

Sylvania Heights Public School



ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

1 Context

1.1 Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their learning. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Parents have a duty to comply with the compulsory education requirements of the Education Act 1990. Under their duty of care, staff monitor part or whole day absences.

1.2 This document reflects the DET School Attendance Policy (2010) as they apply to Sylvania Heights Public School.

1.3 These procedures should be read in the context of The Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy (1997).

1.4 The school attendance register (roll) should reflect the highest professional standards.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Parents are responsible for:

- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling²
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly
- explaining the absences of their children from school promptly and within seven days to the school
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

2.2 School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters a students' sense of belonging to the school community
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance using approved procedures
- seeking verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences.

- retaining records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. Verbal explanations must be noted and kept with written and printed electronic explanations
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise
- providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.
- alerting the Stage Supervisor or Learning Support Team Co-ordinator if a student's attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer
- reporting chronic non-attendance, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the Principal or Learning Support Team Co-ordinator.

2.3.1 The principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled in line with the requirements set out in *The Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy (1997)* and the Memorandum *Enhanced Enrolment Procedures* (Intranet only)
- attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students
- all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible as required
- the School Education Director is informed of any attendance problems and issues including students for whom chronic nonattendance is an issue
- the school discipline policy addresses attendance issues, including truancy.
- The Learning Support Team Co-ordinator has, delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records
- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.

2.3.2 The principal or delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly and within two days of an unexplained absence occurring. Contact may be made either by providing the parent with an Absentee Notice – Compulsory School Attendance by telephone, email or SMS text message, if a pre-arranged secure address has been provided.

2.3.3 The principal or delegate will ensure that where absences are recorded within 14 days of the occurrence of the absence, the hard copy roll cannot be amended. (See Statement 4.2.4)

2.3.4 In the case of students participating in school activities away from the school site (such as Stewart House etc), the principal or nominee should obtain an accurate record of student attendance at other sites at the conclusion of each school week.

2.3.5 The principal or delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly and within two days of an unexplained absence occurring. Contact may be made either by providing the parent with an Absentee Notice - Compulsory School Attendance or by telephone.

2.3.6 The Principal may grant:

- sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness
- leave to students of compulsory school age totalling not more than 15 days per school year in addition to sick leave. In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may grant additional leave for brief periods of time. Additional leave for students not of compulsory school age may be granted at the discretion of the Principal.
- exemption from school attendance for up to 50 days in a twelve month period

2.3.7 The Principal may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as sickness are frequent or prolonged.

2.3.8 The Principal may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

2.4 Home school liaison officers and other regional attendance personnel conduct regular audits of the school attendance register and provide support to the school in maintaining these documents.

2.5 The School Education Director is responsible for:

- granting exemption from school attendance for up to 100 days in a twelve month period
- approving part time attendance for students with behaviour difficulties. Refer to Application for Part Day Exemption.
- making recommendations to the Director of Student Welfare, about the prosecution of cases of non-attendance or failure to enrol a child at school where warranted.
- implementation of plans to improve the attendance of students who are identified by the school as chronic non-attenders.

2.6 The Regional Director is responsible for granting certificates of exemption from school for periods greater than 100 days in a twelve month period.

3 School Attendance Records Requirements

3.1 The school attendance records will include:

- a Register of Admission to be retained permanently
- notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents, retained for two years from the date of receipt

- an Attendance Register to be retained for three years. where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 24 years
- the student's record card listing the number of absences each year to be retained for seven years after the student has left. Where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, the record card should be retained until the student's 25th birthday.

3.2 Records for Certificates of Exemption from attendance and enrolment must comply with requirements at Statements 1.4 and 2.3 of *Guidelines for Exemption from School (2009)*.

4 **Attendance Registers (rolls)**

4.1.1 Attendance registers must be maintained on all days that the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.

4.1.2 The exception method (marking absences only) will be used. Only the codes listed in the support document Student Attendance in Government Schools: Attendance Register Codes will be used.

4.1.3 School attendance will be recorded early in the school day.

4.1.4 Students involved in off-site activities organised by the school or Department of Education and Training must not be marked as absent.

4.2 At Sylvania Heights PS, the Department's electronic attendance register (OASIS) will be used for recording student attendance. This information will be updated on a regular basis from 'Webattend' an electronic roll marking system provided by Sentral.

Teachers will:

- call the roll each morning using a class list and noting any student absences on the absence register
- collect absentee notes - sign, date and place notes in roll folder, noting the reason for and date of absence in the space provided.
- request explanation for absence; remind students after point of return.
- send a letter home endorsed by Principal/ phone call to parents 3 days after absence requesting absentee explanations.
- record the number of absences in each student's record card on the last day of each term.
- liaise with the Principal or Learning Support Team Co-ordinator when concerns arise over students' absences within their class

The office provides each class with a folder containing:

- applications for certificate of exemption for student leave (not sick leave) in excess of 5 days in a twelve month period e.g family holiday.
- generate fortnightly absentee reports for the Principal to sign.
- complete semester absent returns for the Department
- enter partial absences on a daily basis for students who sign in late or are collected early.

