

Attendance Policy

Rationale:

As attendance is intrinsic to educational opportunity, the Department of Education policy is that all students enrolled in government schools must attend on a full-time basis unless absent with the authority of the school. This policy acknowledges that attendance depends on active cooperation between the school, parents/caregivers and the student.

Aims

Research into school attendance has identified factors that facilitate effectiveness in this area and we aim to provide:

- a supportive school environment
- a curriculum that provides for all students
- structures and approaches that facilitate the success of all students
- effective record keeping
- prompt follow-up of absences
- close liaison with parents/caregivers
- guidance and support for those with attendance problems
- a cooperative community/interagency approach to the area

Attendance

Attending school every school day for the whole day enables students to participate in the school's educational program as well as develop their social skills. Regular attendance enables the school to:

- plan an organised educational program that is delivered in a consistent way and has continuity
- facilitate shared student learning experiences that support the educational program
- monitor student progress and adjust the educational program to meet student needs.

Melton 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.
- 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.
- Will support students in 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.

Attendance records

Schools must record student attendance twice per day in primary schools and 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 school councils to report on student attendance annually
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above. Government schools must use only CASES21, eCASES21 or third party software which is compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance. Schools using third party software are required to import attendance data into CASES21 on a monthly basis. Schools that do not have current attendance data recorded in CASES21 will receive regular email notifications reminding them to import their data. Parents/guardians are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and staff must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent/guardian.

Schools must advise parents/guardians promptly of unexplained absences, including for post-compulsory aged students.

Parents

Information will be clearly conveyed to parents that it is their obligation to inform the school of the reason for a student's absence. Parents will be encouraged to notify the school in advance of any absence, where practicable. Where there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a student, prompt communication will occur with the parents/guardians/caregivers. Parents of students will contact the school via the absence phone line on 97435335 and school absence reporting applications.

If your child is feeling sick in the morning but improves during the day then you can still bring them to school.

Teachers

Will accurately mark the roll twice daily using the school's protocols and keep records (notes) of all absences, including lateness. Both the roll and notes are legal documents. Teachers are to encourage students to bring notes to school explaining absences.

School

Rolls are marked daily and data is entered into the software attendance program the school is using. At the end of each month, a monthly summary report of each grade will be looked at by the Principal class and teachers will be informed of students they need to track. The School will contact students on the 1st day of their absence (if the office is unaware of why the student is away) and discuss with the parents the impact that missing days off school can have on the student. Work will be provided for the student to do. Teachers to organise this.

The Attendance Officer/Assistant Principal highlights the names of students who have less than 80% attendance. The Attendance Officer will send computer generated notes to parents of students who have had unexplained absences.

The Attendance Officer/Assistant Principal will contact the families either by phone or letter whose children's attendance is of concern. A School Support Group meeting (known as SSG from hereafter) will be held with the parent/student/ teacher and Leadership member to discuss actions to be put in place to improve attendance. Other agencies will become involved if required.

All notes held by classroom teachers will be collected at the end of the school year and archived.

Processes at MPS:

At the start of each term attendance data will be collected and analysed by the Attendance Officer/Assistant Principal.

Rolls are marked and entered by the teacher on Compass.

Lateness/sickness/medical appointments entered on Compass as well as a school file on the U drive in Attendance.

After data is compiled, the Attendance officer rechecks the unexplained students. If still unexplained, parents are called for an explanation.

If no answer from parent, an email is sent to the parents (via Compass) asking them to contact the school absence line to explain their absence.

Every term notes are sent home with dates of unexplained absences and a space for parents to write an explanation.

When notes are returned with an explanation Compass is updated.

Parents can request a meeting to catch up to discuss absences or lateness, if further support is needed then outside agencies such as Child First, Orange Door or the Attendance Wellbeing officer at the Department are contacted to provide support.

Referral to DET attendance officer

If Melton Primary School has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to the DE School Attendance Officer in the South Western Region 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 the DE 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.

