

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## 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 Sandringham East 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 Sandringham East 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 Sandringham East Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

## DEFINITION

*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.

## POLICY

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 Sandringham East 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 Sandringham East Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Sandringham East Primary School for particular activities.

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

Sandringham East 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.

Sandringham East 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 Sandringham East 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.

Sandringham East Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance via the weekly 'Tendy Award' presented to the class with the highest percentage attendance for the previous week.

## **Recording attendance**

Sandringham East Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements; and
- discharge Sandringham East Primary School's duty of care for all students.

Attendance will be recorded by the supervising teacher. This will generally be the class teacher, unless the class is with a specialist teacher or casual relief teacher.

Attendance will be recorded for both AM (9:00am) and PM (1:50pm), using Compass.

Children will be marked by the supervising teacher as either Present or Not Present. Students that are Late will be signed in through the kiosk in the administration foyer.

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 Sandringham East Primary School of absences by:

- recording the absence themselves in their child's Compass portal; and
- notifying the school directly via email or phone.

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, Sandringham East Primary School will notify parents by automated SMS at 9:30am.

Sandringham East 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 Sandringham East Primary School considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be registered as an 'excused absence'. If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be registered as an '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
- school refusal, in situations where a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school and the school is aware of the circumstances
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- extended 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 of unexplained or unexcused absences. This will generally occur via a generated list provided at least twice per year, allowing parents to respond in writing.

### **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, Sandringham East 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 relevant staff including the class teacher, a member of the leadership team, school wellbeing officer, depending on the circumstance. We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Sandringham East 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 Eastern Victoria Region 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.

## COMMUNICATION, MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

DET Victoria's 'Every Day Counts' flyer – see appendix

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy was last review in **September 2021** and approval by School Council.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the regular policy review cycle every **3-4 years**.

## APPENDIX

Over page – DET 'Every Day Counts' flyer

In primary school, some students **miss** on average **3 weeks** of school **per year**. That's **half a year** of school by the end of **year 6**.



# EVERY DAY COUNTS

## Primary school attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things at school every day – missing school puts them behind.

### Why it's important

We all want our students to get a great education, and the building blocks for a great education begin with students coming to school each and every day.

If students miss school regularly, they miss out on learning the fundamental skills that will set them up for success in the later years of school.

There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes.

Each missed day is associated with progressively lower achievement in numeracy, writing and reading.

### Getting in early

Attendance patterns are established early – a child regularly missing days in kindergarten or in the early years of school will often continue to miss classes in the later years, and receive lower test scores than their classmates. It's vital that students go to school every day – even in the early years of primary school.

### What we can do

The main reasons for absence are:

**Sickness** – There are always times when students need to miss school, such as when they're ill. It's vital that they're only away on the days they are genuinely sick, and setting good sleep patterns, eating well and exercising regularly can make a big difference.

It's vital that holidays are planned during school holidays where possible, and not during the term if it can be avoided.

**"Day off"** – Think twice before letting your child have a "day off" as they could fall behind their classmates – every day counts.

**Truancy** – This is when students choose not to go to school without their parent's permission. There can be many reasons for truancy. The best way to address this is for schools and parents to work together.

If for any reason your child must miss school, there are things you can do with your school to ensure they don't fall behind:

- Speak with your classroom teacher and find out what work your child needs to do to keep up.

- Develop an absence learning plan with your teacher and ensure your child completes the plan.

Remember, every day counts. If your child must miss school, speak with your classroom teacher as early as possible.

Openly communicating with your child's school about all absences is a good way to prevent attendance issues being escalated to a School Attendance Officer. A School Attendance Officer is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regional Director who has authority to follow up attendance issues. Attendance issues that are escalated can lead to an Infringement Notice.

If you're having attendance issues with your child, please let your classroom teacher know so we can work together to get your child to school every day.

**For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:**  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx)

Department of Education and Training



Education and Training