



Education

# *Student Attendance in Government Schools - Procedures*

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*School Attendance  
Policy*

*PD 2005 0259*

**Learning and Engagement Directorate  
2015**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if students are to achieve their potential, and increase their career and life options. Schools in partnerships with parents are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences. Schools, in providing a caring teaching and learning environment, which addresses the learning and support needs of students, including those with additional learning and support needs or complex health conditions, foster students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- 1.2. This document supports the [School Attendance policy](#) and applies to all NSW Government schools, excluding pre-schools. It replaces Student Attendance in Government Schools – Procedures 2010.
- 1.3. These procedures should be read in the context:

[The Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools](#)

[Child Protection: Responding to and reporting students at risk of harm](#)

## 2. What are the responsibilities of Parents?

Parents must ensure:

- 2.1. Their children of [compulsory school age](#) are enrolled in a government or registered non-government school or, they are registered with the [NSW Education Standards Authority \(NESAs\)](#) for Home Schooling.
- 2.2. Their children who are enrolled at school attend every day the school is open for their instruction.
- 2.3. They provide an explanation for absences by means such as a telephone call, written note, text message or email to the school within 7 days from the first day of any period of absence.
- 2.4. They work in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school, including communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school

### 3. What are the responsibilities of school principals?

The [School Attendance policy](#) outlines core responsibilities of principals regarding school attendance. To effectively implement the school attendance policy principals must ensure:

- 3.1. All attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director Public Schools NSW, attendance officers and other personnel nominated by the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities, Director Public Schools NSW, or Audit Directorate.
- 3.2. The school regularly evaluates and addresses school attendance through the school plan.
- 3.3. Open communication on issues affecting student attendance is promoted with parents.
- 3.4. Effective strategies are in place to contact parents where there is a pattern of attendance causing concern or the parent has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence.
- 3.5. [Interpreters and translated materials](#), including letters are available when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English in matters relating to school attendance.
- 3.6. School staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised.
- 3.7. All cases of unsatisfactory attendance, including part day absences are investigated promptly and school based factors impacting on attendance are addressed.
- 3.8. Early identification of students at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns through strategies such as regular roll checks.
- 3.9. Attendance reports from roll checks are generated at least fortnightly and tabled at Learning Support Team or attendance meetings for follow up by appropriate staff members.
- 3.10. The school's Learning and Support Team in partnership with parents identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs of a student with attendance patterns of concern.
- 3.11. Parents, students and the school community are regularly informed of the importance of school and attendance requirements. A range of resources (refer to resource section) have been developed for schools to provide information to parents and key community groups about the requirements of school attendance.

- 3.12. Effective referral and support networks are established so that students whose attendance is identified as being of concern and their families can be connected to relevant services within the department and with local external agencies in discussion with parents. Appropriate staff members may be nominated to meet with parents, arrange referrals and to be the contact points for consultation and coordination of school involvement.
- 3.13. Communication, collaboration and information sharing occurs with other services and agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with students and families.
- 3.14. Any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) are managed consistent with the [Child Protection: Responding to and reporting students at risk of harm](#)
- 3.15. If concerns include not sighting the child principals must, as soon as possible contact the NSW Police Force to request that a child safety check be undertaken.
- 3.16. Consideration is given to the [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) (MRG), specialist advice and professional judgement, where there are concerns about suspected risk of harm. In accordance with the MRG Neglect Education - Habitual Absence is defined as 'The child/young person is of compulsory school age (6 years to current leaving age) AND is habitually absent'. 'Habitually absent is a minimum of 30 days absence within the past 100 school days. However, principals should consider other factors, such as the student's age and learning support needs in deciding on action earlier than the 30 days indicated.
- 3.17. Other decisions trees can be used if the underlying issues impacting on school attendance are also of concern. For example, care concerns, neglect: supervision, or child /young person is a danger to self and others.

