

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

2016 - 2018

*INFORMATION FOR  
PARENTS*



An Independent Public School

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### 1. Policy Statement

The Department of Education (the Department) monitors the attendance of all students enrolled in school, identifies students with attendance issues and implements appropriate measures to restore regular attendance.

### 2. Background

Where a student is enrolled in a public school, the School Education Act 1999 (the Act) requires that the student attends the school on site or an educational program of the school elsewhere as directed by the principal.

The parents of a child who is enrolled in a school are responsible under the Act for ensuring their child is attending on a daily basis. Parents or other responsible persons may be asked to provide an acceptable explanation for any absence to the principal. For the purpose of this policy, parent is defined as the parent at law. Further information about the terms parent and responsible person can be found in the definitions section.

The principal is responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation, and for the management of regular school attendance.

Consistent attendance and participation at school are essential factors in achieving social and academic learning outcomes. Schools that develop a supportive learning environment and an engaging and relevant curriculum create conditions conducive to regular school attendance.

### 3. Definitions

#### Attendance Panel

Is appointed under the *School Education Act 1999* (the Act) to address the persistent non-attendance of a student. The function of the panel is to provide advice and assistance to students and parents in order to secure attendance and, in the event of non-compliance by a student or parent, to issue a certificate required prior to the commencement of a prosecution of a parent under the Act.

#### Authorised Absence

An absence where the reason provided by the parent or Department is considered to be legitimate and deemed acceptable by the principal or their nominee.

#### Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown (SWU) List

A list, usually referred to as the SWU List, containing the names of children who are missing from schools and educational programs in Western Australia. This list is distributed by the Department to administrators in non-government schools and some other agencies by agreement.

## Employee

A person who is currently employed under the School Education Act 1999 or the Public Sector Management Act 1994.

## Documented Plan

An umbrella term used to describe a range of ways of catering for the educational needs of individual or smaller groups of students with identified needs. It is primarily a teaching and learning planning document, and it identified short to medium term educational outcomes. Documented plans may take a variety of forms, including:

- Individual Education Plans (IEP);
- Individual Behaviour Plans (IBP);
- Individual Transition Plans (ITP); and
- Risk Management Plans (RMP)

## Parent

In relation to a child, means a person who at law has responsibility for the long-term care, welfare and development of the child, or the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child.

## Reasonable Cause

The reason provided by the parent or carer to the Principal is considered to be legitimate.

## Responsible Person

A person:

- who is a parent of the student;
- who, in the case of a student who has turned 18 or is a prescribed child, the student; or
- who is an adult, responsible for the child and whose details have been provided on enrolment.

## Responsible Parenting Agreement

A formal written agreement between a parent and an authorised officer in one of the Departments of Education, Child Protection or Corrective Services. Parents may be asked to enter into a Responsible Parenting Agreement where the child is under 15 years of age and demonstrating anti-social or offending behaviour, not attending school where there is no reasonable cause for the absence or is at risk of developing such behaviours. Agreements document support to be provided by the Department (and/or other agencies) and actions to be undertaken by parents.

## Responsible Parenting Order

A Responsible Parenting Order compels a parent(s) to take up the support offered by agencies and to meet their responsibilities in exercising appropriate control over their child's anti-social, offending or truanting behaviour. A Regional Executive Director may endorse a principal's recommendation to the Director General that an application for an order be made in respect of the child, where every effort to engage the parent voluntarily has failed and it is considered that it will make a positive difference to the child's behaviour.

## School Refusal

Non-attendance marked by emotional disturbance and anxiety leading to absence from school.

## Truancy

When students are absent from school without a valid reason and without parental knowledge or permission. It refers to those instances where students take it upon themselves not to attend school, or arrive at school and subsequently leave or miss certain subjects.

## Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absences encompass truancy, those not considered acceptable by the principal, nominee or the Department and where an explanation has not been provided by the parent.

## 4. Procedures for Attendance

### Attendance Records

The principal will:

- keep accurate attendance records for every student enrolled at the school (including attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions for Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Primary students, and every lesson/period for Secondary students) that are able to be reproduced in a written form;
- record whether a student's absence was authorised or unauthorised;
- issue a leave pass to a student under the age of 18 who has been granted permission to leave the school unaccompanied by a responsible adult; and
- record a student as:
  - present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction; and
  - present if they are on a school-approved activity or attending off-site under a section 24 arrangement.

### Retention of Records

The principal will:

- retain attendance records in accordance with the *School Education Regulations 2000* and the *Retention and Disposal Schedule for Department of Education School, College and Campus Records*; and
- retain documentation of all contact and intervention strategies implemented in addressing a student's absence.