The attendance Guidance booklet will also be accessed to support the attendance officer in supporting attendance needs of students

<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/attendance-guidance-students-2022.docx>

Supporting and promoting attendance

Our school also promotes student attendance through

- offering before school breakfast club
- new advertising in the newsletter
- promoting attendance of students through monthly awards to students (pencils/ribbons/certificates)
- termly prizes for 90%, 95% and 100% attendance
- attendance awards at school concert (yearly)

Exemption process

Schools must follow the Department's student exemption processes.

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in certain circumstances. All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision, the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the student's educational progress, wellbeing and development are also considered.

Note: No exemption is required if a student is not of compulsory school age (6-17 years of age).

A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.

DE contacts

In severe absenteeism cases the Department of Education will be contacted:

Benjamin Elisha- Elisha.benjamin@edumail.vic.gov.au or the current Regional Director

Evaluation

Analysis of Attendance Records

Student Absence trends in the Annual General Report

Policy review and approval

Policy last reviewed	16 October 2024
Approved by	Principal and School Council
Next scheduled review date	October 2027

Generated letters are similar to below:

Melton Primary School

No. 430

"Onward with pride"



4/03/2020

Ms [REDACTED] & Mr [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
MELTON, VIC, 3337

Our records indicate that your child has unexplained absences for the dates listed below.

It is DET (Department of Education and Training) policy that all student absences are accounted for.

Please assist us to fulfil our legal obligations regarding student absences by indicating the reason/s for the absence/s in the space provided below and return this letter signed to the school office.

Yours Sincerely,
Emma Sutherland – Assistant Principal

Unitt Street, Melton Vic. 3337
PO Box 512, Melton 3337
Phone 9743 5335 * 9743 5344 *
Fax 9743 5210
melton.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au
www.meltonps.vic.edu.au

Thursday, 30 January 2020

Reason

GEN00, GEN00, GEN00

08:40 AM - 11:50 AM Not Present

Signature of Parent/Guardian of: [REDACTED]

In primary school, some students miss on average **3 weeks** of school per year. That's **half a year** of school by the end of **year 6.**



EVERY DAY COUNTS

Primary school attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things at school every day – missing school puts them behind.

Why it's important

We all want our students to get a great education, and the building blocks for a great education begin with students coming to school each and every day.

If students miss school regularly, they miss out on learning the fundamental skills that will set them up for success in the later years of school.

There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes.

Each missed day is associated with progressively lower achievement in numeracy, writing and reading.

Getting in early

Attendance patterns are established early – a child regularly missing days in kindergarten or in the early years of school will often continue to miss classes in the later years, and receive lower test scores than their classmates. It's vital that students go to school every day – even in the early years of primary school.

What we can do

The main reasons for absence are:

Sickness – There are always times when students need to miss school, such as when they're ill. It's vital that they're only away on the days they are genuinely sick, and setting good sleep patterns, eating well and exercising regularly can make a big difference.

It's vital that holidays are planned during school holidays where possible, and not during the term if it can be avoided.

"Day off" – Think twice before letting your child have a "day off" as they could fall behind their classmates – every day counts.

Truancy – This is when students choose not to go to school without their parent's permission. There can be many reasons for truancy. The best way to address this is for schools and parents to work together.

If for any reason your child must miss school, there are things you can do with your school to ensure they don't fall behind:

- Speak with your classroom teacher and find out what work your child needs to do to keep up.

- Develop an absence learning plan with your teacher and ensure your child completes the plan.

Remember, every day counts. If your child must miss school, speak with your classroom teacher as early as possible.

Openly communicating with your child's school about all absences is a good way to prevent attendance issues being escalated to a School Attendance Officer. A School Attendance Officer is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regional Director who has authority to follow up attendance issues. Attendance issues that are escalated can lead to an Infringement Notice.

If you're having attendance issues with your child, please let your classroom teacher know so we can work together to get your child to school every day.

For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx

