



MERENDA PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE

The *Education Act* requires that children of school age (six to sixteen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult, contributing significantly to the student's lack of opportunity to achieve their potential.

AIMS

To maximise student's social, emotional and learning opportunities by ensuring that children attend school regularly, are punctual and value their learning time at school.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult. Contributing significantly to the student's lack of opportunity to achieve their potential.
- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- Illness is reasonable grounds for an absence – shopping, excursions or birthday parties are not.
- Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school on time and regularly, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- Parents have a further responsibility to provide a reason on Compass or to the school office explaining why an absence has occurred.
- The principal has a responsibility to ensure that attendance records are maintained and monitored at school.
- All student absences and late arrivals are recorded in both the morning and the afternoon by teachers, are aggregated on our CASES database and communicated to the Department of Education.
- All students who arrive late to school i.e. after the morning music has stopped, must report to the office for a late pass.
- Parents dropping off a student who is late must sign the student in via the late book at the front office. Students who arrive late must then walk through the Resource Room and the central plaza at her/his Learning Community.

- The Department of Education and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- The principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences and late arrivals are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism and punctuality are adequately explained.
- All unexplained absences will be notified to families everyday.
- All unexplained absences of 3 days will be followed up with a phone call/email to families.
- All unexplained absences of 5 days or more days will be referred to the principal or Assistant Principal for follow up.
- The principal will ensure parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences and late arrivals are contacted, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- Class teachers and office staff are to record any actions taken in regard to monitoring all unexplained absences using the Compass chronicle.
- If a student returns to school after an absence which is unexplained, the parent is expected to notify the school via Compass.
- Parents are to notify the school *prior* to taking their child on a family holiday. Parents may enter this via Compass.
- For students going on an extended (more than one week) family holiday, a Student Absence Learning Plan will be developed, with the expectation that the student completes the work while they are away.
- Ongoing unexplained absences and late arrivals or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised.
- Unresolved and prolonged attendance issues may be reported by the principal to Child First, the Department of Health and Human Services or to the School Attendance Officer as deemed appropriate.
- The school will promote DET's campaign of "Every Day Counts" in the newsletter, at assemblies and with students.

ONGOING MONITORING

- Office staff monitor absences and lateness.
- Reminders at assembly and via Compass about the importance of punctuality and attendance will occur.
- Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year reports.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Department of Education and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.
- *In general, it would be expected that the Principal would excuse absences for:*
 - Medical and dental appointments, where an out of hours appointment is not possible
 - Bereavement or attendance at a funeral of a relative or friend of the student
 - School refusal, if a plan is in place with the parents to address causes
 - Cultural observances, if the parent notifies the school in advance

- Unavoidable family travels, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, parent and student.
- *In general, the Principal would not be expected to excuse absences where:*
 - Approval had not been sought in advance
 - 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 of the absence

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by school council on 4th September, 2018.

Reference: The School Attendance Guidelines are available at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx>

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007

Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013