

ABSENTEEISM & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

1. RATIONALE:

Absenteeism has continued to become a big issue, and it is an issue that is not owned exclusively by schools. The wider school community, parents and students need to fully understand the impact of missing too many school days.

The ‘fallout’ of poor attendance is that students are at risk of not achieving their potential and therefore limiting their life choices. Other consequences could include:

- Placing themselves at risk of harm while absent.
- Having gaps in their learning.
- Feeling insecure in the school environment.
- Being socially isolated.
- Being the victims of bullying and harassment.

Schools, parents and the wider community need to work in partnership with each other to ensure students enjoy school and look forward to broadening their horizons.

The Education Act 1958 requires that children of school age (6 – 15) resident in Victoria to be in full-time attendance at school unless they are receiving home tuition, correspondence education or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

2. AIMS:

- 2.1 Children are to attend school on all school days unless they:
 - Are too sick or injured to come to school.
 - Have an infectious disease.
 - Have exceptional circumstances e.g. family travelling overseas.
- 2.2 Children are to arrive at school on time.
- 2.3 Legitimate reasons for absences should be provided by parents.

3. IMPLEMENTATION:

- 3.1 Information about the importance of regular school attendance and punctuality will be featured in the newsletter.
- 3.2 Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- 3.3 Whenever a child is absent from school a brief note, phone call or personal contact is required from the parent to explain the absence. Absence notes should be provided by parents immediately on return to school. A letter generated by CASES 21 (and managed by the office staff) will be sent home every two weeks to parents of children who have been absent and who have not provided written or verbal explanations for the absences.
- 3.4 Staff will be briefed and provided with an absence protocol flow chart.
- 3.5 The teacher will mark the attendance role twice daily.

- 3.6 Absences without legitimate explanations from parents will be followed up initially by the class teacher (if the CASES 21 produced letter generated by the office staff asking for written explanations has not been forwarded). Teachers will contact the parents either by telephone or by arranging a meeting time to discuss regular attendance and punctuality.
- 3.7 Parents who are unable to be contacted by phone or who do not attend a meeting organised by the teacher will be followed up with a phone call from the Primary Welfare Officer. If contact by phone is unsuccessful the Primary Welfare Officer will mail a letter requesting an interview.
- 3.10 Absences with legitimate explanations of 10 days or more within the term will result in the teacher contacting the parent. The risk of the child falling behind with curriculum programs or skills development will be discussed and strategies for helping the child catch up in these areas will be highlighted.
- 3.11 Parents of children who are consistently late to school will be contacted by the classroom teacher to discuss punctuality. Likewise parents who are unable to be contacted by phone or who do not attend a meeting organised by the teacher will be followed up by the Primary Welfare Officer. A letter from administration requesting an interview will be mailed to parents.
- 3.12 All children across the school with a 100% attendance record for the term will receive a Perfect Attendance Certificate.
- 3.13 The Primary Welfare Officer will contact the parents of students with high levels of unexplained absence or lateness, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimize absence/lateness. These may include:
 - Establishing a data base of students who are regularly late/absent
 - Having the children that are regularly late making up that time during recess breaks.
 - Requiring parents of children who are frequently absent to contact the school in the morning every time their child is absent.
 - Organizing formal attendance conferences.
 - Utilizing the services of the Region to contact families whose children have ongoing absence concerns.

4. EVALUATION:

Annual absenteeism records will be compared, eg Year levels and individual children who have had high rates of absenteeism.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle.