

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 socially, academically and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps students to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community. This policy applies to all students at Findon Primary School. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#), and is adhered to in this manner.

Aims:

The aims of this policy are 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/caregivers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents/caregivers the key practices and procedures Findon PS has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

Definition:

Parent/Caregiver – 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:

Students are expected to attend Findon PS 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 at Findon PS, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment at Findon PS for particular activities.

Both schools and parents/caregivers have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day. Findon PS believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to promoting attendance and working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance. Findon PS is also committed to supporting punctual 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/caregivers to improve their attendance through a range of supports and interventions.

Students are expected to attend school every day, arrive on time and be prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Findon PS parents/caregivers 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/caregivers are required to communicate with the relevant staff, usually the class teacher or office staff, at Findon PS about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents/caregivers must 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

Findon Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance via universal, targeted and individual practices. This policy should be read in consultation with the *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*. The school promotes attendance at an individual, class, cohort and school level.

Recording attendance

Findon PS must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge the school's duty of care for all students.

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher (or the teacher in charge of the class) at the start of the school day and after lunch using the COMPASS platform. 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/caregiver must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents/caregivers should notify Findon PS of absences by:

- recording absences (unplanned or planned) on the COMPASS platform or by contacting the office as early as possible.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent/caregivers, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Findon PS will notify parents/caregivers by SMS/push notification message. Findon PS will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time first for the parent to respond. In the event that the parent is unable to be contacted, the school will investigate the use of emergency contact details. In addition to this, practice at Findon PS is to respond to student non-attendance through a five staged response (Appendix A).

Findon PS will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is an **authorised absence** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the *School Attendance Guidelines*.

If Findon PS considers that the parent has provided an **authorised absence** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**explained absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexplained absence**' and followed up via the staged approach to non attendance.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent notifies the school in advance
- unavoidable family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance (e.g. attending a family member's funeral interstate).

If no explanation is provided by the parent/caregiver within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file. Parents/caregivers will be notified if an absence has not been authorised.

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, Findon PS will work collaboratively with parents/caregivers, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- engaging with the school's five staged response to managing non attendance
- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing an Attendance Support 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 school counsellor and/or departmental allied support services.

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

Through the staged response to managing non-attendance, if Findon PS 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 Northern Metropolitan Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent/caregiver, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal/nominee 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.

In some situations, a referral to the Department of Health and Human Services may be required.

Communication and Review Cycle:

This policy will be communicated to the school community via the school website, parent/staff induction process, school newsletter, assembly, staff briefings, enrolment and other relevant individual cases. It will be available through the school office and will be reviewed as part of the school's three year policy and review process.

Reference:

DET School Attendance Policy <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy>
DET School Attendance Guidelines <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance>
Findon Primary School Attendance Protocols
Findon Primary School Attendance Checklist
Findon Student Wellbeing, Engagement and Inclusion Policy
Education Training Reform Act 2006
Family Law Act (1975)
Findon PS Staged Response to non-attendance