



# Attendance

Education for your child is important and regular attendance at school is essential for your child to achieve their educational best and increase their career and life options. When your child attends school every day, learning becomes easier, and your child will build and maintain friendships with other children.

## What are my Legal responsibilities?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age of 17 years. The Education Act 1990 requires that parents ensure their children of compulsory school age regularly attend school each day it is open for students.

## The Importance of arriving on time

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students do not miss out on important learning activities scheduled early in the day
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Gives students time to greet their friends before class
- Reduces classroom disruption.

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained by parents.

## What if my child has to be away from school?

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral).

Following an absence from school you must ensure that within 7 days you provide the school with a verbal or written explanation for the absence. However, if the school has not received an explanation from you within 2 days, the school may contact you to discuss the absence.

The school may decline to accept an explanation that you have provided if they do not believe the absence is in the best interest of your child. In these circumstances your child's absence would be recorded as unjustified. When this happens, the school will discuss their decision with you and the reasons why.

The school may request medical certificates or other documentation when frequent or long-term absences are explained as being due to illness. The school may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to collaboratively develop a health care plan to support your child. If the request is denied, the school can record the absences as unjustified.

## Travel

Families are encouraged to travel during school holidays. If travel during school term is necessary, discuss this with your child's deputy principal. An *Application for Extended Leave* needs to be completed prior to leaving which can be collected from the school office. Applications for Extended Leave must state a clear reason for the leave and include documentation such as plane tickets. This should be completed at least 2 weeks prior to the leave. It should not be assumed that this leave will be granted, particularly if it is not in your child's best educational interests, is beyond one school week or if the student has a poor attendance record. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year.

If the time period for absence includes assessment tasks, the procedures set out in the school's assessment policy must be followed. That is, students must apply for special consideration for tasks using the appropriate forms, before their departure. It is also a student's responsibility to ensure work is caught up on return.

### **My child won't go to school what should I do?**

You should contact the school as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school's learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The school may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

### **What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?**

It is important to understand that the Department of Education may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- **Compulsory Schooling Conferences**

You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place, so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan to support your child's attendance at school.

- **Application to the Children's Court – Compulsory Schooling Order**

If your child's attendance at school remains unsatisfactory the Department may apply to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The Children's Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- **Prosecution in the Local Court**

School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child's full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.