



# **Williamstown High School**

## **Student Attendance Policy**

## Student Attendance Policy

<b>Review cycle</b>	3 - 4 years
<b>Department of Education and Training DET requirement for local policy</b>	Mandatory
<b>Source of requirement</b>	Minimum Standards
<b>Consultation requirement</b>	Recommended with School Council
<b>Approval requirements</b>	Principal
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## 1. Rationale

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure social development. School engagement and participation enables opportunities for children and young people for a sound education and support networks. School enables people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation as a member of society.

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6-17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted). 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 the school, parent/carers and School Attendance Officers, under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines. Attendance is also referenced in the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

## 2. 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 Williamstown High School has in place to:
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences

Secondary schools are required to record student attendance in each class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge the school's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority VCAA requirements for Victorian Certificate of Education VCE students

## 3. Implementation

The school is committed to providing a safe and engaging learning environment for all students. The school expects that students are punctual and present for all classes and school activities and actively seek support from parents/carers to enable this.

Students are expected to attend school, during 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
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment at Williamstown High School for particular activities

The school aims for 100% school attendance. The school understands that young people, at times, may be absent from school (detailed below), so attendance is addressed as an issue in itself (in addition to learning and assessment missed) when attendance for a semester is below 95%.

Attendance will be recorded in the first part of each class using Compass (preferred name of child appearing) which then links to CASES21 (as per DET requirements - child's legal name appearing).

### **Recording absences**

For absences where there is not an exemption in place, parents/carers are to provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents/carers can do this by telephoning the relevant campus or adding this to Compass directly.

The school will contact parents/carers of absent students for absences which are yet to be explained, by mid-morning each day so communication with the school prior to this time is recommended. The school will contact both parents/carers via SMS if SMS communication has been allowed by both parents/carers. The school will use other methods of contacting parents/carers if responses are not received including contacting nominated emergency contacts.

Written explanation of absence from a parent/carer or other relevant documentation, ie. a medical certificate, can be provided to the Homegroup teacher, or to the relevant Education Support staff at the campus.

The school records the reason provided for each absence and uses this to determine if the explanation aligns with the requirements for parents/carers under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

The school endeavours to work with parents/carers to optimise school attendance and note that absence from school for the following reasons are largely deemed explained and legitimate:

- specialist medical 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/carers to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance with notification in advance

*Please note:* parents/carers can notify the school of a pending period of planned absence (3 days or longer) by contacting the Homegroup teacher and returning a *Notification of an Extended Absence from School*<sup>1</sup> form. The circumstances for the absence will then determine what actions or support is required.

To enable all students to access the curriculum, teaching and learning, it is recommended that parents/carers schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **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, the school will be in contact with parents/carers to develop strategies to improve attendance.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 - page 9

Strategies may include:

- establishing a Student Support Group including relevant staff, ie. Homegroup teacher, Year Level Coordinator/s, members of the Student Engagement and Wellbeing team
- 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
- referral to the School Attendance Officer

#### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

Referral to the School Attendance Officer is a step that can be taken if school attendance is unsatisfactory and the endeavours to engage the child/parent/carer, as outlined above, have been largely unsuccessful. The South Western Region School Attendance Officer will receive the referral and work with the school to support school attendance.

Referrals can also occur if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- 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.

#### **4. Specific procedures**

##### **SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

###### **Students are expected to:**

- a. attend and be punctual for all scheduled classes (95% attendance per semester is minimum requirement)
  - students arriving late to school are to report to Reception and sign in at the Compass Kiosk and provide an explanation/written documentation from the parent/carer about the late arrival
- b. inform the Homegroup teacher/classroom teacher of an upcoming absence where possible
- c. in the case of absence, written explanation from the parent/carer and/or medical certificates are to be provided to Homegroup Teacher/relevant Education Support staff
  - students should catch up on missed work in a timely manner, seeking support from teachers as required
  - students seek support from the Homegroup teacher/Year Level Coordinator/s, if required

###### **Parent/carers are expected to:**

- a. support punctuality and daily school attendance
- b. communicate with the school if their child is absent, as detailed above
- c. contact the Homegroup teacher, year level coordinator/s or member of the engagement and wellbeing team if support is needed in regards to attendance

## **Staff**

### **Classroom teachers are expected to:**

- a. monitor and maintain accurate and up to date records of student attendance of all timetabled classes and school activities
- b. after liaising with the Homegroup teacher/Year Level Coordinator/s/Education Support staff, communicate with a student and their parent/carer when the attendance rate falls below 95% (also in regards to lateness and unexplained absences) and support the student catch up on work missed
  - teachers at the Pasco Campus are to initiate the 'At Risk' process for students whose attendance falls below 95%
- c. continue to work with the Year Level Coordinator/s to monitor and intervene

### **Homegroup teachers are expected to:**

- a. accurately mark and maintain daily Homegroup rolls
- b. contact parent/carers about all unexplained absences
- c. pass on any written documentation/medical certificates from parents/carers to Education Support staff so absences are documented as explained
- d. monitor students' attendance and discuss with individual students when attendance is a concern
- e. seek support from Year Level Coordinators/s if any student's attendance is an ongoing concern

### **Year Level Coordinator/s are expected to:**

- a. coordinate, monitor and support students, parents/carers, Homegroup teachers and classroom teachers implement attendance procedures and policy
- b. support the Homegroup teacher to identify and follow up students who have unexplained absences, if required
- c. regularly monitor the year level attendance rates
- d. discuss attendance concerns with Homegroup and classroom teacher/s and initiate meetings with parents/carers to discuss attendance concerns, attendance requirements, potential consequences of unsatisfactory attendance (including implementing an Attendance Improvement Plan)
- e. support the progress of students 'At Risk' through liaison with Homegroup teachers, Student Welfare Coordinator and Assistant Campus Principal
- f. communicate to staff specific student explained absences ie. suspension
- g. establish a Student Support Group, if required
- h. liaise with the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Team

