



# Attendance

## Policy

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This policy was last ratified by School Council on 10/9/18

### 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, parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Mt Eliza PS has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### Scope:

This policy applies to all students enrolled at Mt Eliza PS.

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 Mt Eliza PS, parents/carers 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, academically and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps children and young people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Mt Eliza PS believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction (8:45am – 3:15pm) and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Students are expected to attend Mt Eliza PS 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 (eg a Special School setting), or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Mt Eliza PS for particular activities.

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



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. (See Appendix 1. Absence follow up procedures)

Students are committed to 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.

Mt Eliza PS 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 Mt Eliza PS 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**

Mt Eliza PS *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by upholding high expectations and accountability of attendance through frequent communication between home and school.

### **Recording attendance**

Mt Eliza PS staff must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Mt Eliza PS' duty of care for all students (See Appendix 2. Late pick up procedures)

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher before 9:30am and after lunch using the Sentral school software.

If students are attending 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 Mt Eliza PS of absences by stating the child's name, grade, date and reason for absence by:

- Text message (0439 454 239), through the Sentral portal, phone call (9787 1385) or personal contact with teacher.
- Late arrivals and early departures must be signed in/out of the office on the iPad.

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, Mt Eliza PS will notify parents via SMS. Mt Eliza PS will attempt to contact parents by 10:00am on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

Mt Eliza PS will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable explanation** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Mt Eliza PS considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable explanation** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

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

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- 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 if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- long term illness and family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance. Where it is known that a student will be absent from school for two weeks or more, a Student Absence Learning Plan should be developed by the child's classroom teacher prior to the absence occurring. (Appendix 3. Student Absence Learning Plan)

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

#### **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, Mt Eliza PS will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- The teacher will contact the parent to discuss the reasons for lateness/absence and explain the expectations of attendance at school every day.
- The teacher will document the contact and discussion. If the pattern of absences is for a genuine reason, no further action is required.
- If there is no improvement in attendance, the teacher will email their attendance concerns to the Assistant Principal along with accurate data regarding their absences, lateness and any patterns noticed and possible reasons.
- The Assistant Principal will contact the parent to discuss the reasons for lateness/absences, explain attendance expectations and offer support.
- The teacher will continue to monitor attendance data. If there is no improvement in attendance, the teacher will meet with the Assistant Principal.
- A meeting with the parent, teacher and Assistant Principal will be convened to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan. This will be reviewed on a regular basis until improvement takes place. A referral to external agencies may be necessary if attendance does not improve.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance. Mt Eliza PS staff will collaborate with the student and their family and will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

#### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Mt Eliza PS decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, Mt Eliza PS may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the South East Victoria Regional Office 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 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 explanation 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](#)

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS two –year review cycle

School Council President: Kymberly Davidson

Signature:

Date: