



## School Attendance Policy

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### Overview:

Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if students are to achieve their potential, and increase their career and life options. Schools in partnerships with parents are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences. Schools, in providing a caring teaching and learning environment, which addresses the learning and support needs of students, including those with additional learning and support needs or complex health conditions, foster students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.

### Purpose of Document :

This document outlines the procedures to be followed by staff at Cessnock West Public School, in line with the DoE School Attendance Policy.

### Context

Cessnock West Public School utilises the *Sentral* system to mark rolls and record whole day and partial absences.

### Procedures:

- Class rolls are marked each morning and submitted before 10am.
- SMS messages are sent to parents of absent students each day. Parents can respond with a reason for the absence.
- Class teachers and administration staff are responsible for recording absence reasons on Sentral.
- If the Sentral system is unavailable, paper rolls will be marked, signed and dated by the class teacher. They will be filed in the office and updated on Sentral when possible.
- Teachers are to sign, date and record reasons on returned absence notes (on Sentral) and store them appropriately, sending them to office at the end of each term.
- Each Friday, notes are generated by office staff and handed out to students with unexplained absences for the previous 7 days.
- After a student has been absent for a number of days consecutively, without explanation, the CLO will phone parents/caregivers.
- If a student's attendance drops below 85%, the CLO will notify the Principal, and make contact with the parents/caregivers.
- If a student's attendance becomes an ongoing concern it will be referred to the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO)
- Teachers record absences in Student Record Cards at the end of each term.
- The Principal may approve an 'Exemption' from school, in line with the Exemption from School Procedures document.
- The Principal may approve a 'Extended leave (travel or holiday)' from school, in line with the Exemption from School Procedures document.
- The school will retain absence notes and details for 2 years from date of receipt, after which time they will be destroyed.
- If a student is late, they are to present at the front office, with a parent/caregiver. They will be given a 'late note' to be taken to the class teacher.
- Parents are to visit the front office to arrange to pick up students who are leaving early.

- Administration staff will arrange for students to make their way to the front office. Admin staff will record partial absence on Sentral.
- Rolls will be maintained in accordance with *Student Attendance in Government Schools Procedures*.

### **Responsibilities of Parents**

Parents must ensure:

- Their children of compulsory school age are enrolled in school.
- Their children who are enrolled at school attend every day the school is open for instruction.
- They provide an explanation for absences to the school within 7 days from the first day of any period of absence through means such as telephone call, written note, text message or email. The 7 day timeframe for explaining absences is a requirement of the Education Act (1990).
- They work in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school. This includes communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school.

### **Responsibilities of Principals**

The Principal must ensure:

- The school regularly evaluates and addresses school attendance through the school plan.
- Open communication on issues affecting student attendance is promoted with parents.
- Effective strategies are in place to contact parents where there is a pattern of attendance causing concern or the parent has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence.
- School staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised.
- All cases of unsatisfactory attendance, including part day absences are investigated promptly and school based factors impacting on attendance are addressed.
- Early identification of students at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns through strategies such as regular roll checks.
- Attendance reports from roll checks are generated at least fortnightly and tabled at Learning Support Team or attendance meetings for follow up by appropriate staff members.
- The school's Learning and Support Team in partnership with parents identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs of a student with attendance patterns of concern.
- Parents, students and the school community are regularly informed of the importance of school and attendance requirements.
- Effective referral and support networks are established so that students, whose attendance is identified as being of concern, and their families can be connected with relevant services within the department and with local external agencies.
- Communication, collaboration and information sharing occurs with other services and agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with students and families.
- Any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) are managed consistent with the Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy and Procedures.
- If concerns include not sighting the child principals must, as soon as possible contact the NSW Police Force to request that a child safety check be undertaken.
- Consideration is given to the Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG), specialist advice and professional judgement, where there are concerns about suspected risk of harm.
- Other decision trees can be used if the underlying issues impacting on school attendance are also of concern. For example, care concerns, neglect: supervision, or child /young person is a danger to self and others.

## **Responsibilities of School Staff**

- Provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- Promote regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students.
- Maintain accurate records of student attendance.
- Alert the principal, or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance, when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer within required timeframes.
- When nominated by the principal, liaise with external agencies, arrange referrals, coordinate involvement of the school with other services and agencies working with students, and provide feedback about outcomes to the principal.
- Who have concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person must report their concerns to the principal.

## **Record keeping requirements**

School attendance records must include:

- Register of Admission to be retained permanently (now maintained on the Enrolment Registration Number System - ERN)
- Written notes, records of verbal explanations and records of electronic explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt
- An Attendance Register (roll), to be retained for three years. In a case where a student has an accident requiring an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years
- Information detailing a student's absences each year, kept on the student's file until seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, the record should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.
- Records for Certificates of Exemptions from attendance and enrolment must be kept consistent with the requirements of the Exemption from School – Procedures.

## **References**

NSW Department of Education School Attendance Policy

NSW Department of Education Student Attendance in Government Schools Procedures

NSW Department of Education Exemption from School Procedures

NSW Department of Education Student Attendance in Government Schools Procedure.



