

MORAYFIELD EAST STATE SCHOOL



Student Attendance Policy and Procedures

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RATIONALE

Morayfield East State School has a general expectation that students will attend and participate in the program of instruction every day of the school year, except when factors such as illness, serious family matters or important appointments cause an absence.

At Morayfield East State School, we believe:

- That future student success is facilitated by good attendance at school
- Parent/Carer attitude to regular and on-time attendance is paramount in avoiding future truancy
- Promoting the key messages of Every Day Counts
- Attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community

Successful students are well organised and start the school day on time.

All schools in Queensland are committed to providing safe and supportive learning environments for all students which address their educational needs.

"Each parent of a child who is of *compulsory school age* has the legal obligation to ensure their child is enrolled and attends a state school or a non-state school, on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse." *Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State Schools; Department of Education Training and Employment Policy and Procedure Register*

Every Day Counts is a Queensland initiative addressing the issue of student attendance at school. The initiative is designed to change parent, community and student attitudes to school attendance. It requires the support of both parents and the community if student attendance is to be successfully addressed.

Every Day Counts promotes four key messages:

- all children should be enrolled at school and attend on every school day
- schools should monitor, communicate and implement strategies to improve regular school attendance
- truanting can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

Other significant research highlights the importance of regular school attendance and the possible serious negative consequences of poor attendance, such as:

- Missing one day a week of school from Prep to year 10 means missing two years and one term of schooling
- There is a direct correlation between attendance and achievement
- Frequent absences make it difficult for teachers who have to continually re-teach information and skills
- Being half an hour late to school each day from Prep to year 10 equals missing one year and one and a half terms of schooling
- Students who are frequently absent from school are over-represented in the juvenile justice system
- Poor attendance makes it difficult for students to form positive relationships with their peers
- Students who are frequently absent from school are more likely to end up homeless
- Research shows that students who are often absent from school are likely to earn less than their peers as adults

"Information for Parents / Caregivers, Attendance Improvement Package" page 6.2, Department of Education and Children's Services, Government of South Australia.

POLICY OUTCOMES

Through the implementation and regular review of this policy, the following outcomes are expected:

- Student absences will be identified quickly and followed up promptly, following Education Queensland procedures.
- Improvement in students' overall attendance and participation to meet yearly target. (90% + Education Queensland target)
- Improvement in learning outcomes of those students for whom attendance improves
- Increased understanding of the importance of regular attendance by students and families
- Monitoring and review processes allow on-going improvements in policy and procedures
- Community awareness of the value of regular school attendance will be heightened.

RESPONSIBILITIES

School responsibilities

- Inform parents/carers of their legal obligations about enrolment and attendance

- Implement strategies to manage student enrolment, absences and chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy
- Monitor student absences and identify when a student is absent for 3 or more consecutive days, or where there is a pattern of persistent unexplained absences, or where a student's attendance rate is reasonable considered unsatisfactory
- Take reasonable steps to follow up unexplained absences as soon as possible
- Continue to work with regions and other local resources to engage with the student and their family with the aim of returning the student to school
- Follow appropriate processes for enforcing parental obligation in regards to:
 - Enrolment
 - Attendance
 - Compulsory participation

Student responsibilities

- Attend school every day, one time, prepared to learn and remain at school from 8:50am to 3pm
- Report to the office for a **late arrival slip** if arriving to school after the commencement of class at 8:50am
- Provide absenteeism notes from the parent/carer to the class teacher

Parents/ Carers responsibilities

Research demonstrates the importance the family plays in encouraging a child's regular attendance.

Parents/Carers have a legal obligation to ensure their child, who is compulsory school age, is enrolled and attends school every day of the educational program in which the child is enrolled, unless the parent has a **reasonable excuse**.

Parents/carers are responsible for the following:

- Getting their children to and from school, and on time
- Children should be arriving at school between 8:30 am and 8:45 am for an 8:50am start
- Children should attend school every day that learning is offered unless there is a valid reason for being absent (illness, serious family matters, important appointments)
- Parents/Carers must provide the school with an appropriate explanation for non-attendance either by phoning the office **(07) 5428 8444** or by sending a short note to the classroom teacher
- Parents/Carers must notify the school when there will be extended absences, providing reasons for the absence
- If absent from school for more than 10 consecutive school days Parents/Carers need to apply for an exemption from compulsory schooling through the Principal
- Attending meetings and working in partnership with the school personnel to address issues of poor attendance
- If students are required to be collected before 3:00pm:
 - Parents/Carers may be asked to show identification before students are released
 - If anyone other than an emergency contact or Parent/Carer wishes to collect arrangements must be made with the school office
 - Parents wishing to collect their child early from the classroom are required to collect an **early departure authorisation slip** from the office, which ensures your child's safety and teacher release conditions
 - Children are not permitted to meet parents at the school gates

