

# ATTENDANCE POLICY



## Tea Tree Gully Primary School

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### Rationale

At Tea Tree Gully Primary School, we are committed to working with students and families to continually improve our attendance rate.

Research shows that attendance at school all day and every day positively affects learning, wellbeing, employment and life outcomes for children and young people. Learning is cumulative and it is disrupted if students often miss school.

### School Attendance and the Law

Attendance at school is compulsory. The Education and Children's Services Act 2019 states that all children must attend school from 6 until they turn 17. This could be in a school or an approved learning program.

Parents or legal guardians (carers) can be prosecuted if they do not make sure their child goes to school. This can mean being fined or getting a criminal conviction.

### The Department's Attendance Policy

The South Australian Department for Education's [Attendance Policy](#) guides the responsibilities of the whole school community to make sure that children and young people attend school. This includes school staff, parents, carers and students.

Schools work with their community to develop positive attendance habits. This starts from the earliest years. They do this when they provide a safe, inclusive and culturally respectful environment. They use effective and consistent local practices to monitor and manage absences.

### Students at Risk from Missing School

Students can be away from school for many reasons. Schools use categories to identify children and young people at risk. We make sure that appropriate follow up and support is provided.

- **habitual non-attendance:** a student has 5 to 9 days absent in a term explained or unexplained
- **chronic non-attendance:** a student has 10 or more days absent in a term explained or unexplained

### Prescribed Reasons for Non-Attendance

Under the Education and Children's Services Act 2019, the following are prescribed reasons for non-attendance at school by children and young people:

- the child was prevented from attending due to sickness
- the child had an infectious or contagious condition
- the child was prevented from attending due to an unavoidable or sufficient reason

### How we Implement the Department's Attendance Policy

At Tea Tree Gully Primary School, our attendance practices align with the Department's 'Attendance Policy.'

We support student attendance when we:

- promote the importance of education from the earliest years of life and throughout school
- assess patterns of non-attendance and develop ways to address this
- actively engage and include all children, young people and their families
- provide support to address the barriers to attendance, learning and wellbeing
- monitor attendance to make sure progress is documented and supports are in place
- evaluate the need for further or ongoing support and referral for additional support

## Tea Tree Gully Primary School's Attendance Expectations

A parent or carer must provide an explanation if their child is absent. If late or needing to leave early, all students must sign in or out via the Front Office.

### Attendance Responsibilities

Everyone has a role to make sure students attend school all day, every day.

#### Students

- attend school every day the school is open, unless they are ill or have an approved exemption
- arrive at school and to all lessons and activities on time
- participate positively in all learning activities
- report to Front Office if they arrive late or leave early

#### Parents and Carers

- make sure their child attends school every day the school is open, unless they are ill or have an approved exemption
- be responsible for their child's travel to and from school
- make sure their child arrives at school on time
- provide their child's school with up-to-date contact details
- provide a reason to the school if their child is absent, late or leaving early (the same day if possible)
- provide a medical certificate or written explanation if their child is ill for 3 or more days in a row
- make appointments outside of school hours, if possible. For example, dentists or National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers.
- monitor their child's attendance and classwork
- where appropriate, apply for an exemption when they wish to take their child out of school, such as for a family holiday
- work with the school on intervention strategies to improve attendance

#### School Staff

- support departmental requirements and agreed upon attendance improvement processes for the school
- accurately record each absence, late arrival or early departure with the appropriate code
- send daily 'unexplained' absence notifications via SMS/Email
- contact parents or carers if there is no explanation for an absence after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, or after a pattern of absences
- document contact with parents and carers about absences, including attempts to contact
- request a medical certificate from parents or carers if needed
- consult with the local Student Support Services if needed (for example, Social Work, Truancy)
- work collaboratively with department staff and other relevant agencies to address attendance
- make notifications about chronic non-attendance (via the Child Abuse Report Line – eCARL) guided by Responding to Abuse and Neglect (RAN) training and Mandatory Reporting Guide
- make sure the list of absences/late arrivals are sent to Front Office each day, as early as possible
- implement attendance improvement plans as required

#### School Leaders

- make sure all school staff are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the attendance of children and young people
- work with staff and the school community to develop and implement their attendance improvement plan
- make sure all parents and carers are aware of attendance expectations, policies and procedures
- implement procedures to follow up non-attendance and ensure interventions are documented
- ensure attendance records are maintained in EMS
- monitor student attendance to identify habitual and chronic non-attenders so early, timely and appropriate supports can be put in place
- work collaboratively with department staff and other relevant agencies to address attendance
- review whole-school system procedures to ensure a continuous improvement cycle for the school community

## Authorisation of Exemptions

In some circumstances, the Principal has authority to approve an exemption from school. This can be for up to 1 month. It can also be for up to 12 months for a family holiday.

Before asking for an exemption, families should talk to the Principal. Students must attend school until an exemption is approved.

Our school requires an exemption for absences more than 3 school days in a row. This does not include illness. Parents or carers must apply in writing. The Principal will advise them in writing of their decision. A copy is kept in the student record folder. Forms are available from the Front Office.

Exemptions of more than 1 month (excluding holidays) must be approved by the Department's central office. Note: Exemptions are counted as student absences from school.

## Mandatory notifications to the child abuse report line (CARL) are made by staff as required by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, for concerns regarding the following:

- the student is persistently absent with no satisfactory explanation
- multiple interventions have been attempted with the student and family
- the non-attendance has continued despite the intervention attempts
- the child's education is being seriously interrupted by patterns of non-attendance that are enduring or ongoing in nature (noting that an enduring pattern does not require extended consecutive absence)

## Ways for parents/carers to communicate student absence to the school:

- phone **8264 2677** – Office hours are 8:30am to 4:00pm weekdays
- in person: provide details to the Front Office or to the class teacher
- in writing:
  - via Seesaw App
  - email: [dl.0432.info@schools.sa.edu.au](mailto:dl.0432.info@schools.sa.edu.au)
  - write a note in the student's diary or communication book
  - send a signed and dated note/letter with a sibling/family member/friend to the Front Office or classroom teacher

Students will:

- sign in at the office if arriving at school after 8:55am and obtain a 'late slip' from the Front Office staff. The student then proceeds to class and gives the late slip to the class teacher

Parents will:

- ensure children are not dropped at school until 8:35am unless they are attending Before School Hours Care
- advise the school prior to the start of the school day if their child/ren are going to be absent. A certificate from a qualified medical practitioner may be required for student absences for three consecutive days or more
- report to the Front Office in a situation of early departure
- ensure that the Principal is informed of any cases of temporary absences of up to 12 months (eg. Overseas/Interstate holidays etc.) via the Application for Exemption from the School Form (ED 175), available from the Front Office

Staff will:

- ensure emergency placement in OSHC will be provided in the event that the student/s are unable to be picked up by 3:20pm, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Front Office. The cost will be covered at the family's expense
- sound the siren at 8.55am to signify the start of the school day
- call the roll between 8:55am – 9:00am
- mark students as an unexplained absent when the roll is called if the school has not received notification as to the reason for the absence. This will be adjusted if parents/carers provide information at a later time.
- each day the roll book is submitted electronically by 9:15am
- record the details of each child's attendance (absence, lateness, early departure) daily in EMS
- Parents/carers will be notified daily, by SMS/Email, of any unexplained absences
- Class teachers and Front Office staff will bring persistent lateness/early departures and absenteeism to the notice of Leadership for action
- contact the parents following three consecutive days of unexplained absence and if needed, an attendance plan and support structures to improve attendance will be actioned. Ongoing attendance concerns may require referral to Support Services

**Absenteeism Flow Chart:**

