

Tyers Primary School – Attendance Policy

Purpose of this policy

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted.

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

School participation is important as it 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, which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school, disruptive and delinquent behaviour and may lead to a cycle of rebellion against authority. These outcomes have later implications for employment, a range of health risk behaviours (drug and alcohol abuse), homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system.

Implementation

Students enrolled at Tyers Primary School are expected to attend during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp), or where the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.

Tyers Primary School will undertake a number of specific initiatives focused on improving attendance rates across the school, including, but not limited to:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted if no notification has been received for a student absence through the school's student management system, uEducateUs, or by direct contact.
- School leadership will regularly review absence data with staff to determine if current practices are effective.
- Teachers will maintain accurate class rolls and follow up absences
- Communication methods regarding absenteeism between the school and home will be reviewed and updated to ensure parents/guardians are regularly informed of student absences.
- Absence data will be included in student reports.
- The school will work with SSSO staff and outside agencies to support students with high levels of absenteeism.
- The school will actively promote the importance of student attendance to parents/guardians and wider community through its communications and interactions.
- The school will further develop student forums as an approach to discuss relevant issues such as classroom practice and students attitudes towards attendance and school,
- Students arriving late, leaving early or attending appointments must be signed in/out by parents/guardians,

- Sign in/out books will be located at the School Office, main corridor and entrance to the main classroom building.

Reporting and Recording attendance

Parent responsibilities

Parents/guardians are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Parents/guardians should inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- determine if the child's absence needs to be excused by the principal, in line with school policy and these guidelines,
- determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported,
- record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day.

Where possible, parents/guardians should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences.

School responsibilities

Tyers Primary School will record student attendance twice per day and record, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements,
- discharge the schools' duty of care for all students,
- assist calculation of the school's funding,
- enable the school governing body (school council) to report on student attendance annually.

All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above. Government schools must use only CASES21, eCASES21 or third party software, which is compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance. Tyers Primary School will record student attendance through its student management system uEducateUs.

Accurate and comprehensive student attendance records, including the reasons for any absences, also allow schools to monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and measure achievement against attendance targets. It also provides evidence for any further enforcement proceedings including issue of an [Infringement Notice](#) (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school.

Tyers Primary school will report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year. Tyers Primary School will report information about student enrolment and attendance for funding requirements.

The Department collects information on student attendance through extraction of data from CASES21 and publishes attendance rates in its annual report.

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the enforcement system, the Department will collect information about the use of School Attendance Notices and School Enrolment Notices.

Principal responsibilities

The principal will determine if the excuse provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. The principal should use their discretion in making this decision.

The principal or their nominee must record:

- student attendance twice per day,

- the excuse given for an absence and whether this is reasonable in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006,
- an absence as unexplained if no excuse has been given and change the attendance record once an excuse is provided or established,
- a student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.

To meet duty of care responsibilities, the school attendance records should indicate whether the student was physically present in a classroom, or not present but attending a school-approved activity. In the latter situation, the teacher or staff member in charge of the activity should record attendance and ensure parents/guardians are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school.

All students enrolled in the school are required to have their attendance recorded, even if they only attend the school premises part time. Attendance for the times the student is not expected to attend should be recorded so it does not count towards the absences for the school (government schools should use code 602 Exempt in CASES21).

The attendance of students at curriculum programs outside school premises needs to be recorded by the provider and reported back and recorded by the school. Schools manage absences in conjunction with the provider of re-engagement programs or approved education provider.

Excusing and not excusing absences

The Principal or their nominee can consider the excuse given for an absence and use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves the principal:

- considering a request from a parent to approve an absence,
- exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse the absence,
- notifying the parent if the absences have not been excused.

In exercising their discretion, the principal should take the following considerations into account:

- whether the absence is explicitly covered in section 2.1.3 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006,
- whether the student should do some learning activities during the absence (see: Student Absence Learning Plan),
- if this kind of absence is covered in the school's policy (e.g. shopping, birthday, visiting relatives),
- whether or not the length of absence will affect the student's learning,
- whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so how recently and how many times,
- whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before,
- cultural factors or details of the student and family's circumstances,
- the implications for not approving the absence,
- whether an exemption would be appropriate, whereby the school should assist the parent apply for an exemption.

In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:

- 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, 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 any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:

- approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy,
- the student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval,
- the conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed),
- the parent has provided no explanation for the absences.

Exemptions from attendance

Where a student:

- has reached 6 years but has not started school and will be enrolled in a second year of kindergarten; or
- has not reached 17 years but will leave school; or
- is absent from school due to employment in the entertainment industry and certain conditions are met, an exemption from attendance can be sought.

The process for applying for these exemptions is outlined in the School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG). See [Attendance - Exemption Application Process](#)

An exemption is not required for these absences, but if there is no exemption the student's absences will count towards the school's absences for reporting purposes. For example, a student with an exemption from attendance for one day per week, who attends the four days per week they are expected to attend, would have 100 per cent attendance, whereas if no exemption was in place the student would have 80 per cent attendance.

Tyers Primary School will advise parents/guardians when an exemption from attendance is required and support parents/guardians to apply for the exemption. Tyers Primary School in consultation with parents/guardians may also agree to seek an exemption so that a student's absences do not count towards the school's total absences for reporting purposes.

Related School Policies

This policy should be read and understood (but not limited to) in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Student Engagement & Inclusion Policy
- Excursions and Camps Policy
- School Hours Policy
- Supervision and Duty of Care Policy

Links and references

Department resources:

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

DET School Policy and Advisory Guide

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- [Legal requirements](#)
- [Exemption Application Process](#)
- [School Attendance Notices](#)
- [Infringement Notices](#)
- [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance](#)
- [Duty of Care](#)
- [Procedures to Manage Student Absences](#)
- [Creating Respectful and Safe School Communities](#)

- [Suspension considerations](#)
- [Expulsion considerations](#)

Related Legislation

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Disability Standards for Education 2005*
- *Working with Children Act 2005*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*

Review

The Tyers Primary School School Council and staff will regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy and revise the policy tri-annually or as required by completing a policy review. Attendance Policy updates and requirements will be made available to staff, families and visitors.

This policy was ratified by School Council at the School Council Meeting held 26/04/2017.