



POLICY

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Purpose

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17

Firbank Grammar is committed to ensuring the school, students and their parents/guardians comply with their legal obligations in relation to school attendance.

The school believes that high levels of school attendance are essential for learning. School participation is important as it 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 which set them up for further learning and participation in their community

Scope

The attendance policy sets out the principles and framework governing the school's behaviours and activities that enact the school's legal responsibilities and which support students in attending school.

This Policy applies to the whole school community including staff, parents and students, including students living in Firbank Grammar Schools Boarding House.

The school, in discharging its duty of care, is committed to ensuring explained and unexplained absence is communicated promptly and followed up with students and parents.



Definitions

Parent	The term 'parent' is defined in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 as 'a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides'
Enrolment Register	The enrolment register records the students admitted to the school. The school is required to maintain an enrolment register that is accurate, up-to-date and contains the information required by the minimum standard. The school is also required to implement processes and procedures to ensure the register is up to date. ¹ The enrolment register determines those students for whom attendance must be registered and monitored.
Compulsory School Age	Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at school or in registered home schooling. Attendance of all students enrolled at Firbank Grammar will be recorded regardless of their age.
Exemption from Attendance	Under certain limited conditions, parents may apply for an exemption from attendance
Attendance Register	The attendance register is the record of the attendance of all students. The school is required to record the attendance at the school of all enrolled students at least twice on each school day and to note any reason given for the absence of the student from the school.
Unexplained Absences	'Unexplained Absences' are defined as a students' non-attendance at the school in which they are enrolled, where no notification or explanation for the absence has been provided by parents prior to the commencing of the school day

School Roles and Responsibilities

School Board is responsible for endorsing this attendance policy.

Principal/Heads of Campus

The Principal and Heads of Campus are responsible for ensuring that the school complies with the [School's Guide to Attendance](#) as set out by Victorian Department of Education and which apply to all registered schools, including non-government schools.

The Principal and Heads of Campus are responsible for:

- developing strategies that ensure the culture of the school is one in which attendance is given high priority.
- developing strong partnerships with families so that the importance of school attendance is a shared commitment.
- Ensuring that an attendance register is maintained that accurately records student attendance twice per day (primary schools) student attendance in every class (secondary school).

¹ VRQA minimum standards.



- Defining what constitutes lateness and how that will be monitored.
- Implementing procedures to record the reason (if any) given by a parent for a child's absence and for determining if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.
- Using their discretion whilst following the guidelines as set out in the school's attendance procedures to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('explained absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexplained absence').
- Ensuring procedures are implemented so that parents are promptly informed of any absence, including absence from any school-approved activity.
- Ensuring procedures are in place to follow up all unexplained absences.
- Ensuring accurate and comprehensive records are kept of contacts and attempted contacts between the school and parents following an unexplained absence.
- Developing strategies to respond to poor attendance, persistent absenteeism and school refusal.
- Ensuring the school has clear requirements, guidelines and procedures relating to long, frequent or repeated family holidays.
- Ensuring school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns on a school, class and individual basis.
- Advising parents when an exemption from attendance may be required and supporting parents to apply for the exemption.
- Ensuring the school reports student attendance to the school community at least once a year.

Staff

Teaching staff, including Casual Relief Teaching staff, and staff leading school-approved activities are responsible for keeping accurate and timely attendance records following the school's procedures. It is a legal requirement for staff to mark the roll during the first 10 minutes of every lesson and update the roll during the lesson if a student is late to class for a legitimate reason.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents/carers must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and always ensure the child attends school when the school is open for instruction.

Parents should promptly inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- determine if the child's absence is in line with school policy explained or unexplained absence outlines
- determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported
- record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day

Where possible, parents should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences.

To ensure a child's education and wellbeing are supported, parents are encouraged to communicate openly with the school where a child has an ongoing medical condition that may result in ongoing absences or medical appointments during school hours.

Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless there is an approved exemption or absence from school attendance for the student.

Daily Attendance Recording

The school keeps and retains accurate records of school attendance that comply with its regulatory requirements.

The school must monitor the daily attendance of each student, identify absences of a student from school including classes, follow up any unexplained absences from school or from classes, notify parents regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance and record any unsatisfactory school or class attendance on the student's file.

The [School's Guide to Attendance](#) state that attendances and absences must be recorded on a half-day basis (primary schools) and for every class (secondary schools) and the reason given for the absence of the student from the school must be noted.

A student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.

Heads of Campus can use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('explained absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexplained absence').

The VCAA states that the school must determine attendance requirements for VCE students. The expectation of Firbank Grammar School is that VCE students attend a minimum of 80% of the total calendared attendance.

Absences

Parents are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the School must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The School must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Exemption to attend

The Principal may authorise an exemption to attend school and provide written approval to alter the student's requirement for attendance to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.

Exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in certain circumstances, where the student:

- is a child who turns 6 (compulsory school age) while attending kindergarten



- will be participating in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full-time basis
- is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry.

An exemption from school attendance and enrolment may also be granted where leaving school is in the best interests of the student.

All applications for exemptions are considered on a case-by-case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision, the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the student's educational progress, wellbeing and development are also considered.

Note: No exemption is required if a student is not of compulsory school age (6 to 17 years of age).

A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.

Exemptions can only be authorised by the principal.

For information on the various school attendance and enrolment exemption categories, and the application and approval process required for each exemption category, refer to the Guidance tab.

For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/carer must promptly provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. The school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic). Schools must refer to the Guidelines for guidance on what constitutes a 'reasonable excuse'.

Managing Absences

The Head of Campus or Principal can consider the excuse given for an absence and use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('explained absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexplained absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves the Principal/Head of Campus:

- considering a request from a parent to approve an absence
- exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse or not excuse the absence
- notifying the parent if the absences have not been explained.

In exercising their discretion, the Principal/Head of Campus should take the following considerations into account:

- whether the absence has a reasonable excuse, or is entitled to an exemption, under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)



- whether the student should do some learning activities during the absence
- whether or not the length of absence will affect the student's learning
- whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so, how recently and how many times
- whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before
- cultural factors or details of the student and family's circumstances
- the implications for not approving the absence
- whether an exemption would be appropriate

In general, it is expected that the Principal/Heads of Campus would excuse absences for:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not 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
- cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
- family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:

- approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy
- the student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- a family holiday where the school has not been advised in advance
- the parent has provided no explanation for the absences.

Following up Unexplained Absences

Most absences will be explained and require no further follow up. However, where an unexplained absence is identified the school will:

- Make all reasonable attempts to contact the parents/guardians that morning.
- If contact cannot be made with the parents/guardians, the school will attempt to communicate with emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file.
- Where there is no response and there are concerns for the safety and welfare of the student contact may be made with Victoria Police (000).

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, the school will involve the parents and the student as appropriate in developing strategies to improve attendance.

Parents will be informed that if a student has repeated absences without a reasonable excuse or explanation, the parent and student may be required to meet with the Head of Campus to establish an attendance improvement strategy.

Record Keeping

All processes and practices pertaining to the management of records and recordkeeping at Firbank must meet the standards as set out in the Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Non-Government Schools and the Public Records Office Victoria.

Student attendance and absence records such as rolls and registers, attendance databases, notices of non-attendances, and sign in/out registers will be retained:

- Permanently - for any students of Indigenous origin or in out of home care (including the schools boarding house)
- 75 Years from date of birth - for all other students

Records of enrolment and attendance are required for annual data returns for the Australian Government non-government schools and the Victorian school **census** under Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s.77).

The Annual Report to the School Community must include a report on student attendance.

Relevant Legislation and Guidelines

[Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)](#)

[Education and Training Reform Regulations \(2007\)](#)

[Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority \(VRQA\) Minimum Standards](#)

[School's Guide to Attendance](#)

[Australian Education Regulation 2013](#)

Related Policies

Duty of Care Policy

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Enrolment Policy

Student Wellbeing Policy

Record Management Policy

Approval

Policy Issue date	June 2024
Policy Owner	Heads of Campus
Document updated by	Risk and Compliance
Document reviewed by	Head of Sandringham Campus
Document approved/endorsed by	Board
Next Review date	June 2028



Help for non-English speakers.
If you need help to understand this policy,
please contact us at
enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au

The school community may provide feedback on this document by emailing: enquiries@firbank.vic.edu.au