
ATTENDANCE POLICY

All children should be enrolled at school and attend every school day. Not only is this required by legislation but research is clear that there is a direct correlation between attendance and an individual's future life opportunities. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure a student attends school, and Hillbrook is committed to ensuring the welfare and wellbeing of all students by working with parents in this process. The school is also committed to ensuring a school climate where students feel safe, respected and valued.

1.0 Purpose

This policy is intended to provide guidelines for appropriate responses to concerns about student attendance, including procedures for monitoring attendance, communicating with parents and implementing strategies to improve regular school attendance.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff and parents. It covers all school days including school organised events and activities.

3.0 Relevant Legislation

In Queensland, the law requires parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age and compulsory participation age are enrolled at school and attend school for the educational program on every school day. This is unless the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse (see 4.8).

- 3.1 *Education (General Provisions) Act (Qld). 2006.*
- 3.2 *Education (General Provisions) Regulation (Qld). 2017.*
- 3.3 *Family Responsibilities Commission Act (Qld). 2008.*
- 3.4 *Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act (Qld). 2001.*

4.0 Definitions

- 4.1 **Parent** – A *parent*, of a child, is the child's mother or father, or a person who exercises parental responsibility for the child. However, a person standing in the place of a parent of a child on a temporary basis is not a parent of the child.
- 4.2 **Compulsory school age** - A child is of *compulsory school age* if the child is at least 6 years and 6 months, and less than 16 years.

- 4.3 **Obligation of parent regarding compulsory schooling** - Each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age must ensure the child is enrolled at a school; and ensure the child attends the school, on every school day, for the educational program in which the child is enrolled, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.
- 4.4 **Compulsory participation phase** - A young person's *compulsory participation phase* starts when they stop being of compulsory school age (i.e. turns 16 or completes Year 10 whichever comes first) and ends when the person:
- gains a Senior Certificate, Certificate III or Certificate IV, or
 - has participated in eligible options for 2 years after the person stopped being of compulsory school age, or
 - turns 17.
- 4.5 **Obligation of parent to ensure participation** - Each parent of a young person in the compulsory participation phase must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.
- For students in Senior Years, it is important to note that the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) policy on Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments (AARA) states that students in the Senior Years are **not** eligible for AARA for matters of the student's or parent's/carer's own choosing (e.g. family holidays).
- 4.6 **School Refusal** - when poor attendance is related to worries or concerns that the child or young person has about going to school.
- 4.7 **Truancy** - children being absent from school without permission from the school or parents.
- 4.8 **Reasonable Excuse** - absences where the excuse provided is deemed reasonable by the Principal.
- 4.9 **Unexplained Absence** - when no explanation for a student absence has been offered by the parent/guardian.
- 4.10 **Unauthorised Absence** - when the explanation for a student absence that is offered by a parent is deemed by the Principal as not being a reasonable excuse.

5.0 Procedures

- 5.1 School attendance is recorded each morning by the **Home Teacher** and same day absences are followed up by the **Student Services Officer**.
- 5.2 Attendance is also marked in every class throughout the day by the **Classroom Teacher**.

- 5.3 When a student is away for 3 consecutive days, the **Home Teacher** contacts the parents to offer support and assist with communication to class teachers.
- 5.4 After more than 10 days absent (either consecutive or non-consecutive) in a term without appropriate documentation, or where there is a persistent pattern of unexplained absences or absences without reasonable excuses, the **Home Teacher** will contact parents to discuss concerns and request acceptable documentation be provided.

Absenteeism due to holiday or family commitments require prior approval from a member of the **School Leadership Team**

- 5.5 When absences raise concerns about truancy or school refusal, the **Home Teacher** notifies the **Year Coordinator, Head of Student Wellbeing** and **School Counsellors**. Parents are contacted by the **Year Coordinator** and a meeting is requested to negotiate a plan of action.

It is expected that the family will have engaged an external mental health professional to case manage the student and guide the school in their response. This professional will need to be able to liaise with the school.

The plan of action may include, but is not limited to:

- A modified timetable
- Shortened days
- Support during the school day from Counsellors or Enrichment staff
- Adjustments to assessments

During this time, students and parents will be offered continued access to the school's online learning system as well as email and telephone contact with Teachers, Year Coordinators and the School Counsellors.

Students and parents will be advised that the school is registered to deliver a face-to-face learning program which does not include a stand-alone comprehensive online program. Where a student requires full-time online educational support, this should be sought through the Brisbane School of Distance Education. The school is willing to assist parents with this process if necessary.

- 5.6 Following the implementation of a mutually agreed action plan, the **Student Services Officer** and the **Home Teacher** will monitor attendance. They will notify the **Year Coordinator** of ongoing absences. Changes to attendance will be expected within one week of the agreed modification.
- 5.7 After one month, if the student has not attended school on a full-time basis, or has not attended school on a mutually agreed modified basis, the **Principal** will notify the parents in writing of the school's intention to review their enrolment.
- 5.8 Where a parent renegotiates a student's return to school at this time, the management process will revert to 4.5.

If after one term of partial attendance to school, the student has not made an improvement in their attendance, the student and their parents will meet with the **Head of Student Wellbeing** and a member of the **School Leadership Team** to determine if it is in the best interests of the student to maintain enrolment for the next term. At this stage, the Department of Education will be notified.

5.9 If attendance concerns continue over two terms or more the **Head of Student Wellbeing** will contact the parents to explain that progression to the next year level may not be possible at the end of the school year. A member of the **SLT** and the **Head of Student Wellbeing** meet with parents.

5.10 It is acknowledged that there may be times where attendance is not possible. If extended periods of continuous absence occur of over two weeks' duration, exemption from attendance must be sought through the **Principal**.

Documentation of exemption will include the following:

- a. the day the exemption is granted
- b. the name of the student
- c. the day the exemption expires
- d. any conditions
- e. any other exemptions for the student that year
- f. for students in the compulsory participation phase only – whether it is a full or partial exemption and, if it is partial, the extent to which the person is excused from participation.

5.11 For absences totalling in excess of 110 days in a school year, exemption cannot be granted by the Principal and the **Head of Student Wellbeing** will be required to lodge an application for exemption with the **Department of Education**.

6.0 Related Documents

Department of Education and Training. *Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State Schools*.

St Aidan's Anglican Girls School Attendance Policy.

Gordon, Michael. (2018). *Managing School Refusal*.

Education (General Provisions) Act (Qld). 2006

Queensland Government Department of Education. (2018). *School Absenteeism and Student Attendance*.

School of Education and ISSR the University of Queensland. (2017). *Making Every Day Count: Effective Strategies to Improve Student Attendance in Queensland state schools*.

Kearney, Christopher A. (2008). School Absenteeism and School Refusal Behavior in Youth: A Contemporary Review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(3), 451-471.

<http://www.ucc.ie/archive/pub/medstud/uccmed/Malone%20cp4003/school%20refusal.pdf>

Heyne, D., King, N. J., Tonge, B. J., & Cooper, H. (2001). School Refusal: Epidemiology and Management. *Paediatric Drugs*, 3(10), 719-732.

King, N. J., & Bernstein, G. A. (2001). School Refusal in Children and Adolescents: A Review of the Past 10 Years. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*, 40(2), 197- 205.