The Learning Support Team Co-ordinator will:

- monitor the attendance of students on a regular basis record students with 10 percent absences at the end of each term and table for executive meeting. Send letters to the parents outlining the absences.
- implement a ten-day attendance improvement program for students at risk after letter has been sent and no improvement.
- liaise with the Principal and enlist the assistance of the Home School Liaison Officer if required

The Principal will: regularly inform the school community of the attendance policy and procedures

- sign and check the period absent report on a weekly basis
- Liaise with the Learning Support Team Co-ordinator, Home School Liaison Officer and School Education Director in relation to students at risk.

4.3 Special circumstance registers

4.3.1 Attendance registers will be maintained each day the school is open with the exception of:

- days on which there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers
- approved School development days

4.3.2 Special circumstance registers are maintained on days as outlined in 4.3.1 and will:

- specify the dates and times of the variation
- indicate the reason for the variation
- list students attending on that day
- be signed by the teacher maintaining the register
- be permanently attached to attendance registers.

4.3.3 The electronic attendance register will automatically display a 'school development day' message on school development days. A similar notation must be made on hard copies of electronic

attendance registers regarding other reasons for maintaining a special circumstance register (eg industrial action or school closure).

4.3.4 Absences on these days are not recorded on student record cards or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.4 Security of attendance registers

4.4.1 Registers are stored in the security room.

4.4.2 They must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood.

4.4.3 At the end of each school year the Principal will ensure that the attendance register and attached special circumstance registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.

4.5 Students who are suspended from school in accordance with Department's Suspension and Expulsion of School Student - Procedures

4.5.1 The appropriate symbol for suspension (E) will be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension.

4.5.2 The absences of students who are suspended are counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.6 Students who are exempted from school

4.6.1 The appropriate symbol for exemption (M) is to be used when the absences are the result of students being exempted from attending school. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the exemption and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the exemption period.

4.6.2 The absences of students who have been exempted from school are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.7 A student's name will be removed from the attendance register if:

- the student has moved out of New South Wales
- the student enrolls at another school
- advice has been received from parents that the student is to be enrolled in a non-government school or other registered school, or is registered with the Board of Studies for home schooling
- the students has been expelled from the school in accordance with the Departments' *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures*

- the student's whereabouts is unknown and the student has not attended school for a continuous period of 8 weeks in which the school was open. Contact regional student welfare personnel if a student's name has been removed from the roll because they are missing, absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included as absences for statistical purposes. The roll should be amended to reflect this.

5 Enrolment and Attendance

5.1 Students may attend a NSW government school if they are:

- enrolled at that school or
- attending in the short term

5.2 Short-term attendance of students

5.2.1 Students may be enrolled in one school only at any given time. However, for a variety of reasons, a student enrolled at a NSW government school may need to attend another NSW government school for a short period of time.

5.2.2 Short term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school.

They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.

5.2.3 Prior to agreeing to the short term attendance of a student, the Principal will contact the school at which the student is enrolled and conduct a risk assessment if required.

6 Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

6.1 Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents, will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the *Education Act (1990)* the welfare of the student must be the focus of this consultation.

6.2 The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this. The support document *Phone Intervention Program Guidelines* describes a program facilitating early telephone contact.

6.3 Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:

- student and parent interviews
- reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program
- development of a school-based attendance improvement plan
- referral to the school counsellor or outside agencies
- support from school based personnel.

7 Exemption from Attendance at School

7.1 Applications for student leave in excess of fifteen days (5 days is the accepted norm in Sydney Region) in a twelve month period are considered as applications for exemption from school attendance. Refer to the *Guidelines for Exemption from School (2009)*.

7.2 Exemptions should only be granted where conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable. Exemptions may be granted due to:

- domestic necessity, including but not limited to participation in family holidays during school term
- health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment are not appropriate

7.3 Delegated responsibilities for granting exemptions from school attendance

- The Principal may grant up to 50 days in a twelve month period.
- The School Education Director may grant up to 100 days in a twelve month period.
- The Regional Director may grant exemptions for periods over 100 days.
- The General Manager (Access and Equity) may grant exemptions for students to participate in the entertainment industry.

7.4 A copy of the Certificates of Exemption must be attached to the student's record card.

8. Part Day Exemption from Attendance at School

8.1 Students participating in approved alternate education programs may be granted short term exemptions from attendance at school.

8.2 Prior to exemptions being granted, participation in the alternate educational programs must be approved by the School Education Director.

8.3 The parent's signed agreement to their child's participation in the program constitutes an application for part day attendance at school.

8.4 Where the part day exemption is utilised to support a behaviour management intervention, a behaviour management plan must be attached to the application for part day exemption.

9 Students Attending Lessons Outside School during School Hours

9.1 Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricula activities is usually limited to outside school hours.

9.2 Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, at the Principal's discretion short leave may be granted. This provision must not be used on a regular basis.

9.3 If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons, an unjustified absence will be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.

10 Definitions

10.1 **Parent:** Includes a carer or other person having the care or custody of a child or young person.

10.2 **Unexplained absence:** A student absence where a parent provides no acceptable reason for a student's non-attendance.

- 10.3 **Truancy:** The absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent or carer.
- 10.4 **Parent condoned absence:** When a parent or carer causes a student to be absent from school without acceptable reason.
- 10.5 **Explained/justified absence:** A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has been accepted by the principal.
- 10.6 **Explained/unjustified absence:** A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has not been accepted by the principal.
- 10.7 **Unexplained/unjustified absence:** A parent has not provided an explanation of the student's absence within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.
- 10.6 **Compulsory School Age:** {See Section 21B of the *Education Act (1990)*}