



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Overview

Research shows that success in learning is directly proportional to regular attendance and participation in education programs. Early identification of, and intervention in, poor attendance is known to improve child and student learning outcomes. Children and students who have patterns of poor attendance are at risk, as they may not achieve their potential in educational and social development. This means that these children and students may:

- be socially isolated;
- exhibit anxiety difficulties;
- place themselves at risk of personal harm during times of absence;
- have reduced life choices;
- be more likely to be involved in socially unacceptable and/or illegal activities.

Research has shown that once students have begun to absent themselves from school, and the initial cause of this remains undetected or unexplored, it is likely that the pattern of absence will continue and escalate through the student's subsequent school career. Late arrival at school through the primary years is often related to non-attendance during secondary school.

Definitions

Unsatisfactory participation by a student in his or her education program

For the purposes of this policy, 'unsatisfactory attendance' is defined as: *Failure by a student to regularly attend at school during agreed times or participate in a meaningful manner in his or her planned education program.*

Habitual and Chronic Non-Attendance

In order to assist schools to identify students at high risk the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) has established the following parameters:

Habitual Non-Attendance: Where a student has 5 or more absences per term (average of 1 day per fortnight) then the issues of absenteeism for that student should be analysed by the school for possible chronic non-attendance

Chronic Non-Attendance: Where a student is absent for 10 days or more per term (average of 1 day per week) then the issues of absenteeism for that school should be analysed for possible chronic non-attendance.

Aims

Linden Park Primary School aims to provide an educational program that promotes attendance and engagement for all students.

The attendance target for all students is at least 95%. This means that even after all absences have been explained and exemptions granted, the aim is for students to attend at least 95% of the school year.

Responsibilities and legal requirements of the Principal/Leadership:

Principal/Leadership are responsible for ensuring that the attendance of all children and students is maximised, reporting all data to DECD and will:

- develop and implement the site's Attendance Policy;
- ensure the maintenance of attendance records;
- ensure intervention is documented;
- monitor and analyse attendance data and report to the school community through the site's annual report;
- ensure procedures, including parent/caregiver notification and home visits, are in place to follow up unsatisfactory or habitual non-attendance;

- ensure intervention occurs after 10 days (chronic non-attendance) of accumulated absence or sooner if the child or student has a poor attendance record;
- work with families and inter-agency support as needed to address any underlying issues that may be affecting attendance;
- make referral to, and seek support from, agencies and support services when a learner's pattern of attendance becomes irregular;
- ensure that the analysis of data is used effectively to inform action at the site with the involvement of the school's community;
- remain engaged with the family throughout the referral and case management process undertaken by DECD Support Services;
- ensure that notifications about suspicions of neglect and/abuse are made in addition to a referral to Regional Support Services.

Responsibilities and legal requirements of parents/caregivers/legal guardians:

Where a student of compulsory school age is absent from her or his education program, the parent/caregiver/legal guardian is required to present an explanation for that absence within a reasonable time. Ideally, for safety reasons, this explanation should be received on the day of the absence or within three days of the commencement of the absence at the latest.

Parents/caregivers/legal guardians must enrol their child in an education program from 6 years (the age of compulsion as outlined in the Education Act, 1972 and the DECD Memorandum of Understanding and Truancy Schedule).

When they enrol their child in a school they accept the responsibility to:

- provide information to the preschool or school that may assist planning for the child's learning; for example, medical conditions, developmental milestones and family issues;
- enable their child to attend punctually and regularly on every day the education program is offered and to comply with the education program being offered;
- provide an explanation to the school whenever their child is absent, whether for a full day or part thereof. Apply for an exemption whenever their child is removed from the school so the school can meet its legal obligations to DECD as outlined in the Principal/Leadership responsibilities;
- work with the school on intervention strategies to improve attendance as necessary;
- discuss with the principal/leadership any suspicions of neglect and/or abuse that may require a mandatory notification.

Note: The Minister or delegate may require the production of a medical certificate to an officer nominated by the Minister or delegate when a student is alleged to be absent because of illness or injury.

Responsibilities of students:

Students enrolled in a school have responsibility for their attendance. The level of responsibility will be determined by the individual circumstances of the child.

The expectations are that they:

- attend school regularly on every day the program is offered;
- be punctual in arriving at school for all associated lessons and activities;
- engage appropriately in the education program.

Requirements and Procedures

Linden Park Primary School undertakes to actively intervene when attendance and engagement patterns indicate that learners are at risk of not realising their educational and social development potential.

Intervention occurs through:

- daily monitoring of attendance through the keeping of roll books via Sentral;
- setting attendance flags for students not meeting attendance targets;
- making phone calls to families with a request for information if their child has been absent for three days and the absence has not yet been explained;

- sending letters home to families with a request for information if their child has been absent for ten days and the absence has not yet been explained, with information regarding chronic non-attendance and the impact this can have on their child's learning and future education;
- making referrals to and requesting support from agencies and support services when a student's pattern of attendance becomes irregular.

Reporting student absence and late arrivals

Children arriving late, or leaving school early need to be physically present at the front office, with their parents to sign them in or out. Parents will need to provide a reason in line with DECD attendance codes to meet the legal requirements as outlined in the Parent/Caregiver responsibilities section.

Consequences for non-attendance

For consequences of non-attendance please refer to the procedures that are recorded in the 'Responsibilities and legal requirements of the Principal/Leadership' section.

Monitoring and Review:

To ensure this policy is effective, it will be monitored and evaluated as part of the school's regular two-year cycle of policy review.

Amendments may be made and the policy will be re-submitted to the Governing Council.

Changes made will be communicated to the school community.

References:

DECD Attendance Policy 2012

DECD Attendance Requirements 2012

Other information that may be of interest:

Student Attendance Counsellors

Student Attendance Counsellors are available to assist schools, families and students to manage issues that relate to poor student attendance.

Student Attendance Counsellors are located in regional offices and their responsibilities include:

- Providing a consulting and counselling service to schools
- Supporting schools in monitoring and improving attendance through a documented plan for the student
- Working with identified students and their parents/caregivers to support improved attendance
- Identifying reasons for non-attendance and develop and document all strategies to improve attendance
- Developing and implementing special projects to meet the needs of students at risk through non-attendance
- Informing parents/caregivers of their legal responsibilities in relation to attendance and possible implications of non-compliance (see AIGs and the Attendance improvement package)
- Reviewing, with Line Manager, all cases unresolved after 10 weeks
- Preparing case files and documentation for prosecutions
- Implementing the "DECD Interagency Chronic Non-Attendees Protocol" as required

Lawful reasons for child absence (taken from DECD Attendance Requirements 2012)

Lawful reasons for the absence from attendance of their education program by a student of compulsory school age include:

- sickness
- danger of being affected by an infectious or contagious disease
- temporary or permanent infirmity
- events of cultural significance—these could include births, deaths and related ceremonies
- other events approved by the school governing council
- any other unavoidable and sufficient cause

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