

# ATTENDANCE

## 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 Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Templestowe Heights Primary School for particular activities.

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

Templestowe Heights 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.

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

Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights 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**

Templestowe Heights Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- making out of school hours care services available

### **Recording attendance**

Templestowe Heights Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

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

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of the school day and after lunch using the online school management system.

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 Templestowe Heights Primary School of absences by:

- Contacting the School Office or Classroom teacher, using the online school management system, phone message, email or written note.

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, Templestowe Heights Primary School will notify parents at 10.30am on that day via the online school management system automated SMS . If the online school management system is unable to be used, the school will make contact via email or telephone to notify parents as soon as close to 10.30am as possible on the same day of the unexplained absence.

Templestowe Heights Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence on the online school management system. 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 Templestowe Heights Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**explained absence**'.

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

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. Acceptable absence reasons are:

- 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
- family holidays
- Student Medical/Illness
- Parent Choice (where the parent has entered an explanation onto the online school management system).

If no explanation is provided by the parent, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence'. **Late arrivals and early departures**

Students **arriving late MUST** be signed in at the school office using the school online management system kiosk. They will be given a late pass by the school office staff to hand to the class teacher which will confirm that the student has been marked as 'late arrival (and the reason given)' on the attendance roll.

Students **leaving early MUST** be signed out at the school office using the school online management kiosk by a person (over 18 years of age), who is listed on their enrolment information as a parent/carer/guardian or emergency contact. The person signing them out will be given an early

leavers pass by the school office staff and they will give that to the class teacher which will confirm that the student has been marked as “early leaver (and the reason given)” on the attendance roll.

Students who are absent on a regular basis or are regularly arriving and leaving at irregular hours will be referred to the principal for review and consultation with the family.

### **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 or arriving and departing at irregular times frequently, Templestowe Heights 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 and paraprofessional School Student Support Officer.

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 Templestowe Heights 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 North Eastern Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to make 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](#)

### **REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION**

This policy was last updated on 16 June 2021 and is scheduled for review in June 2023.