What is a reasonable excuse

For the purposes of ss.176 and 239, and without limiting the ordinary meaning of the term, I am satisfied that parents **have a reasonable excuse** if, for example:

- the child (or children in question) resides with parent 1, and parent 2 (who does not reside with the children) believes, on reasonable grounds, that parent 1 is complying with the obligation to have their child or children enrolled and attending school. Parent 2 has a reasonable excuse
- the parents are not reasonably able to control the child's behaviour to the extent necessary to comply with their obligation to have their child enrolled, attending or participating
- the parents are unable to comply with their obligation because of ill health or a disability
- the child in question is considered to be independent and is no longer practically subject to the parental authority of the parents
- the child's non-attendance or non-participation was due to an accident or unforeseen event that the parent could not prevent. Evidence must be provided (e.g. certificate signed by medical/health professional in case of medical event).

What is not a reasonable excuse

For the purposes of ss.176 and 239, and without limiting the ordinary meaning of the term, I am satisfied that parents **do not have a reasonable excuse** if, for example:

- they claim they meet the situation of a reasonable excuse as mentioned above without providing reasonable and sufficient evidence to support their claim
- they refuse to let their child attend school due to an alleged incident or incidents that occurred at school
- they refuse to cooperate with staff at the school or region
- they claim they do not understand their legal obligations
- they refuse to respond to the notices and/or claim that they did not receive the notices
- they claim they are not able to control their child without any valid reasonable or sufficient evidence (e.g. information provided by relatives, police or child protection authorities and/or the child/young person, observations from school/region personnel, information from other agencies) supporting their claim
- they claim the extended absences are for family reasons
- they have provided false, misleading or incorrect information intentionally.

Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling

An exemption from compulsory schooling or the compulsory participation phase is available when a child or a young person cannot attend or it would be unreasonable in all the circumstances for them to attend school or participate in an *eligible option* for a period of more than 10 consecutive school days.

Circumstances for exemption from compulsory schooling

Circumstances where an exemption from schooling for a child or young person may be appropriate include (but are not limited to):

- diagnosis of terminal medical condition
- illness or hospitalisation for a prolonged period of time
- 'carer' responsibilities
- mental health condition

Circumstances where an exemption from schooling for a child or young person may not be appropriate include (but are not limited to):

- reluctance to attend school
- response to incidents at school such as bullying
- employment (for compulsory school aged child) or desire to seek employment
- difficulty with school curriculum
- desire to become an apprentice or trainee but without an established training contract with an employer.

Teachers

Teachers are expected to:

- Keep twice daily attendance records in accordance with Education Queensland roll marking procedures
- Monitor student attendance and maintain a filing system for parent notes explaining reasons for absences
- Contact Parent/Carer by phone when a student is absent for 3 or more consecutive days and notify office staff by email
- Comment appropriately on Student Report Cards to indicate excellent attendance, when attendance is less than 90% and when attendance has improved. See page 7 for suggested standard comments.

Principal, Deputy Principals and Student Support Services Team

The Leadership Team, Office Administrators and Student Support Services Team are responsible for:

- Ensuring the implementation of Attendance Policy and Procedures
- Ensuring implementation of One School attendance recording protocols
- Collecting and analysing relevant data regularly and contacting Parent/Carers to ascertain the reasons for absences and lateness
- Annotating One School to record these contacts
- Identifying students displaying significant patterns of absence and/ or late arrivals and making a referral to Student Support Services
- Identifying students displaying school refusal behaviour and making a referral to Student Support Services
- The Student Support Services team may recommend formulating an *Individual Attendance Plan* (Appendix 2), accessing the services of the Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain, and/or referral to other agencies or programs e.g. RAI, Edwrap, CYMHS, Department of Child Safety
- Sharing information regarding student attendance with Parents/ Carers in school newsletter
- Rewarding and recognising excellent attendance through a variety of strategies
- Implementing Education Queensland *Failure to Attend Notices* as outlined in *Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State Schools; Department of Education Training and Employment Policy and Procedure Register*.
- Displaying *Every day Counts* posters and fact sheets

SCHOOL-WIDE PROCESSES FOR MONITORING NON-ATTENDANCE AND PATTERNS OF NON-ATTENDANCE

At Morayfield East State School we are committed to achieving the following targets in improving attendance:

- 100% attendance
- Reduction in late arrivals and early departures

When a student is absent without explanation, Morayfield East State School will take the following actions:

- Class teacher will remind student about providing a note to explain their absence
- Class teacher to send home, with the student, a Student Absence Letter which is generated from the office on a fortnightly basis – update OneSchool when returned

