

## Student Attendance Policy

Written by	<i>Principal</i>
Date approved by School Council	<i>August 2021</i>
Date of Review	<i>August 2024</i>

### 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 Mount Eliza North Primary School has in place to:
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### Definition

*Parent* – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* 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. Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Mount Eliza North Primary School has an expectation that all students will 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.

Mount Eliza North 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 Mount Eliza North 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.

## **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Mount Eliza North Primary School's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance.

### **Recording attendance**

Mount Eliza North Primary School must record student attendance twice per day.

This is necessary to:

- Meet legislative requirements
- Discharge Mount Eliza North Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of the school day and after lunch using an education administration program.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, on or off site, 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 AND CARERS ARE EXPECTED TO:**

Notify Mount Eliza North Primary School of an absence:

- Parents must contact the school to provide an explanation *on the day* of the student absence
- Prior to a child being absent, please contact the school. In addition, we encourage you to email or discuss the absence with your child's teacher
- If your child is late (after 9.05am), they must be signed in at the office by a parent/guardian
- Children who are to be collected early must be signed out at the office and the administration officer will call to the class

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, Mount Eliza North Primary School will notify parents by SMS or phone call at 10.00am. Parents will need to contact the school to confirm the absence.

If contact cannot be made with the parent, the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Mount Eliza North 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 Mount Eliza North Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**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, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- School refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- Cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

### **Family Holidays**

- It is vital that holidays are planned during school holidays and not during the term. Any holidays during school time must be approved by the Principal in advance. Please put all holiday requests of 5 days or more in writing to the Principal and email to [mount.eliza.north.ps@edumail.vic.edu.au](mailto:mount.eliza.north.ps@edumail.vic.edu.au)
- Once approval has been given, the classroom teacher will send home a Student Absence Learning Plan for the student to complete and return to the teacher when back at school

### **Regular Absence (elite sport etc.)**

- A regular absence must be put in writing to the Principal and receive approval.
- A Student Learning plan may be devised to support the learning of the student whilst not attending school

### **School to home communication**

- A student who signs in late without a parent will receive notification from the school
- A student who regularly arrives late to school will receive a letter outlining the benefits of commencing school on time
- A student who is regularly absent will receive a letter outlining the benefits of attending school
- 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 if an absence has not been excused.

### **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, Mount Eliza North Primary School parents 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 Wellbeing Assistant Principal

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, the school will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

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

If Mount Eliza North 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 Regional Office 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.

### **Other thing to note**

- Student absence figures will appear on student first and second semester student reports.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to DET and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.

## **COMMUNICATION**

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

## **MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)

### **Evaluation**

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