#### 4. What are the responsibilities of school staff?

School staff:

- 4.1. Provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- 4.2. Promote regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students.
- 4.3. Maintain accurate records of student attendance.
- 4.4. Alert the principal, or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance, when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer within required timeframes (see section 5).
- 4.5. When nominated by the principal, liaise with external agencies, arrange referrals

and coordinate involvement of the school with other services and agencies working with students. Nominated staff provide feedback about outcomes to the principal.

- 4.6. Who have concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person must report their concerns to the principal.

## **5. When should parents be contacted if an explanation for absence has not been received?**

- 5.1. The principal or delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents on the same day or following day of an absence where parents have not contacted the school. Contact may be made by means such as providing the parents with an [Absentee Notice-Compulsory School Attendance](#), by telephone, email or SMS text message.
- 5.2. If within 7 days of the first day of any period of absence an explanation has not been received and no contact has been made with parents, the principal or delegate must ensure parents are contacted within the next 2 school days.
- 5.3. The [Telephone Interpreter Service and translated materials](#), including letters can be used as required when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English if an explanation for absence has not been received.

## **6. Does the principal have to accept the explanation provided by a parent for an absence?**

- 6.1. Principals can decline to accept an explanation for an absence and record the absence as 'unjustified'. The parent should be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

## **7. What should be done if there are frequent absences being explained as due to illness?**

- 7.1. Where frequent absences are explained as being due to illness consultation with parents must occur regarding the health care needs of the child.
- 7.2. Principals can request the parents to provide a medical certificate if they have concerns with the explanation provided, or where there is a history of poor attendance.

- 7.3. Where the principal has concerns about the medical certificates being produced for absences they can ask the parents to request that the doctor writes on the medical certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.
- 7.4. Where principals have ongoing concerns they can request the parent's consent for a doctor to provide information to the school about their child's health condition. It is essential the school has all relevant information to ensure the learning and health care needs of the student are addressed. If the request is denied or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'. The principal must consider whether the habitual absence or parental attitude places the child or young person at suspected risk of harm.
- 7.5. Principals can seek information from prescribed bodies under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 where they have ongoing concerns regarding a student's safety, welfare or wellbeing. They should also contact the [Child Wellbeing Unit](#) (CWU) or if they believe the student is at risk of significant harm the [Child Protection Helpline](#).

## **8. What should be done if a student has an unsatisfactory pattern of attendance?**

- 8.1. Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the [Education Act \(1990\)](#) the benefits of attending school regularly should be the focus of this consultation.
- 8.2. A child is considered to have an unsatisfactory school attendance when they have:
  - regular absences without explanation (despite follow-up from the school)
  - regular absences and explanations provided by parents are not accepted by the principal, or
  - extended periods of absence without an explanation or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. An extended period of absence may be consecutive or irregular patterns of non-attendance.
- 8.3. The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents on the same day or the following day of an absence. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this. The support document Phone Intervention Program Guidelines describes a program facilitating early telephone contact.

- 8.4. Resolution of attendance difficulties may require more targeted school based strategies including:
- meeting with the student and parents
  - referral to the school's Learning and Support Team to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs for the student
  - development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents
  - engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality
  - referral to the school counsellor
  - requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non- government agencies
  - [use of interpreters and translated materials](#)
  - seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them.
- 8.5. The school should identify if other agencies are involved with the family and liaise with them when a student's attendance is of concern and where it is determined that the issues impacting on attendance are outside of the role of the school to address in isolation. The school may have a role in working collaboratively with the services to engage the family. Family case discussions should be attended by school representatives if the issues relate to students whose attendance is a concern. Meetings and interviews at the school may also involve representatives from support agencies. They may be initiated by school, other agency or departmental staff. Schools may also refer families to services, in discussion with families.
- 8.6. If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful in resolving attendance difficulties the principal can request support by making an application to the Home School Liaison Program and submitting the application to the local program manager for consideration. Parents should be advised by Letter 1: *Principal to parent advising of Application to the Home School Liaison Program*. Copies of communication with parents and documented strategies that the school has implemented to address student attendance issues are to be included with the Application for Home School Liaison support.
- 8.7. Schools, community members and agencies may also report children of apparent compulsory school age, who may not be enrolled, to the Home School Liaison Program. Community members and agencies can report the matter to their local Department of Education and Communities office or government school who will refer the matter to the local manager of the home school liaison program.



