

# NARRE WARREN NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY



### RATIONALE

Narre Warren North Primary School is committed to child safety and establishing and maintaining child safe and child friendly environments where all children are valued and feel safe. We have zero tolerance of child abuse.

By providing all school environments (this includes onsite, online activities and offsite for excursions, camps, etc. and outside of school activities) that are stimulating, safe, happy and positive, we foster the learning potential of our children.

Children of school age (5-17 years) residing in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

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.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is 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 Narre Warren North Primary School has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Narre Warren North Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Narre Warren North Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

### DEFINITION

*Parent* – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

### POLICY

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 both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Narre Warren North Primary School 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 in Narre Warren North Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Narre Warren North Primary School for particular activities.

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

Narre Warren North Primary School believes 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.

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 to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn.

Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Narre Warren North Primary School parents 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 will communicate with the relevant staff at Narre Warren North Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will 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**

Narre Warren North Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by the Ready to Learn program that is implemented across the school at the start of each school day.

### **Recording attendance**

Narre Warren North Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Narre Warren North Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by classroom teachers at the start of the school day and after lunch using Sentral.

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 must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Narre Warren North Primary School of absences by:

- Sending an email to their child's classroom teacher or to the school's email that provides an explanation of the reason for the absence.
- Telephoning the main Office with a follow up email or note.
- Providing a note or message on Sentral.
- Replying to the unexplained absence letter which is sent out fortnightly.
- Replying to the automated notification email regarding unexplained absences that is daily at 9.30am.
- Family holidays require a Prior Approval Note to be completed.

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, Narre Warren North Primary School will notify parents by automated notification email at 9.30am.

Narre Warren North Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable explanation** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Narre Warren North Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable explanation** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as an 'explained absence' using the appropriate codes. The school may require a medical certificate for an extended absence.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as Parent Choice Unauthorised.

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.
- school refusal, with partial absence due to a return to school plan
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance by completing the appropriate paperwork.

### **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 consecutive days without an explanation. After 2 consecutive days without explanation the teacher will email or phone the parent. After 3 consecutive days without explanation the Assistant

Principal is to contact the parents. If the teacher is concerned about the nature of the absence, they should consult the Assistant Principal. The Assistant Principal will monitor the frequency of absences.

Where appropriate Narre Warren North Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals 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 relevant Student Services Support Officers.

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**

If Narre Warren North 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 South Eastern Melbourne 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.

### **COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook
- Discussed at annual staff meetings
- Discussed at parent information night sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

### **MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)
- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)

## REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

Ratified by School Council: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Ratified by School Council: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Ratified by School Council: 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Policy last reviewed             | 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2024   |
| Consultation with School Council | 12 <sup>th</sup> August 2024 |
| Approved by                      | Principal                    |
| Next scheduled review date       | 2027                         |

## Attendance Strategy

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|----------------------------|--|
| Marking of attendance roll | Classroom teacher mark attendance roll before 9.15am and after 12.30pm every day<br>Office staff record lates and early leavers<br>Office to monitor absence codes   |
| Communication              | Parents notify classroom teacher and/or office of student absence in writing (via email or note) that provides an explanation of the reason for the absence.<br>Automated notification email sent to parents at 9.30am if students are absent.<br>Office follow up - send out to parents unexplained absence letter every fortnight for those unapproved.<br>Approval in writing sought for family holidays.<br>Number of absences/lates to be recorded and commented on in student reports.<br>Newsletter items each term to outline the importance of attendance and arriving to school on time. |
| Attendance process         | <b>Day 1 absence</b> – teacher has no parent communication. Teacher marks absence on Sentral.<br><b>Day 2 absence</b> - teacher has no communication from Absence 1. Teacher marks absence on Sentral. Teacher contacts the parent via phone. Record dialogue on Sentral.<br><b>Day 3 absence</b> - teacher has no communication, text or email from Absence 1 or 2. Teacher marks absence on Sentral. Teacher phone parent if no response send an email to parent.  |

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|---------------------|--|
|                     | <p>If teacher cannot contact parent (by 11.40am) teacher to let Wellbeing Coordinator/Assistant Principal know. Wellbeing coordinator/AP to contact the parent. Record dialogue on Sentral.</p> <p><b>Further absences:</b></p> <p>Discussion between teacher and leadership on next step, e.g.</p> <p>Parent student support group meeting to discuss concerns</p> <p>Student Attendance Plan developed</p> <p>Referral to School Attendance Officer</p> <p>Child First/Orange Door contacted</p>   |
| Lates/early leavers | <p>Identify students that are recorded being late more than 3 times in a week period and contact parents – email in the first instance. If there is not any improvement the teacher is to phone the parent. If lateness continues notify wellbeing coordinator who will organise a parent meeting.</p> <p>Ensure RTL activities are engaging to encourage arrival on time – classroom teachers.</p>  |
| Monitoring process  | <p>Check Sentral daily to monitor overall school absences – Assistant Principal</p> <p>Regularly generate report for attendance below 85% each fortnight to identify at risk students to see if there is an improvement– Assistant Principal</p> <p>Identify absence patterns of individual students at risk and follow up with families – Well being Coordinator</p> <p>Focus groups conducted with students to discuss student engagement, including those with poor attendance, to provide feedback to the school – SPAG (Student Principal Advisory Group)</p> <p>Ensure attendance is a fortnightly PLC agenda item to discuss any at risk students - PLC leaders</p> <p>Celebrate good attendance and <b>being at school on time</b> once a term – Principal/Assistant Principal</p> |
| Wellbeing concerns  | <p>Development of strategies in a return to school plan to enable students at risk to attend school; e.g. coming in early; meet a friend; part days, etc</p>   |