When a student is absent without explanation for 3 consecutive days or a pattern of absences has been identified, Morayfield East State School will take the following actions:

- Class teacher will contact the parent/carer by phone on the third day of absence to inquire about the students absence
 - Class teacher will record contact in OneSchool, including if there was no answer (record that contact was attempted)
 - Update student absence reason in OneSchool or notify office (Sharon/Katrina) by email for updating
 - If no response from the parent/carer, email details of the absence to the Deputy Principal

When a student is absent without explanation for 5 consecutive days or a pattern of absences has been identified, Morayfield East State School will take the following actions:

- Office staff (Katrina) generate a '5 Days or more' absence report for sector Deputy Principals weekly
 - Deputy Principal to contact parent/carer to ascertain reasons for absences or lateness and discuss the importance of regular attendance and the impacts of the absences – record contact in OneSchool including if there was no answer and notify office staff to update absence reason
 - Deputy Principal may ask parent/carer to attend a meeting to provide support and explore strategies for improving attendance
 - Deputy Principal may request office staff to send school based attendance letter to parent/carer
 - Deputy Principal may refer to chronic absenteeism and school refusal cases to Student Support Services where decisions regarding appropriate support will be discussed
 - Principal and Deputy Principal may require to enforce proceedings for repeated absences
 - Deputy Principal to notify class teacher of phone call and decisions including any meetings to attend

STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE GOOD ATTENDANCE AND IMPROVE IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE

At Morayfield East State School we promote 100% attendance by:

Developing a positive school culture

- Implementation of anti-bullying strategies and attendance reward schemes (100% attendance certificates, pizza party)

Communicating high expectations of attendance

- Newsletters, website, enrolment package and parent meetings

Recording and following up student absences

- Consistent and timely follow up processes in line with OneSchool tracking data

Monitoring student's non attendance

- Analysis of attendance data, supported by OneSchool

Providing intervention and support

- Liaise with internal and external agencies for assistance in addressing patterns of absenteeism and to support students and families where appropriate

SAMPLE REPORT CARD COMMENTS

Less than 4 days absence

1. has displayed excellent attendance this semester.
2.'s excellent attendance this semester has contributed to their sound/ good results by maximising learning opportunities.

More than 10 days absence in the semester (<90% attendance)

1. is experiencing difficulties grasping and applying new concepts due to the high number of absences.
2. has had some difficulties catching up on new concepts after frequent absences for illness.
3. Hopefully, next semester will see in better health, and more regular attendance may have a positive impact on their academic achievements.
4.'s large number of absences has impacted on their learning, and as a result they have had difficulty mastering new concepts.
5.'s overall grasp of concepts taught this semester may have been negatively impacted by the number of days they arrive late to class and the high number of absences.
6.'s poor attendance has had an impact on their learning as they have missed several assessment tasks and important learning activities.
7.'s results have been affected by their irregular attendance.
8. has completed some excellent work this semester, and has worked hard to compensate for a high number of absences.
9. may have many challenges ahead to fill in the learning gaps caused by their frequent absences from school.
10. has had a large number of absences and this is having a negative impact on their learning.

Improved attendance

1. It is pleasing to see 's improved attendance this semester.
2. It is pleasing to see 's improved attendance this semester, and their improved academic performance.

Persistent lateness

1. As is frequently late to school, a great deal of valuable learning time is being lost and this is/ may be having an impact on their academic learning.
2. Continual lateness to school causes to miss essential learning opportunities, to be continually entering the class in a disorganised fashion, and to disrupt other students and the teacher.

REPORTING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE

At Morayfield East State School reports of absence or truanting are taken seriously. Students, parents, members of the community and school staff may report an absence in the following ways:

- Phone (07) 5428 8444 to speak with an administration officer
- Email administration admin@morayfieldeastss.eq.edu.au

SOME RELATED RESOURCES

Every Day Counts

<http://education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/index.html>

INDIVIDUAL ATTENDANCE PLAN

The purposes of this plan are:

- **to identify if possible, the causes of irregular attendance, and**
- **to make a plan to adapt and change patterns of irregular attendance**

Date	Attendees
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Concerns: *Student, Parent/ Carer, School*

Number/ Pattern of absences/ lateness	Explained/ unexplained	Relevant family information (including sibling attendance)
Student perceptions		Issues at school which impact on attendance

Impact of irregular attendance – *What do you think?*

Achievement / learning
Skills: being on time, being organised, following rules, personal presentation, being part of a group/ team, dealing with conflicts, being recognised for achievements
Friendships
Future education/ career
Safety whilst not at school

What can we do in partnership to ensure that your child's attendance becomes more regular? (*Set goals and strategies. See suggestions next page.*)

Signatures

Student	Parent/ Carer
Class Teacher	Deputy Principal
Others	