- 8.8. When a case is accepted onto the Home School Liaison Program the principal must ensure that the school continues to implement strategies to support the student's regular attendance at school. Regular communication must be maintained between the school and attendance officers.
- 8.9. In managing attendance concerns consideration should be given to whether the pattern of unsatisfactory attendance may on its own or with other risk factors impact on the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the student. Contact with the [CWU](#) should be made or a report to the [Child Protection Helpline](#) if they believe the student is at suspected risk of significant harm.

## 9. What additional actions can be taken to support the regular attendance of students?

- 9.1. Legislative amendments effective in January 2010 increased the range of options available to deal with unsatisfactory attendance and non-enrolment at school.
- A. **Compulsory Schooling Conferences** are conferences directed by either the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities (or delegate) for the purpose of ensuring a student is provided with compulsory education. It aims to bring together the parents, student, a member/s of the school executive nominated by the principal, and where appropriate, relevant agencies to help parents to resolve the underlying issues that have led to the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Conferences are convened by an authorised person appointed by the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities. Students under the age of 12 are not required to attend compulsory schooling conferences
- B. **Undertakings** are written agreed commitments regarding action that will be taken to resolve the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Undertakings can be obtained with parents at any time and independently of the conferencing process. Undertakings are also a key outcome of a compulsory schooling conference and are often given by conference participants in addition to parents. They can be entered into evidence in any future court action
- C. **Compulsory Schooling Orders**. Application for a Compulsory Schooling Order to the Children's Court can be considered where previous measures have been unsuccessful in improving student attendance. It is an extension of efforts aimed at addressing any welfare issues deemed to be adversely affecting a child's attendance at school. The Application to the Children's Court can also include an application for a Court Ordered Attendance Conference
- D. **Prosecution in the Local Court** is only undertaken when all other avenues

have been exhausted, or where there is no likelihood of an Application to the Children's Court rectifying unsatisfactory attendance.

## 10. What are the record keeping requirements for school attendance?

10.1. School attendance records must include:

- A. a Register of Admission to be retained permanently (now maintained on the Enrolment Registration Number System - ERN)
- B. written notes, records of verbal explanations and records of electronic explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt
- C. an Attendance Register (roll), to be retained for three years. In a case where a student has an accident requiring an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years
- D. in secondary schools, a record of the attendance at each lesson, to be retained until the end of the school year
- E. information detailing a student's absences each year, kept on the student's file until seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, the record should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.

10.2. Records for Certificates of Exemptions from attendance and enrolment must be kept consistent with the requirements of the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#)

## 11. How must Attendance Registers (rolls) be maintained?

11.1. Registering the attendance of students

- A. The Education Act (1990) (Section 24) requires that attendance registers (rolls) be maintained in a form approved by the Minister. These may be either manual or electronic rolls
- B. Attendance registers (rolls) must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events
- C. Attendance information must be recorded on the Department's electronic attendance register, OASIS or SALM/eps4 or compliant third party systems or an approved manual roll on a daily basis
- D. Principals may delegate responsibility to staff for the maintenance of the attendance register (rolls). Staff must be trained on the requirements of Student Attendance in Government Schools – Procedures, and the School Attendance Register Codes. Advice and further information may be obtained

