



Drysdale Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Drysdale Primary School has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Drysdale Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Drysdale Primary School, parents/carers and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent/carer – includes a guardian or carer and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind academically, socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Drysdale Primary School during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Drysdale Primary School, or

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- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Drysdale Primary School for particular activities.

Both school and parents/carers have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Drysedale Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents/carers to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and being prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Drysedale Primary School parents/carers are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents/carers will communicate with the relevant staff at Drysdale Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents/carers will provide a reasonable explanation for their child/ren's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Drysedale Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- articulating high expectations to all members of the school community by:
 - regularly communicating with parents/carers about expectations for attendance
 - promoting awareness that absence results in quantifiable lost learning time and opportunities
 - modelling punctuality across the whole school
- creating safe, supportive learning environments where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning by:
 - developing collaborative and empowering relationships between teachers, students and parents/carers
 - implementing effective and supportive transition programs, including student transitions between different learning areas and levels within the school
 - developing class and home group structures and environments that enable opportunities for increased connectedness to individual teachers and peers

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- encouraging parents/carers to get involved in the life of the school
- immediately following-up any problems identified by students and parents/carers in a transparent manner
- adopting consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence by:
 - immediately following-up individual student absences
 - correctly using student attendance data management systems (e.g. CASES21, eCASES, Sentral)
 - delegating responsibilities to all staff, with a key member of staff leading attendance improvement initiatives
- implementing data-driven attendance improvement strategies, for example:
 - monitoring and analysing school attendance records regularly and using tools for early identification of students at risk of poor attendance (such as the Student Mapping Tool)
 - regularly discussing student attendance records in staff meetings and in the staff performance and development review process
- providing early identification of and supportive intervention for students at risk of poor attendance by:
 - understanding the causal factors of absence and the need for targeted interventions
 - utilising the Student Mapping Tool or similar early identification strategy
- linking with local community groups and agencies to maximise program and individual support by:
 - collaborating with other schools, community groups and agencies
- accessing specialist support for individual students with identified behavioural, health, or social issues by:
 - utilising Student Support Services or external community services where appropriate
- providing a staged response to non-attendance by:
 - focusing on prevention and early intervention by creating a positive school culture
 - intervening and providing targeted responses for individual students
- supporting students to return to school after absences through:
 - setting individual student attendance goals and data-driven improvement plans
 - formal procedures for supporting the learning of a student absent for an extended period
 - positive and flexible support and follow-up with students on their return to school, including the use of Return to School Plans and modification of learning outcomes where required

Recording attendance

Drysedale Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Drysedale Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the teacher supervising (including specialist teachers) of the class at the start of the school day and again after lunch. Drysedale PS staff will use Sentral. All other teachers will use a hard copy roll that is returned to the school office. Hard copy rolls will be entered onto Sentral by Admin staff when necessary.

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Supervising teachers will submit AM attendance rolls no later than 9:10AM. If a student arrives before the AM roll has been submitted the supervising teacher will ensure the student's attendance is recorded. Any student arriving after the AM roll is submitted must go via the school office to be signed in and receive a late pass to hand to the supervising teacher. If a student arrives without a late pass they must proceed to the school office to be signed in and then return to class with the late pass.

Supervising teachers will submit PM attendance rolls after returning from lunch no later than 2PM. Any early departure will be recorded via the school office when parents/carers come to collect their child/ren.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity eg. an offsite sports event or excursion, the teacher in charge of the activity will ensure they are recorded as present or absent. Staff should notify the office of any student not in attendance, and if they arrive to school for the day their attendance will be marked accordingly.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent/carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents/carers should notify Drysdale Primary School of absences by:

- using the Sentral Parent Portal or emailing the school or by contacting the school office by phone or if it is an unplanned absence,
- informing the classroom teacher via the Sentral Parent Portal or Student Diary if it is a planned absence. Admin staff can support teachers in managing attendance records on Sentral and setting up future absences if necessary.

Drysedale PS will attempt to contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent/carer to respond. If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent/carer, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Drysdale PS will notify parents/carers by **automated email at 9:45am each day**.

If contact cannot be made with the parent/carer via email (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Following 3 consecutive days of unexplained absence, classroom teachers will try to contact families via phone and Sentral and seek support from the Principal and Assistant Principals if needed. All records of these attempts should be kept on record, staff to record attempts in their notebook/diary.

Drysedale Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent/carer meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Drysdale Primary School considers that the parent/carer has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as an '**explained absence**'.

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If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as **'unauthorised'**. It will remain **'unexplained'** if no contact or an excuse is not provided.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent/carer for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent/carer within 10 school days of an absence, it will remain recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file on Sentral. Parents/carers can update 'unexplained absences' via the Sentral Parent Portal at any time.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Drysdale Primary School will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant staff including the Principal, Assistant Principals and class teachers.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Drysdale Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the Barwon Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact a parent/carer, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
 - the parent/carer has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and

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- measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful

DPS focus on student attendance that sits at or below 80% as a priority.

- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](#)
- [School intranet](#)

REVIEW

This policy was reviewed in May 2021 and is scheduled for review in May 2024.

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