

POLICY TITLE: Essendon North Primary School: Attendance Policy

DATE DEVELOPED: May 2021

REVIEW DATE: May 2025

ENPS MISSION: We maximise the potential of all; empowering independence, excellence, innovation and engagement with the world.

Critical Engagement
with the World

Academic Excellence

Inclusive Learning
Environment

Personal and Social
Wellbeing

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 and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Essendon North Primary School has in place to:
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

- This policy applies to all students at Essendon North Primary School.
- 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 Essendon North Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

POLICY

Definitions:

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.

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 and developmentally. School participation 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 that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Essendon North Primary School 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 in Essendon North Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment at Essendon North Primary School for particular activities.

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

Essendon North Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

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.

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.

Essendon North Primary School 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 Essendon North Primary School 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

Essendon North Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance. Our school also promotes student attendance by regularly monitoring attendance, offering breakfast club and additional learning support sessions prior to school.

Recording attendance

Essendon North Primary School must record student attendance twice per day.

This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Essendon North Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher, allocated specialist teacher or nominated teacher at the commencement of the school day and after lunch using Compass. If students are in attendance at 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 Essendon North Primary School of absences through Compass. Parents may contact reception in the event of an unplanned absence and it is recommended that parents inform the classroom teacher of any planned absences.

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, Essendon North Primary School will notify parents via a push notification through Compass. This notification will be sent as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond. If a student arrives late, after the roll has been marked, and they have not signed in through the Compass Kiosk, they may also be marked absent for the morning attendance resulting in the parent/carer receiving a Compass notification indicating an absence. Attendance records can be amended, however it is essential to use the Compass Kiosk in the event of students are late.

Essendon North Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Essendon North Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** 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
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance.

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.

When using Compass to register an absence notice, parents/carers can select from a range of options, including the following reasons for absence and specify additional information in the notes section:

- Medical/Illness
- Bereavement
- Truancy
- Parent Choice
- Family Holiday
- Religious/Cultural Observance

**Please note these categories are mandated by the Department of Education and Training (DET). We acknowledge the category of School Approved 'Parent Choice' (CASES21 code 807) incorporates special circumstances, unavoidable causes, unforeseen circumstances and ill family members.*

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, Essendon North Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from the relevant student wellbeing and welfare team.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

Attendance records

Schools must record student attendance twice per day in primary schools in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge schools' duty of care for all students
- assist calculation of the school's funding
- enable school councils to report on student attendance annually
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

All schools must report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Essendon North Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines, refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the South-West 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 excuse 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](#)

RELATED POLICIES

- Duty of Care Policy
- Health Care Needs
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was developed in May 2021 and is scheduled for review in May 2025.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Effective Date	Owner	Description of change
2	May 2021	Kate Barletta	Policy updated in alignment with the Policy Advisory Library and current DET advice
1	Feb 2019	Scott Mullen	Policy updated

**Information on revisions and new versions to be added to the top of the table, therefore the most recent is always on top.*