Student Attendance Policy

Background

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

It is crucial that children develop habits of regular school attendance from an early age. International studies have found a strong correlation between students learning, longer-term life outcomes, attendance at school and appropriate participation in education programs.

Poor patterns of attendance place students at risk of not achieving their educational, social and psychological potential and render them disadvantaged in the quality of choices they are able to make in later life situations.

At Huntingdale Primary School 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.

Help for non-English Speakers.
If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office.

Purpose

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 Huntingdale Primary School has in place to
    - Support, monitor and maintain student attendance.
    - Record, monitor and follow up student absences.
- Maximise learning opportunities by ensuring absenteeism of students is kept to a minimum at Huntingdale Primary School.
- Comply with the Department of Education and Training (DE) policies and procedures.
- Maintain the DE values of leadership, respect, responsiveness, human rights, integrity, impartiality and accountability.

`Engaging Minds Together` 心をひとつに

Implementation

- The principal has the overall responsibility of implementing this policy, but may delegate certain roles to suitably qualified staff.
- This policy applies to all students at Huntingdale Primary School.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of Huntingdale Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

Attendance at school setting

- All students must attend school at all times when the school is open for instruction.
- If a student requires exemption from school attendance for a longer period of time (e.g. short term entertainment industry employment, for example acting) or a reduction in school attendance hours, this must be approved by the Regional Director. The following link outlines exemption categories and processes:
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/exemption-school-attendance-and-enrolment/policy
- Students do not have to attend school if participating in an agreed Home Schooling or Distance Education arrangement. The following links outlines the Home-Schooling registration process:
  https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/home-schooling-and-partial-enrolments/policy

Supporting and promoting attendance

- Huntingdale Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.
- Our school also promotes student attendance by giving monthly class awards for excellent attendance and providing parents with attendance update newsletters.

Recording attendance

- Huntingdale Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:
  o Meet legislative requirements
  o Discharge Huntingdale's 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 GradeXpert. A paper copy of the roll will also be available in the classroom folder in case of a computer malfunction or power outage.
- Students who are late must go to the Office to receive a blue slip to give to their classroom teacher. The Office Manager will access GradeXpert to ensure the child's attendance has been marked correctly.
- If students are in attendance at a school approved activity they will be recorded as being present.
- Any child who needs to leave the school early must come to the office to wait for their parents to sign them out using the online system.

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 the School of absences through Operoo.
- 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, the school will notify parents by SMS. The school will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

- If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.
- The 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 Huntingdale 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 '**unexplained 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
    - 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 (see below)

- 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 explained.

Family Holidays
- The school understands there are benefits of family travel and holidays. They can provide educational experiences beyond the classroom e.g. visiting cultural monuments, going to school overseas etc.
- However multiple/regular holidays can interrupt the continuity of learning/social relationships and have a negative impact on a student. Therefore, this needs to be closely monitored.
- Parents must give at least a week's notice of a family holiday for it to be approved by the principal. If notice is not given, the absence may be categorized as 'unapproved'.
- If a child is absent for a week or more on holiday, a Student Absence Learning Plan will be implemented. (Appendix 1)
- The parents must meet with either the Assistant Principal, Principal or classroom teacher to devise the plan before the holiday is taken.
- When the child resumes school, the family must meet with the teacher to discuss the learning needs of the child e.g. areas to focus on, is there a need for an IEP etc.

Monitoring Attendance
- Each month the Office Manager will download CASES Reports on student attendance and highlight reasons for absences for the Leadership Team to peruse.
- Any concerns about student attendance will be raised with the classroom teacher, who will make contact with the parents.

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 consecutively, Huntingdale 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 wellbeing staff or the Assistant Principal.

- 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.

International Students
- There are special attendance requirements for international students.
- Please see the link below for information
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/international-student-program/guidance/supporting-students-learning-and-engagement-section-7

Referral to School Attendance Officer
- If Huntingdale 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 North Eastern Victoria 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:
        - 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.

Roles and Responsibilities in School Attendance
At Huntingdale Primary School it is recognised that the school, teachers, parents, administration staff and students have a role in ensuring maximum student attendance and have the following responsibilities:

School

The school will:

- Develop policies and procedures to support student attendance.
- Maintain attendance records. (e.g. CASES21, GradeXpert)
- Ensure attendance data forms part of each child's half year and end of year progress reports to parents.
- Communicate clearly to parents attendance expectations (including being punctual to school) in the newsletter.
- Sending out DE brochures about attendance
- Awarding classes with low absences and late arrivals at assembly.

Administration Staff

Administration staff will:

- Monitor late arrivals at school and enter this data on GradeXpert.
- Notify parents as soon as possible on the day of their child's unexplained absence.
- Record any notifications of student absence via the school email onto GradeXpert.
- Generate GradeXpert absence letters each week to ask parents/guardians to explain absences that have not been reported to the school.
- Archive all student absence notes.
- Monitor that all attendance data has been exported into the CASES21 system.
- Print monthly attendance reports for the Leadership Team.

Teachers

Classroom teachers will:

- Mark the attendance roll by 9.10am and 2.40pm each day using GradeXpert.
- Ensure that student absences are recorded using the correct codes.
- Ensure the roll is available in the classroom for casual replacement teachers to use in the event of teacher absence.
- Promote the importance of attendance in their grade.
- Closely monitor student attendance in their grade.
- Acknowledge students with excellent attendance.
- Follow up with parents (e.g. phone call) on students who have been absent for more than 3 days.
- Pass on absent notes to administration staff to be archived.
- Report to the Principal/Assistant Principal concerns about a student's high absenteeism.
- Actively participate in support group meetings for students with high absenteeism.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians must:

- Enrol a child of compulsory school-age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction or seek enrolment for approved tuition.
- Ensure their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicate openly with the school and provide valid explanations for any absence.
- 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.
- Use Operoo to report absences. (NOT See Saw)
- Inform the school ahead of time of planned absences (e.g. family holiday) either using Operoo, an email or a note to the office.

- Encourage their child to attend school and outline the benefits in doing so.
- Communicate with relevant staff about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Students

Students should:
- Attend school every day.
- Inform their teacher/parents of any issues which may compromise their attendance at school.

Information & Resources
- School Attendance Guidelines
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: Attendance

Evaluation

CASES21 enrolment data, Grade Xpert data and Attendance trends in Panorama will be used to monitor this policy.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's 3 year cycle or as needed to comply with DE policy changes.

Policy Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year cycle or as needed to comply with DE policy changes.

Policy reviews	July 2018 June 2021- Principal & Office Manager December 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	December 2026

Student Absence Learning Plan

Student name:	Class:	Teachers:
Reason for absence:		

Will the student be attending school overseas? ☐YES ☐NO

What dates will the child attend?

What is the name of the school?

Date of last day of school:	Date of return to school:

Activities for the student to undertake while away from school:

Resources the student may find useful:

Agreed role of parents/carers in supporting the absence learning program:

Contact details for the student to stay in touch: See Saw	**School phone number: +613 9544 2318**
School contact person:	**School email address:**
Signature of parent/carer:	huntingdale.ps@education.vic.gov.au
	Signature of principal: