



# ABERFELDIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy

### 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 Aberfeldie Primary School has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Aberfeldie Primary School.

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 Aberfeldie Primary School parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

### DEFINITION

*Parent* – 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.

### POLICY

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

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation 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 that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Aberfeldie Primary School during normal 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 in Aberfeldie Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Aberfeldie Primary School for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Aberfeldie Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Aberfeldie Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Aberfeldie Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Aberfeldie Primary School *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Promoting the 'It's Not OK to be AWAY' slogan in classrooms along with lessons about the importance of attending school, in our beginning of the year 'Learning to Learn Program' and ongoing references to this from teachers, throughout the year in classrooms.
- Regular articles and reminders about the importance of attendance in the School Newsletter.

### **Recording attendance**

Primary schools must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Aberfeldie Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by a classroom or specialist teacher at the start of the school day and after lunch using CASES21 or by filling in a hard copy roll and sending this to the office. *Hard copies are used for Casual Relief Teachers and Specialist Teachers.*

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

### **Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Aberfeldie Primary School of absences by:

- Contacting the school office by phone, email or Skoolbag App if it is an unplanned absence, or informing the classroom teacher if it is a planned absence.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Aberfeldie Primary School will notify parents by phone.

Aberfeldie Primary School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Aberfeldie Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Aberfeldie Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexcused absence**'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental 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 to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

### 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, Aberfeldie Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- 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
- arranging for assistance from relevant [student wellbeing staff/insert appropriate terminology for your school].

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

### Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Aberfeldie Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the South Western Metropolitan Region of the Department of Education, for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer 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.

## MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)
- See fact sheets for schools and parents following this policy.

## REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last approved by School Council 13 August 2018 and is scheduled for review in June 2019 or when updates are required.

## Fact sheet for parents/carers:

### Same-day notification of unexplained student absences

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If your child is sick or absent, you are required to notify their school as soon as possible **on the day of absence** using one of the following methods:

1. **Online:** log the absence directly using your school's IT platform.
2. **Telephone:** the school office and let the staff know your child's name, class, date of absences and reason.
3. **Email:** the school and provide the staff with your child's name, class, date of absences and reason.

Notifying the school of your child's absence either prior to, or on the day that they will be away, helps ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and will fulfil your legal responsibility.

#### Why do I need to notify the school if my child is absent?

Schools need to know when and why a child is absent and you need to know if your child isn't at school.

From the end of Term 2 2018, all Victorian government schools are required to contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same day of an unexplained student absence. If your child is absent on a particular day and you have not contacted the school to explain why, the absence will be marked as unexplained.

This system also promotes daily school attendance. Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education, they learn new things every day – missing school puts them behind.

#### What is your responsibility?

You are legally required to ensure your child attends school every day or you must provide an explanation for their absence. You should let the school know in advance of any upcoming absences or let them know in the morning if your child won't be at school. In order for schools to implement the same day notification requirement, it's essential that you provide the school with your most up-to-date contact details.

Generally one notification will be sent per family. Should there be circumstances that require both parents and carers to be notified, please contact the school to make the necessary arrangements.

#### What is the school's responsibility?

The school must notify you of an unexplained absence in relation to your child as soon as practicable on the same day.

Schools will let you know either by your school's online communications app, SMS, phone call or email. If you can't be reached because the school does not have your correct contact details (i.e. changed phone number, SMS/email failure notification received etc.), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on your child's file held by the school. Where possible, this contact will be made on the same day of the unexplained absence.

#### Where can I learn more about the process for managing student absences?

Ask your school for a copy of the *Attendance Policy* which outlines the school's processes and procedures for monitoring, recording and following-up of student absences. **What is the school's responsibility?**

- **Notify parents/carers:** The school must notify parents and carers as soon as practicable on the same day of an unexplained absence. This should occur in the morning allowing time for the parent or carer to respond. Schools can choose how they advise parent and carers based on their local context e.g. by email, push notification via downloaded app, SMS or phone call.

- **Follow-up (where required):** At times the parent or carer may not be able to be reached because the school does not have their correct contact details (i.e. changed phone number, SMS/email failure notification received etc.). In this instance, the school should attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the child's file held by the school, where possible, on the same day of the unexplained absence.

**Record student absences data:** Under the [School Attendance Guidelines](#) schools are required to record or transpose absence data in CASES21, eCASES or a third party software which is compatible with CASES21. Schools using third party software are required to import attendance data into CASES21 on a monthly basis.

### Online solutions to same-day notifications

The Department is committed to supporting schools to meet their attendance requirements through an automated IT platform where practicable. Schools can decide which IT platform to use and current options include:

- eCases (a departmentally provided adjunct to CASES21) to generate SMS alerts
- third party software to alert parents of their child's absence via SMS or push notification

### Parent/carer's responsibility

Parents/carers are required to ensure their child attends school every day and have an obligation to contact the school to notify the school of their child's absence. Parents/carers should inform the school in advance of known upcoming absences, or on the day of absence as soon as practicable. In addition, in order to implement this requirement, it is essential that parent/carers provide schools with their most up-to-date contact details.