- from attendance officers
- E. Only the approved codes listed in the [Attendance Register Codes](#) are to be used.
- 11.2. Recording student attendance in compliant third party systems
- A. Third party system software must comply with the Department's requirements
  - B. Attendance registers must be transferred at least weekly and accurately to the Department's electronic attendance register, OASIS or SALM/eps4
  - C. Weekly and semester attendance register transfers must include students who have left the school during the year
  - D. Schools must contact IT Helpdesk if they have concerns regarding data transfers.
- 11.3. Record keeping requirements for student attendance?
- A. Attendance registers (rolls) must reflect the highest professional standards
  - B. The teacher or other nominee of the principal responsible for maintaining a manual attendance register is required to sign the register each day. The principal or delegate should countersign the register each week. This becomes the formal record of attendance
  - C. The principal or delegate will ensure that explanations for absences are recorded within 7 days of the occurrence of the absence. Explanations that have been accepted by the principal which are provided after the 7 day period should be retained
  - D. School attendance must be recorded on the attendance register (roll) at the commencement of the school day
  - E. In secondary schools, attendance is also recorded each period or lesson. In primary schools attendance is recorded in classes regularly conducted in locations other than the home classroom
  - F. The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all schools when using a manual roll or OASIS. Schools using SALM/eps4 should record both presence and absence
  - G. In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance register codes
  - H. Principals may grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness, or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. Principals can request the parents provide a medical certificate of the explanation is doubted or where there is a history of poor attendance.  
**Please Note:** Refer to the document [Attendance Register Codes](#) for further guidance on the use of approved attendance register codes.

- 11.4. Where errors occur in roll marking:
- A. In an electronic attendance register – an amendment should be made within 7 days of the absence
  - B. In a manual attendance register – a line is to be ruled through the existing entry and the correct entry made above within 7 days of the absence. Correction fluid must not be used
- 11.5. School sport is an integral part of the curriculum and principals must ensure adequate attendance monitoring practices occur for the safety of all students. Specific sports rolls must be marked at the beginning and conclusion of each sports session. Attendance information contained on sports rolls must be transferred to the attendance register (roll). Class teachers or secondary school sports co-ordinators must follow up absentees promptly and ensure that the school's procedures for managing fractional truancy are implemented.
- 11.6. Security of attendance registers (rolls)
- A. Manual Attendance registers (rolls) must be stored in a secure location within the school.
  - B. Attendance registers (rolls) must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood. School staff must not take attendance registers (rolls) home.
  - C. The loss of a manual attendance register (roll) is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to the Director Public Schools NSW. A new attendance register (roll) should be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to commencement of the new register must not be included.
  - D. A notice signed by the principal must be attached to the new attendance register (roll). The notice must state the period for which the original register was a record of student attendance (e.g. 1 February – 30 March 2014) and the date from which the replacement attendance register (roll) commences.
  - E. At the end of each school year the principal must ensure that the attendance register (roll) and attached Special Circumstances Registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.
- 11.7. An attendance officer will conduct regular roll checks of individual student attendance. In addition they will conduct an audit of the school's attendance procedures and records at least annually in conjunction with a member of the school executive. The report of the audit is for the advice of the principal.

## 12. When should schools use Special Circumstance Registers?

- 12.1. Attendance Registers must be maintained each day the school is open for instruction; however Special Circumstance Registers should be used:
- A. when there is full or part day industrial action involving teachers
  - B. when there is an approved school development day
  - C. on days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. Principals should consult with the Director Public Schools NSW, prior to deciding that a school is inaccessible
  - D. when students with a shared enrolment are attending specialist education settings and that setting is not the home or census school
  - E. when students are attending another NSW government school for a short period of time, while enrolled in their local school. The Attendance Register Code 'H' should be used on the local school's Attendance Register (roll)
  - F. for students who attend a Suspension Centre who are suspended from school in accordance with the Department's Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures. The Attendance Register Code 'E' should be used on the school's Attendance Register (roll) to denote the days the student was suspended from school
- 12.2. Special Circumstance Registers should:
- A. specify the dates and times of the variation
  - B. indicate the reason for the variation
  - C. list students attending on that day
  - D. be signed by the teacher maintaining the register
  - E. be forwarded to the student's enrolled school at the end of each school week (for students with a shared enrolment attending a special setting, or students attending suspension centres)
  - F. be permanently attached to the Attendance Registers (rolls).
- 12.3. On days outlined in A, B or C in 12.1 above, on the Manual Attendance Register (roll), a broken line must be ruled through that day's column and the notation 'Roll not marked – see Special Circumstance Register' recorded within.
- 12.4. Absences on these days are not to be recorded on student records or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

