

VIC-EDU-P-048 Attendance Policy

1. Policy Scope

This policy is applicable to all MacKillop Education parents/guardians/carers (referred to as 'guardians'), students, and staff responsible for the care of students.

2. Policy Outline

Context

Our values of respect, hope, justice, compassion, and collaboration inform the quality of relationships we establish and all that we do to ensure our learning community is a place of welcome and safety. MacKillop Education celebrates diversity, and we are committed to inclusion, so that every student, regardless of race, religion, culture, gender identity or personal circumstances, including barriers to learning, can access education and experience success.

Our model, Reframing Learning and Teaching Environments (ReLATE), supports our trauma-informed practice and highlights the critical partnership between students, guardians, and staff, as we work together, to enhance the learning outcomes for every child.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure students, staff and guardians have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and guardians the key practices and procedures MacKillop Education has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

School attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted. Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of guardians, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of guardians, students, the school, and the wider community.

School attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. Positive engagement with schooling enhances academic, social and wellbeing outcomes for students and regular attendance enables MacKillop Education to:

- plan an education program that has continuity and is delivered in a consistent way
- facilitate shared student learning experiences that support the education program
- monitor student progress and adjust the educational program to meet student needs.

Policy statement

In accordance with the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requirements and the school's moral obligation to ensure the safety & welfare of students under its care, the school must:

- check and record the daily attendance of all students

- monitor attendance at least twice daily and identify absences from school or class
- identify the person(s) with responsibility for monitoring daily attendance
- follow up unexplained absences on the day of a student's absence
- notify parents and guardians of unsatisfactory attendance
- maintain current contact details for parents and guardians
- accurately record attendance on student files.

Principles

Our policy is guided by principles of fairness, inclusivity, and collaboration. Aligned with our broader values, we believe that every student, regardless of individual circumstances, deserves equal access to education and opportunities for success.

Definitions

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| Attendance | <p>A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite, or when involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school.</p> <p>A student is also considered to be in attendance when 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 funding and the educational plan for the student.</p> |
| Guardian | Includes a parent, 'guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the <i>Family Law Act 1975 (Cwlth)</i> and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides'. |
| Approved & Unapproved Absences | <p>A principal can approve or not approve any absence, based on the requirements of the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</i>, an individual school policy or on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>In general, a principal may record an absence as 'unapproved' when no reasonable explanation has been given for the student's absence. If a reason is given for a student absence is not approved by the principal than the school will notify the guardian in writing.</p> |
| Reasonable Excuse | <p>Some examples of what a reasonable excuse for explaining a school absence include if a student is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ill or has had an accident • Absent as a result of complying with another law • Receiving distance education through a registered school • Undertaking approved education, training and/or employment • Suspended or negotiated transfer/expelled • Attending or observing a religious event or obligation. |
| Unexplained Absence | <p>A principal will record an absence as 'unexplained' if no explanation about the absence is given to the school by the guardian of the student.</p> <p>If the guardian does contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the school must attempt to contact the guardian and seek a clarification for the absence.</p> <p>If no contact can be made with the guardian within 10 days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and noted in the child's file.</p> |
| Exemption | <p>The <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</i> allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted where the student (aged 6 to 17):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ turns 6 (compulsory school age) while attending kindergarten ▪ is participating in approved full-time education/training, and/or employment |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry ▪ leaving school is in their best interest <p>All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.</p> <p>Exemptions can only be authorised by the Department of Education, Regional General Manager in conjunction with the school principal.</p> |
| SIMON | MacKillop Education's Learning Management System (LMS) where daily attendance of all students is registered. |

3. Procedure

3.1 The following information is registered on SIMON for each student:

- daily attendance
- absences and reason for absence
- class passes for exemption from class for a limited period; and
- documentation to substantiate reason for absence.

3.2 Attendance is checked regularly throughout the day, as follows:

- each session of the school timetable (2-3 sessions per day)
- during every session that a student has been assigned; and
- at the beginning and arranged interval times on excursions/activities.

3.3 Unexplained absences are followed up:

- Where an absence has not been explained by 10am, the Key Teacher/Education Support notifies the guardian of the absence via text message or phone call requesting an absence reason.

Note: When students have an alternative start time, the guardian must be notified of an unexplained absence within 30 minutes after the student's expected arrival.

- If the guardian does not respond by the end of classes, the Key Teacher/Education Support should again attempt to contact the guardian via text message or phone call.
- Where the absence remains unexplained for 3 days or the student has under 50% attendance over a two-week period, the Key Teacher will report to a Local Leadership Team member for investigation and follow up, as outlined in *VIC-EDU-F-015 Guide to Student Engagement Process*.
- All information in relation to unsatisfactory attendance is recorded on the appropriate student file on SIMON or Synergetic, and attendance information is provided in each student's school report.

4. Responsibilities

Principals

Principals must ensure that:

Recording attendance

- The daily attendance of each student is recorded for each session of the school timetable
- Any student absence/s from school is identified:
 - Guardians are contacted regarding unexplained student absence/s

- If a guardian reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the guardian who was responsible for the child on the relevant day(s) is contacted.
- Reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded in SIMON
 - If an explanation is assessed as 'not reasonable' the guardian must be notified in writing
- Information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school is recorded on the student's file

Supporting student attendance

- Guardians and staff are informed of their responsibilities regarding student attendance
- Students are informed of the importance of regular attendance
- Attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented when the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development. This may include:
 - Student Support Group meetings
 - Care Team meetings
 - Individual Education Plan and/or Safety Plan revision
 - A Student Engagement Plan
- Strategies for supporting attendance of students in out-of-home care (OoHC), experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families, students with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and newly arrived families are implemented
- Students may be referred to external agencies for support in addressing barriers to attendance, when required.

Teachers

Teachers must ensure that they:

- Record student attendance three times per day (or for each session) in SIMON
- Record the reasons for student absences in SIMON
- Use the attendance and absence codes as outlined in *VIC-EDU-F-013 Marking Student Attendance Guide*.
- Follow up unexplained absence as outlined in this procedure
- Develop and implement an engagement plan for students as required, in line with *VIC-EDU-F-015 Guide to Student Engagement Process*.

Office Managers (or other nominated staff)

Office Managers must ensure that they:

- Record student absences that are communicated to the School Office, in SIMON
- Use the attendance and absence codes as outlined in *VIC-EDU-F-013 Marking Student Attendance Guide*.

Guardians

Guardians must ensure that:

- Their child attends all sessions of their school timetable, unless for approved absence.
- They provide an explanation for their child's absence, on each occasion, to the school via email, SMS or phone.
 - It is preferred that the guardian notifies the key teacher in the morning of the student's absence and provides the reason for the absence.

Students

Students must ensure that:

- They attend all sessions of their school timetable.

5. Related legislation, policy, guidelines and resources

- Catholic Education Victoria Network (CEVN)
 - Attendance and Engagement
- Department of Education
 - Attendance
 - Exemption from School Attendance and Enrolment
 - Student Engagement
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
- VIC-EDU-F-013 Marking Student Attendance Guide
- VIC-EDU-F-015 Guide to Student Engagement Progress

6. Approval and Review Details

This policy will be communicated to all guardians and students on enrolment at MacKillop Education, and to all MacKillop Education staff.

The policy will also be available to the school community on the MacKillop Education website.

| Approval and Review | Details |
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| Approval Authority | Group Director, The MacKillop Institute and MacKillop Education |
| Approval Date | 13 December 2023 |
| Recommended to Approval Authority by | MacKillop Education Leadership Team |
| Next Review Date | 1 November 2026 |
| Version | 1 |