



'Quality Education in a Friendly, Caring and Supportive Environment'

Adoption Date: 19th March, 2018

Revise: 19th March, 2022

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Purpose:

To ensure all children enrolled at Bridgewater Primary School attend school every day unless they have an approved reason for not attending. A child who attends school every day has the best chance to learn and develop social skills. Missing school regularly means children miss out on learning and may fall behind.

Compliance requirements

School attendance requirements are set out at Part 2.1 of Victoria's *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

Daily school attendance is compulsory for all children in Victoria between the ages of 6 – 17.

All children are expected to attend school during normal school hours unless:

- there is an approved exemption
- The child is registered for home schooling and is only partially enrolled for particular activities.

All registered schools must record every child's attendance twice a day. When a child is absent, the reason for absence must be recorded in writing.

Parents/ guardians must provide an explanation if their child is absent. The Principal must determine if the reason for the absence is acceptable and ensure that the reason for the absence is recorded in writing.

Policy points

Parents / guardians are responsible for:

- ensuring their child attends school every day during normal school hours
- providing a reasonable explanation if their child is absent from school
- Informing the school in advance of any planned, upcoming absences to gain approval from the Principal. Sufficient notification allows time for the child's teachers to prepare a learning plan while the child is away.

Note that long periods of planned absence are discouraged. Parents are expected to plan holidays during school holidays where possible.

The Principal (or their nominee) is responsible for:

- recording every child's attendance twice per day (using the CASE21 software or software compatible with CASE21)
- recording any reasons for absence, and recording the absence as "unexplained" if no reason has been provided (and updating the records once a reason is established)

- determining if the explanation provided for a child's absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. A principal should use their discretion in making this decision.
- determining if the reason for the child's absence is acceptable and any follow up needed to support the child's education and wellbeing
- notifying the parent/guardian if the absence has not been approved
- keeping records of all attempts to contact parents/ guardians in relation to attendance
- recording if a child only attends half a day (two hours or more)
- monitoring attendance and developing improvement strategies for attendance where necessary
- taking further action (at their discretion) if a student reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absence within a school year
- reporting the annual rates of school attendance

The following are generally acceptable reasons for absence:

- sickness or accident, where the child is not well enough to attend school
- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not 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 (by the child), if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes
- cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes a Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.
- When the child is suspended from school.
- When the child is employed in the entertainment industry and has an approved exemption.

The following are not generally acceptable reasons for absences:

- participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- the conditions of approval have not been met (for example if a learning plan was not followed during a family holiday)
- absence where the parent/ guardian did not provide an explanation

Truancy is when a child chooses to miss school without a parent's permission. Such absences due to the child's disobedience and not due to any fault of the parent. In deciding to accept this explanation, a principal must consider:

- the age of the student
- the previous attendance of the student and
- the parent's capacity to influence and control the student's behaviour.

In the case of truancy or school refusal, the parents and the school will work together on a plan to address the cause.

Communication:

The importance of attendance at school will be communicated via the newsletter. Absences will be recorded in student's reports in June and December.

Amendment:

From the commencement of Term 3, 2018, all Victorian government schools must contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same-day of an unexplained student absence

Breaches:

If a child reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absence from school, the Principal may refer the child to a School Attendance Officer.

The School Attendance Officer will investigate the absences and may take one or all of the following steps depending on the circumstances:

- Issue a School Attendance Notice
- Issue an Official Warning
- Issue an Infringement Notice.

If, after multiple attempts to contact 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:

- no alternative education destination can be found for the student, and
- the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days.

Training

All staff will be provided with annual induction and training in regard to this policy.

Related school policies

B.P.S. Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy

Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four yearly review cycle.