### **Student Engagement and Wellbeing team, Student Welfare Coordinator, Mental Health Practitioner, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator are expected to:**

- a. support all staff in early intervention of all 'At Risk' students
- b. regularly support students who are 'At Risk' and implement strategies to re-engage students with their schooling
- c. seek the support of the Student Support Services (SSS) team and appropriate agencies to support students who are 'At Risk'

### **Education Support Class - Attendance are expected to:**

- a. receive parent/carer absence communication and input daily absences (including school based activities) on Compass/CASES 21
- b. produce and share 'unexplained absences' report

- c. provide weekly attendance summaries to Homegroup teachers/Year Level Coordinators/Student Engagement and Wellbeing Team/Principal Class to assist them to identify when a student's attendance
- d. highlight 'At Risk' students to Year Level Coordinators/Student Engagement and Wellbeing Team/Principal Class

**Campus Assistant Principals are expected to:**

- a. monitor attendance data and support Homegroup teachers/Year Level Coordinators to intervene, as required
- b. refer to the School Attendance Officer

**Campus Principals are expected to:**

- a. liaise with the Campus Assistant Principal to intervene with 'At Risk' students
- b. liaise with the Curriculum Leader to determine student progression

## 5. Evaluation and Review

Each 3-4 years

## 6. Definitions and References

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

*Parent/carer* includes a guardian 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.

*Explained absences* include:

- illness with a medical certificate
- illness with communication from the parent/carer
- attendance at an approved school activity (e.g. instrumental music or drama production, camp, excursion or school sporting event)
- suspension from school
- exceptional personal or family circumstances (e.g. funeral, family illness of parent, sibling)

All Year 10 to 12 students are required to provide a medical certificate if absent on the day of SAC/submission of a SAT. This needs to be shown to the classroom teacher and submitted.

*Unexplained absences* are all other absences.

*Notification of an Extended Absence from School*

- for a pending absence of 3 days or longer, parents/carers are to complete and submit the 'Notification of an Extended Absence from School form' in advance, with as much notice as possible (at least 4 weeks in advance for travel).
- we will acknowledge receipt of the form

*Please note:*

- that teachers are not required to create additional work for students absent during the term for travel but learning activities may be accessible through Compass/Google Classroom
- it may not be possible for a student to successfully complete VCE units when absent due to travel

- students are to communicate with their teachers to complete the 'Extended Absence from School - Work to be completed form'<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Victorian Certificate Education VCE units minimum attendance*

The Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority VCAA requires students to have a minimum of 90% attendance to be considered for successful completion.

#### *Attendance rates*

Attendance rates, for each class, will be calculated as a percentage for VCE students, ie. the number of classes attended, divided by the total number of classes. This will take into consideration the total number of explained absences. Therefore, only unexplained absences will decrease the percentage.

VCE students not achieving an attendance rate of 95% for a subject will receive an 'N' for that unit. The outcome and communication of this result will be made in conjunction with the student, teacher, parent/carer, Year Level Coordinator/s, Curriculum Leader and Principal Class. Year 10 and 11 students will continue in the unit until the end of the semester and may be recommended to re-study the unit or have consideration for Redemption. For Year 12 students, this will be determined case by case.

### **7. Consultative process**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- available on our school's website
- discussed at annual staff meetings
- included in transition and enrolment packs

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2 - page 10



**Appendix 1 - Notification of an Extended Absence from School**



## Notification of an Extended Absence from School

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and ensure their social development.

Extended absences from school do not provide optimal learning opportunities and can have negative effects on student learning and outcomes. Of course, some extended absences are unavoidable, such as illness or a serious family situation. However, parents/carers should consider the impact of long-term absences that are within their control, such as overseas travel.

Extended absences have a serious impact on educational progress in the senior years of schooling and become critical in Victorian Certificate of Education VCE, as there are specific Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority VCAA requirements for attendance. Extended absences taken without the school's acknowledgement will put a child's ability to obtain successful completion at risk.

If you do wish to notify the school of an extended absence, please complete the form below and submit the request to your year level coordinator/s at least four school weeks in advance of the proposed absence.

Prior to the absence, students need to see each teacher so that they can fill in a "Work to be Completed" form

On return from the absence, the student and parent/carers will be contacted to attend an interview with the year level coordinator/s to support their transition back into classes.

**Name of student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Homegroup:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of absence:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for absence:**

**Parent/carer signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School use only:**

Approval for extended absence granted: YES / NO

Approval acknowledged by: \_\_\_\_\_ (Year Level Coordinator)

Approval acknowledged by: \_\_\_\_\_ (Curriculum Leader)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 2 - Extended Absence from School - Work to be completed form**



**EXTENDED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL - WORK TO BE COMPLETED FORM**  
(to be completed prior to absence)

**Child's name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Homegroup:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teachers** - please be informed that this student will be absent from your classes for the following from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Please include on this sheet the work that you require the student to undertake during this time. Please state if the student will miss any assessment tasks or School Assessed Coursework and explain if this absence may affect this student's overall satisfactory result in your subject.

Subject	Work to be completed while absent	Absences – total number of periods	Teacher initials

**Student signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/carer signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Year Level Coordinator signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Curriculum Leader signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Absence notification date** \_\_\_\_\_