
Student Attendance Policy

PURPOSE

To outline the College's expectations in relation to student attendance and sets out the procedures for monitoring, identifying, excusing, recording and following up on students' absences, whether these be once-off absences or long-term absences.

SCOPE

All currently enrolled students at Mt Hira College ("the College"). To be applied in conjunction with the School Attendance Procedure Information.

WHAT THIS POLICY EXPLAINS

1. The College's expectations in relation to student attendance
2. The procedures for monitoring, identifying, excusing, recording and following up on student absences
3. Parent responsibilities
4. School responsibilities
5. Principal responsibilities
6. College procedures for monitoring attendance and intervention strategies

DEFINITIONS

Attendance

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program

Parent/guardian

Includes "a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cwlth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides".

School Attendance Officers

In the context of attendance, School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices and Infringement Notices.

Students

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled during normal school hours every day of term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment.

POLICY

THE IMPORTANCE OF FULL-TIME ATTENDANCE

In Victoria, it is compulsory for children and young people aged 6–17 years to attend school.

Parents are legally required to ensure their child attends school every day and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school unless an exemption from attendance has been granted or an exception to their attendance applies.

Evidence shows that daily school attendance is important for young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health and employment outcomes and enjoy higher incomes.

WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

School attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. The College works to ensure active support for full student attendance and retention until the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent and respond to individual student circumstances when regular attendance is not consistent.

Mt Hira College adopts a whole school approach in ensuring students attend school for at least 90% of their scheduled classes on a yearly basis. Mt Hira College has set up a system that monitors attendance, absences, and reviews reasons for absence patterns on regular basis. Where students are absent more than five days a term for any reason be it approved absences or not, the college adopts an early intervention strategy for improving attendance in the following cases:

1. The student is impacted significantly by the absence in terms of educational attainment, achievement and development;
2. The student has been absent without parental consent (Truancy);
3. The student refuses to attend school;
4. The student has no explanation for the absence; and
5. The parents do not provide a reasonable excuse for the student absence.

The support Mt Hira College provides for the students who have difficulty meeting the attendance requirements depends on the number of days of absence and if they are consecutive or not, reasons for the absence(s), time of year, year level and the age of the student. These factors help us provide a differentiated (tailored) solution for each student, keeping in mind that the main purpose is to improve attendance of the student or return to a mainstream school setting for primary and lower secondary students. For upper Middle and Senior School students the intervention is to help students re-engage in learning and for the senior students the purpose is to help them complete the VCE/VET certificate.

Strategies that promote maximum attendance at a **whole school level**;

- Articulating high expectation of attendance to the whole school community;
- Creating a safe and supportive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation in purposeful learning;
- Linking with local community groups and external agencies;
- Implementing attendance improvement strategies; and
- Supporting students to return to school after absences.

Strategies that promote maximum attendance at an **individual level**;

- Recognising students who achieve 100% attendance through SEQTA notification, certificates and at assembly
- Implementing a most improved attendance recognition to be awarded each term
- The College SMS system that communicates unresolved absences with parents
- Formal notification to parents/carers of a child's low attendance rate
- Attendance is linked to College Scholarship eligibility

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS / REPORTING, RECORDING & FOLLOWING UP ATTENDANCE

a) Parent Responsibilities

- Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless exemption from attendance has been granted.
- School attendance is mandated under the Education Training and Reform Act 2006. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians or anyone who has parental responsibility for a child to ensure the child attends school on a regular basis.
- Parents, guardians or anyone who has parental responsibility for a child must contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence.
- For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

b) School Responsibilities

Front Office:

- The Front Office sends out an SMS to parents/carers by recess of the day a child has been marked absent and prompts them to provide an explanation by return SMS or a phone call to the College.
- If parents/carers do not contact the College to provide an explanation after being prompted to do so by SMS, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and noted in the student's file.

Form Teachers:

- To accurately record students' attendance each morning.
- To report attendance and/or welfare concerns promptly to the relevant Head of School and Head of Wellbeing for follow up.

Class Teachers:

- To accurately record students' attendance each lesson (secondary) / part of day (primary).
- To report attendance and/or welfare concerns promptly to the relevant Head of School and Head of Wellbeing.

Heads of Schools:

- To run attendance reports for their sub-school every half term and to report concerns about specific students to the Principal and Head of Wellbeing.
- To work collaboratively with the Head of Wellbeing to follow up on unexplained absences and to address attendance concerns. Follow up must include initial phone contact with the family to ascertain the reasons for the absences and to subsequently implement measures to improve student attendance. Unresolved absences must be followed up by meeting with the student and their parent/carer, as well as any other interventions that may be required / helpful.
- The Principal Team must be kept informed of all steps taken to resolve the attendance issue.

Head of Wellbeing:

- To work collaboratively with the relevant Head of School to follow up on unexplained absences and to address attendance concerns. Follow up must include initial phone contact with the family to ascertain the reasons for the absences and to subsequently implement measures to improve student attendance. Unresolved absences must be followed up by meeting with the student and their parent/carer, as well as any other necessary interventions
- The Principal Team must be kept informed of all steps taken to resolve the attendance issue.

c) Principal Responsibilities

- To participate in the collaboration with the Head of School and Head of Wellbeing to implement measures to improve the attendance of disengaged students.
- To provide a formal written (posted & emailed) reminder to parents/carers of their legal obligation to ensure their child attends school regularly (see template) and provide a deadline for them to get in touch with the school before further action is taken, which could include reporting the chronic absenteeism to external agencies
- Daily attendance of each student enrolled at the school is recorded at least twice a day in primary schools and for every class in secondary schools.
- Any absences of a student from school, including classes, are identified.
- Reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded in writing.
- Explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act.
- Follow up any unexplained absences of a student by contacting the parent/guardian of the student as soon as practicable on the same day.
- If contact cannot be made with the parent, contact should be made with the emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.
- Information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes is recorded on their student file.
- Attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development, including an Attendance Student Support Group, PLP, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan.
- Make a referral to the School Attendance Officer. For Mt Hira College, this is the Regional Director of the DET's Dandenong Office. The contact details are:

Dandenong Office

Phone: 1300 338 738

Fax: (03) 8765 5784

Postal Address: PO Box 5, Dandenong, VIC 3175

Location: 165-169 Thomas Street, Dandenong, VIC 3175

Changes to our Student Attendance Policy

This Policy is subject to change at any time. Please check the Student Attendance Policy on our website (www.mthira.vic.edu.au) regularly for any changes.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's 2 year review cycle.