

ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE

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

AIMS

- 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 Patterson Lakes Primary School has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

This policy applies to all students at Patterson Lakes 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 Patterson Lakes 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.

IMPLEMENTATION

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

Patterson Lakes 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.

Patterson Lakes 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 Patterson Lakes 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.

Parents of students who are absent for three consecutive days, without approval, will be contacted by either the classroom teacher or the attendance officer.

International students are required to attend all scheduled class hours and their attendance will be monitored for compliance on a minimum fortnightly basis. International students must achieve satisfactory attendance, which at a minimum must be 80 per cent. Failure to do so will then involve notification to parents and possibly DET and DHA. Provision to DET of information on compassionate and compelling circumstances where a student is attending at least 70% of scheduled course contact hours but less than 80% will be adhered to.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Patterson Lakes Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by holding weekly runners club meets on the school oval at 8am each Wednesday morning, holding special lunchtime clubs, e.g. lego club, gardeners club, maths club, quiet library time, school sport teams representing the school, class captain roles and waste warrior class roles.

Recording attendance

Patterson Lakes Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Patterson Lakes Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher every morning at the start of the school day using the Compass software and also directly after lunch.

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 Patterson Lakes Primary School of absences by using one of the school's preferred methods, including online using Compass, by telephone, email or letter.

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, Patterson Lakes Primary School will notify parents by SMS through Compass by 10am each morning. Parents will then be prompted to click on the link via the SMS to report their child's absence.

On a monthly basis our Attendance Officer will send home notices to families who have unexplained absences for their child(ren). The parent then has the option to update their own child(ren)'s attendance data on Compass, or can return the notice to school for the Attendance Officer to update the data.

Patterson Lakes 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 Patterson Lakes 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.
- 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

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, Patterson Lakes 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 Learning Improvement Plan

- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant staff, i.e. Student Welfare Coordinator, Assistant Principal or 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, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Patterson Lakes 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 East Victoria Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact 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.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- School Attendance Guidelines
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: Attendance
- School intranet

EVALUATION

Guidelines are updated every 3-4 years as per DET recommendations.

CERTIFICATION

This policy was ratified at the School Council meeting held at Patterson Lakes Primary School, May 22nd, 2019.

Signed 
School Council President

Signed 
Principal