on the school's website as early as is practical, so that families can make holiday and other arrangements during designated holiday periods.

Official school hours are 9.00am - 3.30pm Monday to Friday. Students are required to attend school during these times, unless prior notice has been given to the school of an absence.

Students who arrive to class after 9.15am without prior reason provided will be marked as 'Late' on the school's Attendance Register.

Students are expected to remain at school until 3.30pm unless prior arrangement for pick up has been made (see below).

Absence Notifications

Parents/carers are required to notify the school of any planned or unplanned absence before 9.00am on the day of absence by:

- emailing hello@newmark.vic.edu.au OR
- calling (03) 8560 4466

When emailing or calling the school parents/carers should advise:

- the reason for your child's absence (e.g. illness, appointment, family holiday); and
- the expected date for your child's return.

The school may request a medical certificate for absences longer than three consecutive days, or for students who have experienced high absenteeism.

Parents/carers who seek to withdraw students from class for more than two consecutive weeks must apply in writing no less than two weeks prior to the start of planned absence. The school will assess requests and respond within five days approving the request, or asking for additional information.

Marking Attendance Register

It is the responsibility of teachers to mark student attendance twice a day (morning and afternoon).

By 9.45am each morning Front Office staff will check hello@newmark.vic.edu.au and phone messages and update the Attendance Register.

The school will contact parents/carers of students with an unexplained absence (where a parent/carer has not advised the school of absence). The school has a duty of care to keep students safe, and being aware of why students are absent from school is part of that responsibility. Parents/carers are therefore required to respond to any contact from the school, explaining why their child is absent.

Common reasons for absence include:

- short term illness/injury;
- medical appointment;
- family holiday;
- bereavement; or
- attending alternate educational events.

The school may also contact parents/carers for clarification, if the reason for absence received is deemed 'unjustified'. The school has an obligation to decide if the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unjustified absence').

The administration staff and/or teachers must bring to the attention of the principal any student whose attendance is irregular, who does not adequately explain absences, or absences appear unwarranted.

In the instance that a parent/carer repeatedly fails to contact the school to advise of absences, the school will send the parent/carer a formal email:

- requesting they comply with school policy to notify the school of absences before 9.00am each day; and
- outlining next steps should unexplained absences continue.

Monitoring Attendance

The school understands that repeated absences negatively impact student learning. The school will monitor attendance trends by:

- individual student;
- family;

- class; and
- school.

In line with its obligations, the school will also report to Government authorities the number of children who have <90% attendance rate.

The school may request a formal meeting with parents/carers to discuss the impact to their child’s educational outcomes where high levels of absenteeism or repeated lateness occurs.

Ongoing truancy issues will be reported to the government agencies by the principal.

RELATED POLICIES

- Enrolment Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- Record Management Policy
- Privacy Policy

POLICY REVIEW

The school board and principal will review the Attendance Policy every second year.

ENDORSEMENT

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| Updated date | May 2023 |
| Endorsed by | School Board |
| Endorsed on | May 2023 |