Attendance policy

Student Attendance

All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.

Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find ‘catching up’ difficult. Absenteeism contributes significantly to student failure at school.

Students need to attend school on a regular basis to gain the maximum benefit from schooling and optimise their life opportunities. It is widely recognised that attendance problems are best managed by early identification and intervention.

The School Education Act 1999 requires compulsory aged students to attend school, or participate in an educational program of a school, on the days on which the school is open for instruction, unless a written arrangement has been entered into for the student (sections 23, 26).

Since 2008, education has been compulsory for students from the beginning of the school year they turn 6 years 6 months, until the end of the year in which they turn 17.

The school principal is responsible for the accurate recording and rigorous monitoring of all students’ attendance. The principal will implement appropriate strategies to restore student attendance if there is any cause for concern.

Whole school planning for the full participation of all students can often help prevent attendance difficulties. Identifying attendance problems as they occur and intervening early gives the best outcomes.

Legal background:

School attendance is compulsory for all students in Tasmania between the ages of five and the end of the year in which the student turns seventeen. It is the responsibility of both schools and parents to ensure that students enrolled in schools attend regularly.
Education Act 1994 – Sect 6

“6. Attendance

(1) A parent of a school-aged child must ensure that the child –
(a) attends the school each day as required by the principal; or
(b) participates in an individual educational program; or
(c) receives home education; or
(d) attends at the Academy or the Polytechnic each day as required if the child is exempted under section 5 from the requirement to be enrolled at a school subject to a condition that the child attend or be enrolled at either the Academy or the Polytechnic.

Penalty:
Fine not exceeding 10 penalty units and a daily fine not exceeding 2 penalty units.

(2) A school-aged child who is not provided with home education is to attend a school during the whole of a school day unless the child is participating in an individual educational program or is exempted or excused under this Part.

(3) A principal, a College principal and the Polytechnic executive officer must ensure that a register is kept recording the daily attendance or absence of each school-aged child.”

Aim:

It is the intention of this policy to provide guidelines to:

• Ensure that attendance at school is a regular and ongoing part of life for all students enrolled at Larmenier School thus enabling them to maximise their learning opportunities.

• To implement a process that can assist in improving the attendance are retention of students.

• Standardize procedures in an area that is of key importance in improving student outcomes.

• Build a consistent process that can provide sufficient evidence in court of law or the prosecution of parents.

• Provide guidelines for the roles of school staff in relation to non-attendance.

Attendance:

Once a student is enrolled at Larmenier School:

• The parent/carer of that student must ensure that the student attends school each day as required.
• The Principal must ensure that a register of absences is kept.
• If a student is absent and no notification has been received by 9.30am, the school office then calls the parent/carer to ascertain the reason for the absence.
• If absence continues for no valid reason, the Principal then contacts the parents/carers to discuss the continuing absences and to try to resolve issues to the satisfaction of all parties.

• If the absences continues and the parents/carers are aware of their obligations under the Education Act, then parents will be informed that further actions will be taken should obligations be further ignored. Procedures in this case will follow the agreed protocols issued by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office. The Principal will inform the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and will follow legal instructions given from the Office.

Prosecution:

Prosecution of a parent for a child's non-attendance should only be an option where all other strategies to improve attendance have failed.

However, prosecution for non-attendance may be instigated in the educational interests of a child. If this occurs it is important for a magistrate to be provided with evidence that shows that due process has been followed and that the school has made every possible effort to work with the parent and child to ensure improved participation.

• All class teachers are issued with Class Attendance lists (which are legal documents) for the daily recording of absences.
• By 9.30am attendance lists of students absent, and reasons for absence if know, are recorded and sent in the message box to the office.
• If reason is unknown the office calls the student’s parents/carers and seeks further information.
• Records of all absenteees and reasons for absence are recorded and kept on file.

If the Principal believes that a child may have an infectious illness or infestation, they will contact the child’s parent/carer and request that the child not attend school. Parents/carers should be aware that the Principal has the right to require that a student not attend school if the Principal believes that the child has an infectious illness or infestation.

Refer to Parent Handbook for a complete list of Infectious diseases.

Further advice is available from the Director of public Health.

Processes for responding to Non-Attendance:

This policy outlines 8 levels of non-attendance and recommended actions at each level. The levels are provided as a guide. This allows the Principal to apply discretion in relation to the most appropriate school response and recognizes the individual nature of student and family situations. Exceptional circumstances such as direct parental referral/request for assistance, home/school relationship breakdown, critical incident, abuse issues, mental health issues or homelessness may have an impact on the actions of the school.
The need for due processes to be followed, particularly in relation to prosecution, however, should always be kept in mind.

The absences referred to in these guidelines and flowcharts are **unexplained and unauthorised** absences that are **non-consecutive** over **one term**.

**Definitions:**

**Unexplained absence** – The parent/carer has not notified the school as to the reason for their child’s absence.

**Unauthorised absence** – The parent/carer has provided a cause for the student absence that is deemed unreasonable. Or the parent has reported that the student has been sick or incapacitated beyond 5 days and a medical certificate has not been provided.

**Unreasonable cause** – This term refers to a reason for non-attendance provided by a parent/carer that the Principal in their professional capacity judges not to be in the educational interest of the student.

**Process for Non-Attendances:**

**LEVEL ONE** – Unexplained /unauthorized absence

**LEVEL TWO** – Three unexplained/ unauthorized days absences

**LEVEL THREE** – Five days unexplained/ unauthorized absences

**LEVEL FOUR** – Ten days unexplained/ unauthorized absences

**LEVEL FIVE** – Fifteen days unexplained/ unauthorized absence

**LEVEL SIX** – Twenty days unexplained/ unauthorized absences

**LEVEL SEVEN** – Ongoing failure on part of parent/carer to ensure attendance

**LEVEL EIGHT** - Prosecution
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