



MOSSFIEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

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

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

Mossfiel 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.

Mossfiel 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 Mossfiel 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

Mossfiel Primary School *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by providing a breakfast club.

Recording attendance

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

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Mossfiel 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 Compass

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 Mossfiel Primary School of absences by:

- contacting the classroom teacher, informing the office staff or calling the absence telephone line.

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, Mossfiel Primary School will notify parents by SMS, prompting

parents to contact the school to explain the absence.

Mossfiel 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 Mossfiel 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, including illness
- 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

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 three days, Mossfiel 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 student wellbeing staff.

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 Mossfiel 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-Western 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:

- o the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
- o measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - o the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - o 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](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

School/VRQA/Department	Approval Process	Last Updated	Review Cycle	Scheduled for Review
VRQA	Not Required	April 2020	3 years	April 2023

Staged Response to Non-attendance

Stage 1- Unexplained/unauthorised absence

- Is this student part of an identified vulnerable cohort that is targeted for specialised intervention? If so, please contact Louise or Dennis
- Automatic text message is sent via Compass for family to follow up unexplained absence
- Compass is used by the office to generate absence letters on a monthly basis for families to provide reasons for absences.

Stage 2 – Three days in a row unexplained absences

- Phone contact made with parent/guardian and/or emergency contact by Classroom Teacher
- If unable to make contact, send home Stage 2 letter
- Record actions on Compass under 'Attendance Follow Up'
- Student Wellbeing Team made aware by Compass chronicle post

Stage 3- five days or more in a row of unexplained absences

- Phone calls as per level one and two, increasing offer of, or re-offer, support
- Stage 3 Letter generated by student wellbeing team regarding absences, including offer of a parent meeting
- General parent information flyers will be sent with the letter:
 - o [The importance of attendance at primary school](#)
- Home visit as per school's procedures if unable to make contact after phone call and letter
- Liaise with existing family service / seek support for family if applicable
- Record actions on Compass under 'Attendance Follow Up'

Stage 4- Ongoing unexplained absences

- Phone calls as per previous levels, increasing offer of, or re-offer, support

- [Stage 4 Letter/email](#) sent via registered post to parent/guardian regarding continued unexplained / unauthorised absences formally requesting presence at an Attendance SSG. To be signed and sent by Student Wellbeing team
- Hold Attendance SSG: establish causes of non-attendance, develop Student Absence Learning Plan and/or Attendance Improvement Plan or Return to School Plan to support attendance as per DET Attendance Guidelines and advice
- Student Wellbeing team to request secondary consultation or direct intervention from SSS staff/ Koorie Engagement and Support officer, Vic Police Community Liaison Officer, MIPS/Pathways and Transitions worker/Careers Teacher if applicable
- Referral to external agency e.g. Youth Connections/ CYMS/CAMHS/ChildFIRST if applicable
- Explore Flexible Learning Options/Re-engagement programs at a school level or in the community. Consider an individual tailored program if applicable
- Initiate individual Check In/Check Out system
- Liaise with existing family service / Seek support for family
- Allocate a mentor
- Continue to support the students education with the development of a Student Absence Learning Plan
- Home visit as per school's procedures
- Excusing non-attendance due to school refusal - *"In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:.....school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes....."* [CASES21 Administration User Guide - Attendance, Chapter 3](#)
- Record actions on Compass under 'Attendance Follow Up'

Stage 5- unresolved ongoing non-attendance

- [Stage 5 letter/email](#) via registered post to parent/guardian summarising all intervention and support offered. To be signed and sent by the Principal. The letter is to offer an opportunity to meet with the school for an Attendance Student Support Group Meeting and advising the parent/guardian unless there is improvement the matter may be referred to the School Attendance Officer.
Parents required to respond within 7 days.
- Continue with secondary consultations/phone calls/home visits
- Record actions on Compass under 'Attendance Follow Up'

Stage 6- Referral to school Attendance Officer

A principal does not have to make a referral for all absences that meet the criteria but may continue to manage the absences at a school level

- [Send the Stage 6 letter/email](#) from the Principal advising parents that the matter has been escalated to the School Attendance Officer at the region.
- Referring a student attendance matter to a School Attendance Officer may be appropriate where the principal determines that:
 - Intervention strategies have been unable to secure parental engagement and improvement in school attendance (or engagement in another educational program); and
 - Requiring the parent to respond to the notice will convey the seriousness of the matter and is likely to elicit an improvement in attendance
- Principals should be certain they have evidence to demonstrate the parent has not been meeting their responsibilities under the Act. This will be important in the event the School

Attendance Notice leads to an Infringement Notice being sent to the parent and the parent wishes to appeal the decision or elect to have the matter heard in court.

- The Principal may contact DET Regional Office – Wellbeing and Engagement Team for policy and process advice and secondary consultation
- Principal completes appropriate referral documentation and forward to the regional office.
- Continue to monitor attendance as per school's requirements
- Record actions on Compass under 'Attendance Follow Up'