### **13. When can a student be granted an Exemption from Attendance at School?**

- 13.1. Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory schooling requirements of the Education Act (1990) must only be granted by the delegated officer when it has been clearly demonstrated by the applicant that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term and that alternatives to exemption have been considered. For example, it may be in the student's best interests and be more appropriate to access distance education than be exempted from attending school.
- 13.2. Applications for a Certificate of Exemption from School must be managed consistent with the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#). Principals must consult this document when considering an application for Exemption from School.

### **14. How should schools manage Applications for Extended Leave (travel or holiday)?**

- 14.1. From the beginning of 2015, Family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the [Exemption from School - Procedures](#). Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.
- 14.2. A Certificate of Extended Leave – Travel should not be issued where the principal is aware that the student has been the subject of contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit or a Community Services (Family and Community Services) report and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain
- 14.3. A principal should not accept a reason for travel during school term if it is not in the best interests of the student. Educational, social and participation reasons, which should be specified on the Application
- 14.4. Travel is considered to be domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reasons, which should be specified on the application
- 14.5. Principals should consult with parents about the intention of the travel and in the case of family holidays encourage parents to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.
- 14.6. Where a principal considers that the travel is appropriate during school term, the principal should issue the parent with an Application for Extended Leave – Travel for completion and inform the parent that if the Application is accepted, the absences will be recorded as “L” - Leave
- 14.7. Principals should request travel documentation, such as travel itinerary or e-ticket, and ensure this is attached to the Application

14.8. Principals should ensure that parents are assisted with the completion of the Application and provide a translation service if required

When travels period exceeds one school term access to Distance Education must be considered. Refer to [Distance Education Enrolment Procedures](#)

14.9. Principals may decline to accept a parent's Application for Extended Leave – Travel. In this case the parent must be advised in writing. Refer to example letter – Declining an Application for a Certificate of Extended Leave – Travel

14.10. If a student or students do not return on the date specified, the principal must ensure the parents are contacted to establish the whereabouts of the student. If contact is not established then the principal should follow processes associated with an Application for Home School Liaison Program support

14.11. On accepting a parent's Application a Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel must be issued. The original certificate will be provided to the parent and a copy of the certificate placed in each student's record.

14.12. An Application for Extended Leave form, Certificate of Extended Leave and example letter for declining an application are available in the appendices of this document. They can also be downloaded from the links below:

[Application for Extended Leave \(Travel or Holiday\)](#)

[Certificate of Extended Leave](#)

Sample Letter (see section 24, Appendix)

## 15. How should schools manage short-term attendance of students?

15.1. Students may be enrolled in only one school at any given time. However, for a variety of family circumstances a student enrolled at a NSW government school may need to attend another NSW government school for a short period of time. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, family relocation to care for relatives, family member requiring medical treatment in a location away from their family residence.

15.2. Short-term attendance is generally for periods not exceeding 10 school weeks.

15.3. Short-term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.

15.4. Prior to agreeing to the short-term attendance of a student, the principal of the host school should gather the necessary information from the student's enrolled school to determine if a risk assessment is required. The objective of the risk assessment should be the maintenance of a safe learning environment for staff and students. Principals should refer to [Legal Issues Bulletin 43](#).

- 15.5. The host school should complete a [Special Circumstance Register](#) for the student's attendance and forward it to the student's enrolled school at the end of each week for inclusion in the Attendance Register (roll).

## 16. What are the requirements for students who have a shared enrolment?

Students can attend a specialist education setting separate to a mainstream school on a sessional or full-time basis in line with the Department's Enrolment policy ([Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools](#)).

