

Attendance Policy

1. Purpose

Firbank Grammar is committed to ensuring the school, students and their **parents** comply with their legal obligations in relation to school attendance. The school believes that high levels of school attendance are essential for learning.

The attendance policy sets out the principles and framework governing the school's behaviours and activities that enact the school's legal responsibilities and which support students in attending school. The policy, together with the policy implementation documents listed in section 10, should be read and understood by all those connected to the school.

2. Scope

The application of the policy is relevant to the School Board, Principal, to school staff, students and parents.

The school places a high priority on student attendance in the belief that attendance is essential for learning. This is reflected in the procedures surrounding attendance for students, staff, principal, School Board and Principals

The school understands that attendance is impacted by the partnership that is formed between the family and the school.

The school keeps and retains accurate records of school attendance that comply with its regulatory requirements.

The school, in discharging its duty of care, is committed to ensuring unexplained and unexcused absence is communicated promptly and followed up with students and parents

3. Relevant Legislation

- a. Duty of Care
- b. Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- c. Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)
- d. Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards
- e. Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) School Attendance 2014 Guidelines – applies to all registered schools in Victoria, including non-government schools
- f. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

4. Definitions

- a. **Parent:** The term 'parent' is defined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 as 'a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides'.
- b. **The enrolment register** records the students admitted to the school. The school is required to maintain an enrolment register that is accurate, up-to-date and contains the information required by the minimum standard. The school is also required to implement processes and procedures to ensure the register is up to date.¹ The enrolment register determines those students for whom attendance must be registered and monitored.
- c. Children of **compulsory school age** (six years and up to the age of seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at school or in registered home schooling. Attendance of all students enrolled at Firbank Grammar will be recorded regardless of their age.
- d. Under certain limited conditions, parents may apply for an **exemption from attendance**.²
- e. The **attendance register** is the record of the attendance of all students. The school is required to record the attendance at the school of all enrolled students **at least twice on each school day and to note any reason given** for the absence of the student from the school.
- f. In addition, the school must **monitor the daily attendance** of each student, identify absences of a student from school including classes, follow up any unexplained absences from school or from classes, notify parents regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance and record any unsatisfactory school or class attendance on the student's file.
- g. The **School Attendance 2014 Guidelines** state that attendances and absences must be recorded on a half-day basis (primary schools) and for every class (secondary schools) and the reason given for the absence of the student from the school must be noted.
- h. A student is present for a **half day** when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.
- i. There is no legal definition of **lateness**
- j. Principals are able to use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').
- k. Vic DET's Regional Directors act as **School Attendance Officers** for all Victorian schools, including non-government schools.
- l. A School Attendance Officer may decide to send a School Attendance Notice to a parent if the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12

¹ VRQA minimum standards.

² Following Vic DET's procedures as set out in the School Policy and Advisory Guide

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/participation.aspx> (Accessed August 2018)

months and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences and if measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances.

- m. The VCAA states that the school must determine attendance requirements for **VCE and VCAL students**. The expectation of Firbank Grammar School is that VCE and VCAL students attend a minimum of 80 per cent of the total calendared attendance.
- n. The **Annual Report to the School Community** must include a report on student attendance
- o. The Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s.37) requires student enrolment and attendance records to be **retained** for seven years³ after the end of the school year in which the last entry was made. Student attendance records may be **audited** by either State or Commonwealth authorities in order for the authorities to monitor payments made on the basis of student numbers or on the basis of particular categories of students.
- p. Records of enrolment and attendance are required for annual data returns for the Australian Government non-government schools and the Victorian school **census** under Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s.77).

5. Roles and Responsibilities

a. The School Board:

The School Board is responsible for authorising the attendance policy.

b. The Principal:

- i. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the School Attendance 2014 guidelines as set out by Vic DET and which apply to all registered schools, including non-government schools.⁴
- ii. The Principal is responsible for:
 - a. developing strategies that ensure the culture of the school is one in which attendance is given high priority.
 - b. developing strong partnerships with families so that the importance of school attendance is a shared commitment.
- iii. The Principal is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring that an attendance register is maintained that accurately records student attendance twice per day (primary schools) student attendance in every class (secondary school).
 - b. Defining what constitutes lateness and how that will be monitored.
- iv. The Principal is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring procedures are implemented so that parents are promptly informed of any absence, including absence from any school-approved activity.

³ <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2013L01476> (Accessed August 2018)

⁴ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/attendance.aspx> (Accessed August 2018)

- b. Notifying parents if the Principal's decision is that the reason for the student's absence is an unexcused absence.
- c. Ensuring procedures are in place to follow up all unexplained absences.
- c. Ensuring accurate and comprehensive records are kept of contacts and attempted contacts between the school and parents following an unexplained absence
- d. Implementing procedures to record the reason (if any) given by a parent for a child's absence and for determining if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.
- e. Using their discretion whilst following the guidelines as set out in the school's attendance procedures to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').
- f. Determining the attendance requirements for VCE and VCAL students.
- v. The Principal is responsible for developing strategies to respond to poor attendance, persistent absenteeism and school refusal.
- vi. The Principal is responsible for ensuring the school has clear requirements, guidelines and procedures relating to long, frequent or repeated family holidays.
- vii. The Principal is responsible for ensuring school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns on a school, class and individual basis.
- viii. The Principal is responsible for:
 - a. Advising parents when an exemption from attendance may be required and supporting parents to apply for the exemption.
 - b. Referring concerns about a student with persistent unexplained absence to the School Attendance Officer.
 - c. Ensuring the Attendance Register is capable of providing evidence for any enforcement proceedings, including the issuing of an Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school.
- ix. The Principal is responsible for ensuring the school reports student attendance to the school community at least once a year.
 - g.

c. All Staff must:

Teaching staff, including Casual Relief Teaching staff, and staff leading school-approved activities are responsible for keeping accurate and timely attendance records following the school's procedures. It is a legal requirement for staff to mark the roll during the first 10 minutes of every lesson and update the roll during the lesson if a student is late to class for a legitimate reason.

d. Students and Parents / Guardians:

- i. Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends school. If their child is absent from school for all or part of a school day, parents are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence.
- ii. Students are expected to attend class as outlined by the school.

6. Related Policies and Procedures

- a. Duty of Care Policy
- b. Enrolment Policy
- c. Student Wellbeing policy
- d. Record Management Policy (Including Archiving Policy)
- e. Behavioural Expectations guidelines – found in school diary
- f. **Policy Implementation Documents – The document setting out the strategies and actions required to implement this policy are contained in the following appendices:**
 - a. setting out decisions as to the different types of absence and their recording
 - b. detailed procedures for recording attendance, absence, lateness and the reasons given
 - c. procedures for following up and monitoring attendance and absence
 - d. guidance for parents regarding attendance and absence
 - e. attendance and absence for VCE and VCAL students.
 - f. Attendance for students on a student visa

7. Feedback / Enquiries

The school community may provide feedback on this document by emailing: Communications@firbank.vic.edu.au or contacting your Head of campus

8. Approvals

- a. **Approved by:** Jenny Williams, Principal.
- b. **Date:** February 2021
- c. **Next Review date:** February 2025