

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Research shows that attendance at school all day and every day positively affects learning, wellbeing, employment and life outcomes for children and young people. Learning is cumulative and it is disrupted if students often miss school.

### **School attendance and the law**

Attendance at school is compulsory. The *Education and Children's Services Act 2019* requires that all children must attend school from 6 until they turn 17. This could be in a school or an approved learning program.

Parents have a responsibility under the *Education and Children's Services Act 2019* to ensure their children attend school regularly. If a child or young person does not attend, without a 'prescribed reason' for their non-attendance or an approved exemption, their parents may be guilty of an offence.

### **The department's attendance policy**

The South Australian Department for Education's [Attendance policy](#) guides the responsibilities of the whole school community to make sure children and young people attend school. This includes school staff, parents, carers, and students.

Schools work with their community to develop positive attendance habits. This starts from the earliest years. They do this when they provide a safe, inclusive, and culturally respectful environment. They use effective and consistent local practices to monitor and manage absences.

### **Students at risk from missing school**

Students can be away from school for many reasons. Schools use categories to identify children and young people at risk. This might be about their learning and wellbeing. We make sure appropriate follow-up and support is provided.

- **Habitual non-attendance:** a student has 5 to 9 days absent in a term for any reason.
- **Chronic non-attendance:** a student has 10 or more days absent in a term for any reason.

### **How we implement the department's attendance policy**

At Nicolson Avenue Primary School our attendance practices align with the department's attendance policy.

We support student attendance when we:

- Promote the importance of education from the earliest years of life and throughout the schooling years as a school community priority of the highest value.
- Assess patterns of non-attendance and circumstances to inform the development of appropriate targeted, intensive and coordinated interventions.
- Actively engage and include all children, young people and their families in education and interventions which support attendance.
- Provide support to address the barriers to attendance, learning and wellbeing and ensuring inclusive support for children and young people so they can be physically present and engaged in education.
- Monitor attendance to ensure that risks are identified, supports are in place, and progress is reviewed.
- Evaluate the need for further or ongoing interventions, referrals for external support and mandatory notifications.

We use data to create our attendance improvement plans. This is in partnership with our community. Our plan includes the actions we will take to make sure all students can attend school.

## Nicolson Avenue Primary School's attendance expectations

School starts at 9:00 am each day and finishes at 3:10 pm.

A parent or carer must explain if their child is late or must leave early. All students must give this to the Administration Office when they sign in or out.

## Attendance responsibilities

Everyone has a role to make sure students attend school all day, every day.

### Students

- Attend school every day the school is open unless they are ill or have an approved exemption.
- Arrive at school and to all lessons and activities on time.
- Participate positively in all learning activities.
- Report to the Administration Office if they:
  - arrive late (after 9:00 am) or leave early (before 3:10 pm)
  - leave school due to illness (a parent will be contacted for approval)

Note: a student's age and circumstances affect the level of responsibility.

### Parents and carers

- Make sure their child attends school every day the school is open unless they are ill or have an approved exemption.
- Be responsible for their child's travel to and from school.
- Make sure their child arrives at school on time, between 8.30 and 8.55 am.
- Provide their child's school with up-to-date contact details.
- Provide a reason to the school if their child is absent, late, or leaving early. The same day if possible.
- Provide a medical certificate or written explanation if their child is ill for 3 or more days in a row.
- Make appointments outside of school hours where possible. E.g., dentists or National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers.
- Monitor their child's attendance and classwork. Help their child to meet deadlines and catch up if needed.

### Teachers and leadership team

- Make sure all parents and carers are aware of attendance expectations, policies, and procedures.
- Accurately record each absence, late arrival, or early departure with the appropriate code.
- Contact the parent or carer on the day their child is absent, for example by text message.
- Contact parents or carers if there is no explanation for an absence, or a pattern of absences.
- Document contact with parents/carers about absences, including attempts to contact on EMS.
- Request a medical certificate from parents if needed.
- Consult with the local Student Support Services if needed. For example, Social Work, Truancy.
- Make notifications about chronic non-attendance (via the [Child Abuse Report Line](#) – CARL) guided by Responding to Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care ([RAN-EC](#)) training and the [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#).

## Authority for exemption

In some circumstances, the principal has authority to approve an exemption from school. This can be for up to 1 month. It can also be for up to 12 months for a family holiday.

Before asking for an exemption, families should talk to the site leader. Students must attend school until an exemption is approved.

Our school requires an exemption for absences more than 3 school days in a row. This does not include illness.

Parents or carers must apply in writing. The principal will advise them in writing of their decision. A copy is kept in the student record folder. Forms are available from the Administration Office.

Exemptions of more than 1 month (excluding holidays) must be approved by the department's central office.

Exemptions are still counted as student absences from school.

## ATTENDANCE RECORDING AND FOLLOW UP

### Operational Procedure

#### Roll Marking:

- Student attendance is recorded within the first ten minutes of school starting using EMS (Education Management System).
- Students arriving later than 9:10 am must complete the sign-in process at the Administration Office. They will receive a ticket showing that they have signed in and hand it to their teacher.
- Attendance SSO updates attendance information in EMS.
- Students leaving before the school day has ended report to the Administration Office and complete sign out process.

#### Student Absence:

- Once all classroom rolls are marked, a text is sent to parents of students with unexplained attendance each morning.
- Classroom teacher follows up with family regarding the reason for absence when student returns without communication from parents.
- Classroom teacher collects and records absence details in EMS received via parent correspondence.

#### Absence Follow Up:

- After three consecutive days of absence, the classroom teacher contacts parent/caregiver via telephone seeking explanation and documentation (if ill).
- After ten days of absence, two staff members do a home visit (following a risk assessment process) to sight the student, explain absences, and discuss strategies to re-engage them at school. EMS is updated. If no-one is home leave a *Home Visit Card*.
- After ten days of absence where no contact from student or parents has been made, a Child Abuse Report Line notification is made by the classroom teacher and is repeated weekly whilst non-attendance persists. EMS is updated and eCARL documentation given to Principal.
- When a student's attendance rate falls below 85% an *Attendance Rate Letter* is posted to the student's parent/caregiver(s). EMS is updated.
- After all steps are followed with no improvement of student attendance leadership will seek advice from Social Work Truancy.
- Ensure all follow-up attempts have accurately been detailed in EMS.
- Attendance Improvement Plan meetings are to be held with students and parents who have an actual attendance rate of 80% or below. The *Attendance Improvement Plan* should be used to document the meeting.
- The *Attendance Barriers* document can be used by the staff members to help identify strategies to improve attendance rates.
- After students have been referred to the Social Work Duty Line, it is still a requirement of school staff to complete attendance follow-up.