- 16.1. Specialist educational settings can include tutorial centres and programs, behaviour schools, juvenile justice and hospital schools.
- 16.2. Where the mainstream school principal verifies that a student is attending a specialist education setting, the mainstream school can mark the Attendance Register (roll) with the Attendance Register Code 'H' to denote student attending specialist education setting on a sessional or full-time basis.
- 16.3. Where the duration of attendance at a specialist education setting is more than four days in duration, the specialist education setting should use the Special Circumstances Register to record student attendance. The [Special Circumstances Register](#) should be returned to the student's mainstream school at the end of each school week.

## 17. What are the requirements for students leaving the school grounds during school hours?

- 17.1. All government secondary schools are required to issue a leave pass to students (Years 7 -12) who have permission to leave school premises during normal school hours.
- 17.2. The school leave pass assists attendance officers, police officers and community members to identify students who have permission to be out of school during normal school hours.
- 17.3. Schools should inform the school community about their school leave pass system. Students should be reminded regularly that authorised attendance officers including police officers, can direct them to return to school if they do not have a valid leave pass. Authorised attendance officers will then notify the school that a student has been identified as being out of school without a valid leave pass. The school should investigate the matter and if truancy is confirmed the student's parents must be informed.
- 17.4. The leave pass is only valid on the day of issue. Passes must be valid and contain the school logo or name, date and time and able to be recognised by



authorised attendance officers, including police officers.

- 17.5. Students accompanied by school staff on school sporting activities or excursions do not require a leave pass.
- 17.6. Students participating in regular, timetabled school activities such as vocational education training that necessitate them leaving school premises, or students who go home for lunch each day do not require the use of a leave pass. These students should be provided with documentation describing the purpose and duration of these activities. A timetable on school letterhead or bearing the school stamp would be sufficient.

## **18. How are students participating in flexible timetables marked on attendance registers?**

- 18.1. The attendance of students participating in flexible timetables includes, but is not limited to:
- secondary students not present at school because they are not required to be at school. This could also apply for blocks of examinations where students attend on different days.
  - secondary students participating in pathways to completing their Higher School Certificate course.
  - kindergarten students at the commencement of the school year as they undertake Best Start assessments.
- 18.2. The attendance of students participating in flexible timetables must be recorded in the same manner as other students. However, scheduled days or periods of non-attendance must not be marked as absences. The Attendance Register Code 'F' should be used to denote periods of non-attendance.
- 18.3. Students participating in flexible timetables should be provided with documentation identifying specific days or parts of days when they are not required to be at school.

## **19. Should approval be given for students to attend lessons outside of school during school hours?**

- 19.1. Involvement in private lessons, such as dance and music classes conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities will usually be limited to outside school hours.
- 19.2. Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional

importance such as sitting examinations, principals may use their discretion in justifying the absence. This provision must not be used on a regular basis.

- 19.3. If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons an unjustified absence should be recorded and procedures for addressing attendance concerns followed.
- 19.4. See the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#) for requirements when considering an application for a certificate of exemption for participation in the entertainment industry, elite sports or elite arts.

**Note:** Higher School Certificate courses conducted outside school, participation in work placement or TAFE based courses are not considered to be private lessons.

## 20. When should a student's name be removed from the school's Attendance Register?

Students are removed from the attendance register by having their enrolment status changed in ERN. Students must not have their enrolment status changed in ERN unless one of the following circumstances applies:

- 20.1. Advice has been received from parents that the student is enrolled in a non-government or other registered school. Schools should:
- request that the parent provide the name of the non-government or other registered school so that the enrolment can be confirmed
  - The status of the student should not be changed in ERN (ie the student should not be marked as 'Left') until confirmation of enrolment is received from the enrolling school
  - In cases where confirmation has not been received, all reasonable measures should be taken by the school to attempt to confirm enrolment details. Measures can include contacting the school provided by the parent, requests under Chapter 16A, appropriate contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit if there are concerns for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the student, or reports to the Child Protection Helpline if there are significant risk of harm concerns.
- 20.2. The student has enrolled in another NSW government school. The status of the student should not be changed in ERN (ie the student should not be marked as 'Left') until confirmation of enrolment is received from the enrolling school.
- 20.3. Written confirmation provided to the school by the parent including a Registration Number from NESA which indicates the student has been registered for home schooling. Where a principal has only received verbal advice from a parent regarding registration for home schooling they can contact attendance officers who will verify the information by checking the databases provided by NESA. Principals can only mark as 'Left' once the student's registration is verified.

- 20.4. Students who are still of compulsory schooling age and have successfully completed Year 10, and there is documented evidence that they are engaged in full-time study, employment or a combination of both. 'Full-time' is defined as an average of 25 hours per week or more.
- 20.5. Students who have moved out of New South Wales and have not applied for a cross-border enrolment in New South Wales. Information should be requested from the parent regarding the interstate residential address, or name of school in which the parent intends to enrol the student so that confirmation of enrolment can be sought.
- 20.6. Students who have moved out of New South Wales and the school has received an [Interstate Student Data Transfer Note](#) from the student's new school.
- 20.7. Student has been expelled from the school in accordance with the Department's [Suspension and Expulsion of School Student – Procedures](#). The student's enrolment status should not be changed to 'Left – Expelled' in ERN until issues regarding the student's educational placement have been resolved and the new enrolment confirmed. See memorandum DN/12/00162 (Intranet Only).

## **21. What must occur when students are believed to have left the school and their destination is unknown?**

- 21.1. Some students may not be attending school because they may have moved or enrolled elsewhere, and their parents have not notified the school. In some cases the student may not have enrolled in another school.
- 21.2. Prior to the student's name being removed from the Attendance Register (roll) a number of actions need to be confirmed by the principal. This process is managed using the Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) system, using the Registration Status 'Left – Destination Unknown'.
- 21.3. Where the student is of compulsory school age and has been marked as 'absent' for periods exceeding a total of 10 consecutive school days, where the school is open for instruction, and is believed to have left the school the school should:
  - contact the parent to seek an explanation
  - contact the emergency contact recorded for the child
  - investigate the student's enrolment/registration status on Enrolment Registration Number records (ERN)
  - contact government and non-government schools within a reasonable radius of any presumed new residential address
- 21.4. Where the school is unable to determine the location of a student following its investigation, the school should submit an Application for Home School Liaison

Program support to the local Manager of the Home School Liaison Program. The Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) will investigate the matter. If, on investigation the enrolment destination cannot be determined the HSLO will advise the principal that the student's registration can be changed to 'Left – Destination Unknown'.

21.5. In changing the student's enrolment status to 'Left – Destination Unknown' the principal must ensure:

- any risk of significant harm issues including Educational Neglect have been reported to the Child Protection Helpline
- where the family or student is missing (or their destination is unknown) and there are concerns for their safety, welfare or wellbeing, in line with [Incident and Notification Response procedures](#), a report is made within 24 hours to the Safety and Security Directorate to determine if the matter has been reported to the Police. Where no report is made the principal is to report the matter to their Local Police
- the Director Educational Leadership is informed that following investigation by the Home School Liaison Program the student is unable to be located and their enrolment status has been changed to 'Left – Destination Unknown'
- If a student is later located the school is able to change the status on the Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) system to 'Left – Located'.

21.6. Where the student is of post compulsory school age, their whereabouts are unknown, and the student has not attended school for fifteen consecutive school days for reasons not known to the school, following the school's investigation the status on the Enrolment Registration Number (ERN) system can be changed to 'Left – Destination Unknown'.

21.7. If a student's name has been removed from the attendance register because 'their enrolment destination is unknown', absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included as absences for statistical purposes. The Attendance Register (roll) should be amended to reflect this.