### Reporting and Disclosure of Attendance Data

The principal will:

- comply with requests from their education regional office and Central Office to provide information on student attendance; and
- include the attendance data of every student enrolled in response to requests for school attendance data (for example, participation in the Attendance Data Collection).

### Alternative Attendance Arrangements Under Section 24 of the School Education Act

Where it is deemed to be in the best interests of an enrolled student to undertake an alternative course or program, the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled will:

- only enter into a section 24 arrangement where a student will undertake a program provided by another school or training organisation, and where the combination of arrangements equates to full-time attendance;
- formalise an alternative attendance arrangement for the student in accordance with section 24 of the *School Education Act 1999*;
- approve the section 24 arrangement and end date the arrangement;
- issue a *Certificate of Approval: Alternative Attendance Arrangement (Section 24 Arrangement)* outlining the details of the alternative attendance arrangements;
- appoint a school-based case manager to monitor the arrangement and to work in consultation with the student, the parents of students under the age of 18 and the alternative school or provider;
- confirm that the duty of care provision for the student meets Department requirements; and
- record the student's attendance using the E code and provide the student with a Leave Pass.

### Access to Curriculum for Students with Illness and/or Health Conditions

Where a student has a mental or physical illness and/or health care needs which may impact on their ability to attend the usual school site, the principal will:

- inform the parent of a student under the age of 18 and the student of the student's right to an educational program and actively engage the parent and the student in negotiating access to a relevant program;
- arrange access to an educational program for a student who has a physical and/or mental health condition and/or health care needs and who cannot attend the regular site; and
- follow the procedures described in *School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health* (SSEN:M&MH).

## Student Absence

The principal will:

- request a reason for a student's absence be provided to the principal's satisfaction;
- where a student is participating in a section 24 arrangement, manage the student's attendance in conjunction with the alternative school or provider; and
- where a student's attendance is below 90% or is identified as a concern:
  - investigate the reasons for the student's absence;
  - organise a parent/teacher meeting and/or case conference at the earliest opportunity to identify issues concerning the student's absence; plan improvement strategies; and
  - include identified attendance improvement strategies in a documented plan.

## Persistent Student Absence

The principal will develop and implement an attendance improvement plan consisting of:

- a consultation phase;
- a formal meeting phase if attendance is not successfully restored through actions taken as a result of consultation; and
- a process to monitor and review engagement with any plan or agreement developed in the formal meeting.

The principal will document all intervention strategies used to address a student's absence, so that, should it become necessary to proceed to prosecution, it can be clearly established that all reasonably practicable steps to restore attendance have been taken.

Where absence persists, the principal will offer the option of an attendance panel to the parent, the purpose of which is to provide advice and assistance to restore regular attendance.

## Missing Students – Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown (SWU)

If a student cannot be located within 15 days of the start of an absence, and their parent/s cannot be contacted, the principal will:

- complete an SWU Request form and email it to the Student Tracking Coordinator at [Student.Tracking@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:Student.Tracking@education.wa.edu.au).
- retain the student on the school's current enrolment register until email notification is received from the Student Tracking Coordinator that the student has been placed on the SWU list.

## Standardised Leave Passes

Standardised leave passes enable students to demonstrate they have appropriate permission to be away from the school site without direct supervision of an authorised adult.

Examples of use include:

- One off appointments where the parent is not accompanying the student.
- Repeat appointments that occur at a set frequency over a period of time and the parent is not accompanying the student e.g. every Wednesday during Term 1.
- Participation in an approved off-site educational program without supervision of a teacher or authorised adult.

Standardised leave passes assist badged attendance officers, police officers, transport officers and local businesses to verify a student's absence from school in a recognisable and consistent form.

A pass is only valid if:

- the front of the card is complete;
- the reverse side of the student's copy is stamped with the school name and contact details; and
- the signature of the Principal, or the Principal's delegate appears on the card.

## 5. Student and Parent Roles and Responsibilities

Staff can discuss these points with students and parents when contacting them with attendance concerns.

### Students

- If a student is going to be late they should where possible request a late note from their parents on that day and give it to their Sub-School Office. If it is not possible to get a note that day (e.g. parents at work) they should provide it to the Sub-School Office, the following day.
- Students who are late but arrive before 8:45 am should proceed to their Period 1 class. Their Period 1 teacher will 'sign them in'.
- Students who are late and arrive after 8:45 am are to proceed to the Sub-School Office to 'sign in'. The Sub-School Officer will provide them with a note to enter class.
- A student that is absent should provide absentee notes or Medical Certificate to their Sub-School Office upon their return to school.
- Students can only leave school early if they have permission from their parent/guardian to do so. This may be in written form or a phone call.
- Students who are leaving early with permission are to 'sign out' at their Sub-School Office. The Sub-School Office will provide them with a leave pass to show staff and police if requested.
- Students that are late to classes during the day will be marked as present, but the time will be noted in iScholaris. This can impact on their attendance and is a form of truancy.

