



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale:

- Regular school attendance enables students to maximise their full educational potential and to actively participate in their learning. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age. Students who are regularly absent from school are at risk of missing fundamental aspects of their educational and social development.
- The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* requires that children of school age (six to sixteen years) resident in Victoria be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless formally exempt. Our school requires that post-compulsory aged students also attend school unless a valid reason exists.

Aims:

- To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that children required to attend school do so regularly, and without unnecessary absences.

Expectations and Implementation:

Shared understanding of attendance:

- Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult.
- Absenteeism contributes significantly to student failure at school.
- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* describes a reasonable excuse for a student not attending school as being due to:
 - Illness, accident, or any unforeseen event.
 - The child being suspended or expelled.
 - The child undertaking an educational program provided by a registered organisation.
 - A child observing or attending a religious event or obligation as a result of a genuinely held belief.
 - Exemption from attendance at school by the Minister

Expectations for parents and carers:

- Parents and carers have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- Parents have a further responsibility to provide a written note to the school explaining why an absence has occurred. (*Independent students not living with parents or guardians are also required to provide notes*).
 - Note that a written excuse offered by a parent is not necessarily a satisfactorily explained absence if the school does not accept the validity of that excuse.
 - Parents of students in Senior Years (years 10-12) must provide a medical certificate or statutory declaration for missed school days or it will count as unexplained attendance.
- Promote and provide organisational support to their child for full attendance at school.
- Ensure that their child is on time for school each day.

- Notify the school in advance if any absence of any period is planned. The absence is then to be confirmed in writing by a note from parents.
- Ensure that contact details for the child are correct and up to date.
- Support their child's learning during continued or prolonged absences through the implementation of an agreed Student Absence Learning Plan.
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with the school to develop and implement improvement strategies when attendance has been deemed unsatisfactory by the school.
- Work cooperatively with the school in supporting the child to return to school after prolonged absence.
- Attend school support group meetings when a student's attendance falls below 90% for unexplained reasons.

Expectations for students:

- Always attend school when the school is open.
- Arrive on time to school and to every class.
- Remain on the school premises during school time unless they have permission to leave from their parent/carer or the school.
- Provide a written explanation from their parent/carer when they have been absent from school. Students in Senior Years (years 10-12) must provide a medical certificate or statutory declaration for missed school days or it will count as unexplained attendance.
- Work cooperatively with the school to develop personal attendance improvement goals and strategies when attendance has been inconsistent.
- Work with their teacher to develop learning activities to be included in their Student Absence Learning Plan during a prolonged absence.

Expectations for school:

- An Attendance Team will be responsible for monitoring and investigating student absences.
- Promote student attendance through clear statements of expectations and procedures.
- Ensure that student attendance is recorded in every class.
- Maintain accurate attendance records on a database.
- Pursue and record an explanation for every absence.
- Ensure the prompt processing of student transfers by immediately contacting the student's transferring school upon the student's enrolment at their new school.
- Monitor and analyse school attendance records regularly for early identification and the provision of timely, targeted support to students at risk of poor attendance and possible disengagement from school.
- Monitor and follow up all individual cases of student absence promptly and consistently. Ensure that wherever possible, parents/carers are aware of student absences on the same day of the absence. It is the Principal's responsibility to keep parents/carers informed of the absence of post-compulsory age students.
- Work collaboratively with parents/carers and students to develop an agreed Student Absence Learning Plan when a student will be absent from school for an extended period. This process should involve discussion with the parents/carers about the possible impact of the proposed absence on the student's learning, and the determination of an appropriate learning plan for the time spent away from school.
- Convene a student support group meeting which is attendance-focused with parents/carers and students when a student's attendance pattern is of concern to the school. The outcome of the meeting may lead to the development of an Individual Learning Plan to improve the student's attendance.

- Provide ongoing intensive support for students if communication with parents/carers has not been possible or if the student's attendance pattern continues to be a problem after the initial student support group meeting.

Recording attendance:

- The Principal will ensure all student absences are recorded each period by teachers, are aggregated on our database and communicated to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- The DEECD and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- The Attendance Team will be informed of students attending school events prior to the set date and will be updated after the event to ensure accuracy of attendance records.

Monitoring attendance:

- The Attendance Team will contact parents of absent student via SMS, email, or phone. If within three days of the initial absence, the parents/carers fail to provide an explanation, or the explanation provided is deemed unsatisfactory by the school, contact must again be made with the parents/carers requesting a satisfactory explanation.
- If following contact via letter or email, the parents/carers' explanation is deemed satisfactory, the accurate cause of absence must be recorded and entered into CASES21 or equivalent. If there has been no response or explanation provided within 10 school days of the initial absence, the absence should be recorded as an unexplained absence in CASES21 and must be noted in the student's file.
- High-risk students who are observed as being absent will have their parents contacted by the Attendance Officer on the day.
- Attendance meetings with parents/carers and students should be convened following initial contact with the parents/carers when a student's attendance pattern is of concern to the school. The purpose of these meetings is to review strategies initiated to support the student's attendance and to examine why non-attendance has not been resolved.
- If a student aggregates 3 consecutive missed days due to unexplained or inadequately explained absences, Wellbeing or the Year Level Coordinator will initiate a meeting to resolve the attendance concerns.
- If a student's attendance falls below 90% or has 3-5 consecutively missed days due to unexplained or inadequately explained absences, the Year Level Coordinator will initiate another meeting including additional supports within the school, such as wellbeing, to resolve the attendance concerns. The purpose of these meetings is to review strategies initiated to support the student's attendance and to examine why non-attendance has not been resolved, and to amend plan in accordance with discussion. The meeting should establish a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving the attendance of the student. Ideally, the student should be involved in the process of problem identification and improvement goal setting. Meetings should be supportive rather than disciplinary and should focus on proactive solutions. It is important that transparent and immediate action is taken on any problems identified by the parents/carers or the student.
- For ongoing unexplained attendance, where attendance falls below 85% or 10+ consecutively missed days, further attendance meetings will be convened by the principal (or nominee) and attended by relevant teachers, wellbeing, parents/carers, and the student (if appropriate). Professionals from other agencies (for example, a youth worker) may also attend as appropriate with the permission of the parents/carers. The purpose of this meeting is to review strategies to support the student's attendance and to examine why non-attendance is ongoing, and to amend plan in accordance with discussion.
- Students in years 7 - 12, who aggregate less than 80% attendance in any subject (including semester-length subjects) due to unexplained absences, will not have satisfied the requirements of that subject.

Student will be at risk of not moving into the next year level and therefore further attendance meetings may be required to resolve concerns.

- Unresolved attendance issues for students may be reported by the Principal (or nominee) or to the Senior Wellbeing Engagement Officer. Where a student has unexplained attendance 10 days or more, and the school has not had contact from parents/carers, or emergency contacts, the school may also request police do a welfare check and make a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.
- Maffra Secondary College recommends a 90% minimum attendance for ALL students.
- Attendance at VCE assessment is compulsory unless students provide a medical certificate or statutory declaration.
- Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year reports.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the DEECD and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	August 2023
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	School's review cycle