## 22. What is the role of the NSW Police Force?

22.1. Police officers are authorised as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act 1990.

22.2. During school hours, an authorised attendance officer or police officer may approach a student who appears to be of compulsory school age and who is not in attendance at school. On presentation of their authorisation card the attendance officer may request the student's name, home address and the name and address of the student's school. They may approach a student who is

accompanied by an adult.

- 22.3. A police officer or authorised attendance officer in the company of a police officer may accompany the student to his or her home or to the school to verify the information provided.
- 22.4. Under this authorisation police have no power of arrest, detention or physical restraint.
- 22.5. Police and Departmental attendance officers regularly conduct Joint Anti-Truancy initiatives (JATS) which target student truancy.

### **23. Resources to Support the Regular Attendance of Students at School.**

- [Every Student, Every School](#) is an initiative providing better learning and support for students with a disability, additional learning or behaviour support needs in our public schools. Addressing the learning and support needs of students with a disability strongly supports regular attendance at school.
- A Guide to Effective Roll Marking is a resource developed to provide further information to principals and school staff with delegated authority for maintaining School Attendance Registers (rolls) so that they reflect the accurate attendance of students.
- [Attendance Register Codes](#)
- [Application for Home School Liaison Support](#)
- Letter 1 – Principal to parent advising of Application to the Home School Liaison Program

#### Information for parents:

The following document is available from the [School Attendance](#) webpage on the Schools Internet site.

- [Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Parents](#)

#### Information for schools:

- [Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Schools](#)
- Attendance of Aboriginal Students- Working with families and communities
- Legal Issues Bulletins

Information for agencies

- [Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Government and Non-Government agencies](#)

## **24.Appendices**

[Application for Extended Leave \(travel or holiday\) and Certificate of Extended Leave](#) (now in digital format)

Sample Letter declining and application for extended leave

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## Example Letter - Declining an Application for a Certificate of Extended Leave – Travel

School letterhead

Correspondence Name

Correspondence Address

Student SRN:

Dear Correspondence Name

You recently applied for a *Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel* for Student Name/s. *Certificates* are provided when it has been clearly demonstrated by the parent that the leave is necessary or desirable and that alternatives to providing leave have been considered. Further, the providing of leave must be in the student's best interests in the short and long term.

Your application has been considered. On closer examination I find there are insufficient reasons and I am not able to provide leave at this time. I am not satisfied that providing a period of extended leave is in Student's Name/s best interest.

Please be aware that any absences not accepted by a principal will be marked as A – Absent (unexplained/unjustified) on the school's attendance register.

I encourage you to contact the school on school's phone number to make an appointment with me if you wish to discuss this application further.

You have the right to appeal this decision if you consider that correct procedures have not been followed or that an unfair decision has been made.

Yours sincerely,

Principal's name

Principal

Insert date

## EXAMPLE LETTER

### Principal to parent advising of Application to the Home School Liaison Program

#### On school letterhead

Correspondence Name  
Correspondence Address

Student SRN:

Dear Correspondence Name

I refer to the attendance of Student Name at school.

At a recent school Learning and Support Team meeting Student First Name's pattern of attendance was reviewed and despite the school implementing a number of strategies Student First Name's lack of attendance remains a concern.

Regular attendance at school is essential if Student First Name is to achieve his/her educational best, and increase his/her career and life options. School staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing Student First Name's from full participation at school.

As a result of Student First Name's unsatisfactory attendance I am required to make an Application to the Home School Liaison Program local manager for consideration of further action. An attendance officer may be allocated to work with you and the school to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

I would like to remind you that The *Education Act (1990)* requires parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school each day it is open for instruction. If you do not meaningfully engage in the Attendance Improvement Plan, or there is no improvement in Student First Name's attendance during this time, the Department of Education and Communities may consider further action such as an application to the Children's Court for Compulsory Schooling Orders.

It is important that we work together to improve Student First Name's attendance at school.

Yours sincerely

Principal Name  
Principal School  
Name

<Insert date>