### Parents/Guardians

At Rockingham Senior High School, we recognise and support the strong link between student attendance and student achievement. Contact with parents/guardians is fundamental in ensuring the attendance data the School has is accurate. There are many reasons why our information may be incorrect, such as the regular class teacher maybe absent, the student may not answer their name when it is called, students may arrive late to class, or data may not be entered correctly, and so on.

In order for the School to work collaboratively in improving student attendance rates, we are asking that parents/guardians note the following:

- If your student is absent from school, please provide an absentee note or Medical Certificate.
- If your student is absent from school, please call to notify school the morning of the day of the absences. Please provide the following information:
  - Your name
  - Student's full name
  - Student's Year Group
  - Reason for absence

This can be done by phoning the Front Office or Sub-School Office on 9527 0300, or responding by text.

- If you need to sign your student out early, where possible please provide a note. Alternatively, a visit or phone call to the Front Office or Sub-school Office is sufficient.
- Please discuss with your student the importance of regular attendance and ensure that they attend school whenever fit to do so.
- Avoid scheduling family holidays during school terms. Whilst the school respects that travel can be an educational experience in itself, it is important that it does not come at the cost of the child's education. Parents are required to negotiate their child's absence with the Principal prior to the first day of non-attendance, otherwise the absence will be considered to be 'unauthorised' and recorded as such. Absence due to family vacation is deemed by the Department of Education to be an unacceptable reason for a student's absence from school.
- If your student is refusing to attend school, please contact the Head of Student Services or Student Services Coordinator as a matter of urgency.
- Please notify the School immediately of any changes to your contact details (e.g. change of address or home or mobile telephone number) as soon as possible so that we can update our records.
- If a student is a member of one of Rockingham SHS's Specialist Sports Program, they are expected to maintain an attendance rate of 95% or above. Please refer to the Specialist Sports Contract for specific information regarding attendance, and subsequent consequences for failing to meet this target.

## 6. Students at Educational Risk Years 7 to 12 Overview

The monitoring and recording of attendance is to proceed as per the School's Attendance Policy. This will ensure regular review of student attendance and appropriate response.

As an overview and assistance to the attendance process, Heads of Student Services will complete a fortnightly review of attendance data as described in the Staff Response to Escalating Attendance Issues Flow Chart.

If additional intervention is required, then the Teaching Staff/Heads of Learning Areas can initiate some or all of the following (as outlined in the Staff Response to Escalating Attendance Issues Flow Chart).

- Monitor attendance closely and inform parents (phone/letter/email)
- Request parent attend meeting
- Refer to Head of Student Services

When a student's attendance has dropped to 90% attendance or lower, clear communication with parents needs to happen in writing regarding their responsibility and possible consequences according to Regional Office policy and the Education Act. Heads of Student Services will contact parents by email or phone if a student's attendance falls below 90%.

If a student is a member of one of Rockingham SHS's Specialist Sports Program, they are expected to maintain an attendance rate of 95% or above. Please refer to the Specialist Sports Contract for specific information regarding attendance, and subsequent consequences for failing to meet this target.

If the students' attendance continues to fall, the Head of Student Services will:

- Send *Attendance Stage 1 Letter* to parent/guardian informing them that the student's attendance is less than 90%;
- If no improvement in student attendance, send *Attendance Stage 2 Letter* to parent/guardian requesting a meeting to discuss the attendance issue, and develop an Attendance Improvement Contract and Plan, and issue a Student Attendance Card if required;
- Send *Attendance Letter in Semester Reports* to all students whose attendance falls below 90% for each semester.
- Attendance continues to be unsatisfactory or commences again to be unsatisfactory refer to the Student Services Coordinator.

The Student Services Coordinator will:

- Send out *Attendance Stage 3 Letter* to parent/guardian for students who have not been successful in improving their attendance.
- Schedule and coordinate a Case Management meeting with stakeholders and relevant support staff/agencies, including School Psychologist. Attendance Improvement Plan adjusted.
- If attendance is not improved, the Student Services Coordinator is to coordinate with Associate Principal.
- Send out *Attendance Stage 4 Letter*, and complete Attendance Intervention Record.
- If attendance is still not improved, the Student Services Coordinator is to coordinate with Associate Principal and Regional Office.

