



ATTENDANCE POLICY

FCS is committed to ensuring the school, students and their parent/guardian/carer comply with their legal obligations in relation to school attendance. The school believes that high levels of school attendance are essential for learning.

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

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age

School participation is important as it 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 which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school, disruptive and delinquent behaviour and may lead to a cycle of rebellion against authority. These outcomes have later implications for employment, a range of health risk behaviours (drug and alcohol abuse), homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system.

The attendance 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. This policy should be read and understood by all those connected to the school.

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 students and parents.

Aims

- To encourage and set high expectations in relation to attendance.
- To eliminate unexplained or unexcused absence.
- To develop strong partnerships with parents and 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 and to the authorities as required.

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 is also required to implement processes and procedures to ensure the register is up to date. The enrolment register determines those students for whom attendance must be registered and monitored.
- Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at school or in registered home schooling.
- Under certain limited conditions, parents 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 of any enrolled student of compulsory school age and to note any reason given or apparent for the absence of the student from the school.
- In addition, the school must monitor the daily attendance of each student, identify absences of a student from school, follow up any unexplained absences from school and notify parents regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. The school must also identify the person(s) with responsibility for



monitoring daily attendance, maintain current contact details for parents and guardians and accurately record attendance on student files.

- The School Attendance Guidelines 2014 state that attendances and absences must be recorded on a half-day basis (primary schools) and for every class (secondary schools) and the reason given or apparent for the absence of the student from the school must be noted.
- 'A student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction'.
- There is no legal definition of lateness.
- Principals are able to 'use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence')
- Vic DET's Regional Directors act as School Attendance Officers for all Victorian schools, including non-government schools.
- A School Attendance Officer (Vice-Principal) may decide to send a School Attendance Notice to a parent if 'the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences' and if 'measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances'.
- The VCAA states that the school must determine attendance requirements for VCE and VCAL students.
- The Annual Report to the School Community must include a report on student attendance.
- The Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s 37) requires student enrolment and attendance records to be retained for seven years after the end of school year in which the last entry was made. 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)*



Reporting and Recording Attendance Responsibilities

School responsibilities

The school must record student attendance in every class in secondary schools and record, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

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

All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above.

Accurate and comprehensive student attendance records, including the reasons for any absences, also allow schools to monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and measure achievement against attendance targets. It also provides evidence for any further enforcement proceedings including issue of an Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school.

All schools must report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year. Schools are also required to report information about student enrolment and attendance for funding requirements.

Principal Responsibilities

The principal is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the School Attendance 2014 guidelines as set out by Vic DET and which apply to all registered schools, including non-government schools.

The principal is responsible for:

- developing strategies that ensure the culture of the school is one in which attendance is given high priority
- developing 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.
- Defining what constitutes lateness and how that will be monitored.
- Implementing procedures to record the reason (if any) given by a parent for a child's absence and for determining 'if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations'.
- Use their discretion whilst following the guidelines as set out in the school's attendance procedures to 'decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence')

The principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring procedures are implemented so that parents are promptly informed of any absence, including absence from any school-approved activity.
- Notifying parents if the principal's decision is that the reason for the student's absence is an unexcused absence.
- Ensuring procedures are in place to follow up all unexplained absences.
- Ensuring accurate and comprehensive records are kept of contacts and attempted contacts between the school and parents following an unexplained absence.
- The principal is responsible for developing strategies to respond to poor attendance, persistent absenteeism and school refusal.
- The principal is responsible for ensuring the school has clear requirements, guidelines and procedures relating to long, frequent or repeated family holidays.
- The principal is responsible for ensuring 'school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns.

The principal is responsible for ensuring the school reports student attendance to the school community at least once a year.

To meet duty of care responsibilities, the school attendance records should 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 should record attendance and ensure parents are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school.



All students enrolled in the school are required to have their attendance recorded, even if they only attend the school premises part time. Attendance for the times the student is not expected to attend should be recorded so it does not count towards the absences for the school.

The attendance of students at curriculum programs outside school premises needs to be recorded by the provider and reported back and recorded by the school.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the Principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The Principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Parents should inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- determine if the child's absence needs to be excused by the Principal, in line with school policy and these guidelines
- determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported
- record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day.

Where possible, parents should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences.

Staff Responsibilities

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

Policy Endorsement

This Policy has been endorsed by the FCS Governing Body.

Date: July 2021

Review Date: July 2022

Review Cycle. Every 12 months.

Exceptions: This Policy may be reviewed earlier than the date stated subject to circumstance