The Associate Principal will:

- Send *Attendance Stage 5 Letter* to parent/guardian for students whose attendance does not make improvements after several intervention methods.
- Convene a Formal Meeting with parent/guardian and Attendance Officer from Regional Office.
- If no improvements to student attendance, send *Attendance Stage 6 Letter* to parent/guardian informing them that the matter will be referred to an Attendance Advisory Panel at a Regional level.
- If an Attendance Panel is not convened quickly or the student's attendance is not restored after the intervention of the Attendance Panel, the Associate Principal will see permission from Regional Office to place the student on ZZ.

## 7. Encouraging Attendance – Benefits for All

Regular attendance has significant benefits for students, educators, parents/guardians and the community. Staff can use the following information with the relevant stakeholders to help development of shared understanding about attendance.

### ***Benefits of regular attendance for students***

- Getting the maximum benefit from school will optimise your life choices.
- Attending school regularly will develop skills and attitudes that will help you to be successful in later life. These include self-discipline, punctuality, being organised and sticking to routines.
- Regular attendance leads to an increased likelihood of being successful at school.
- Attending regularly leads to making friends and learning to maintain relationships over a length of time.
- You will learn social skills necessary to live and work successfully with others.
- You are safer at school than on the streets.
- People will be more positive about you if you have a good attendance record.
- Attending school provides opportunities for socialising with your friends.
- The more you attend, the more you learn, and this will probably mean you will like school more.

### ***Benefits of regular student attendance for educators***

- You are able to fulfil your responsibilities to the students in your care.
- There will be improved learning outcomes.
- You will enjoy less complex management of the learning program as you will not need to re-teach parts of it to students who were away when you introduced something new.
- There will be less complex classroom management because you will not need to help students re-establish relationships following periods of absence.
- You will be able to help students develop habits such as punctuality, self-discipline and organisation which will be of value to them in everyday situations.
- Resources currently being spent on following up absences can be spent on the classroom program.

### ***Benefits of regular student attendance for parents/caregivers***

- By encouraging regular attendance, you will know that you have positively influenced your child's education.
- You will know that your child is safe at school and not at risk elsewhere.
- You will know that your child is engaged in more appropriate activities than if they were truanting.
- Regular attendance by your child will ensure that you have fewer contacts with government agencies.
- You will have peace of mind in knowing that children who attend school regularly are less likely to engage in risk taking behaviour.
- You will enjoy more structured family routines.
- Your child is more likely to finish year 12 and have broader opportunities.
- You will avoid a fine or legal action due to your child's poor attendance at school.

### ***Benefits of regular student attendance for the community***

- As a member of the community and a participant in promoting regular school attendance, you will have contributed to the next generation of community leaders.
- Through addressing attendance issues, you have an opportunity to work in partnership with schools to achieve a shared goal.
- You will be supporting young people in being less likely to be involved in crime.
- You will be helping to ensure that young people are spending their days safely.
- The community as a whole will experience less cost, both financially and socially.
- Regular attendance by students will promote an increased level of safety for all.



## 8. Importance of Regular Attendance

The likelihood of success in learning is strongly linked to regular attendance and appropriate participation in educational programs. It is crucial that children and students develop habits of regular attendance at an early age, even from the time they are enrolled in a preschool setting.

Children and students who have poor patterns of attendance are at risk of not achieving their educational, social or psychological potential and are disadvantaged in the quality of choices they are able to make in later life situations. These learners may:

- be socially isolated
- place themselves at risk of harm during times of absence
- be more likely to be involved in socially unacceptable and/or illegal activities
- have gaps in their knowledge and understanding of basic concepts
- be more likely to leave school early
- be over-represented in the juvenile justice system
- be the victims of bullying and harassment.

### EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Early intervention for students at risk of developing irregular patterns of attendance is crucial in order for these patterns to be reversed.

Indicators of students at risk of developing these patterns include the following:

- frequent lateness
- leaving school early missing lessons
- being the victim of bullying and harassment
- learning difficulties
- many days absent, either through illness, unexplained reasons or family commitments
- unresolved issues with school personnel (staff or students)
- social or emotional issues
- difficulties at times of transition
- health issues experienced by the student and/or family members.

### INTERVENTION

Although there will be individual situations for particular students, Rockingham Senior High School will be expected to increase their level of intervention when a student's attendance falls below 90%.

All intervention strategies are to be documented (see Staff Response to Escalating Attendance Issues). Active involvement of students in joint planning to address attendance issues is central to intervention by Rockingham Senior High School.

Rockingham Senior High School works broadly with their community to promote the importance of regular attendance so that it is valued and understood by all. An increased level of understanding will be reflected in improved attendance rates and academic successes.

## Appendix 1: Staff Response to Escalating Attendance Issues

