

Mawson Lakes School – Attendance Policy



Reviewed and Ratified by Governing Council: 9 September 2025
(Principal: Tammy Lambden, GC Chairperson: Aaron Chirakis)

'To empower compassionate, diverse learners to positively impact the world'

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 for any reason.
- **Chronic non-attendance:** a student has 10 or more days absent in a term for any reason.

How we implement the department's attendance policy

At Mawson Lakes 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.

We use data to create our attendance improvement plans. This is in partnership with our community. Our plan includes the actions we will take to make sure all students can attend school.

Mawson Lakes School's attendance expectations

School starts at 8.40am each day and finishes at 3.00pm.

A parent or carer bringing students late or taking them out early must provide an explanation and sign in/out at the front office. Late arrival and early departure cards are given to the classroom teacher to keep a record that students have been signed in/out at 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 the front office if they arrive late or leave early. A parent or carer might be contacted. (Note: a student's age and circumstances affect the level of responsibility.)

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, between 8.15am and 8.40am.
- Provide school with up-to-date contact details.
- Provide an explanation 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.

Teachers and leadership team

- Make sure all parents and carers are aware of attendance expectations, policies and procedures.
- Accurately record each absence, late arrival or early departure with the appropriate code.
- Contact parents or carers if there is no explanation for an absence, or a pattern of absences.
- Document contact with parents and carers about absences, including attempts to contact via notes/documents on EMS.
- Request a medical certificate from parents or carers if needed.
- Consult with the local Student Support Services if needed. For example Social Work, Truancy.
- Make notifications about chronic non-attendance (via the Child Abuse Report Line – [CARL](#)) guided by Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care ([RRHAN](#)) training and the [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#).
- Upload the list of absences via EMS to the front office each day as early as possible.
- Contact the parent or carer on the day a child is absent if there is no explanation provided, via ClassDojo in the first instance. After 3 days of unexplained absence, formally contact parents via ClassDojo, email or directly by phone (see attendance and lateness communication templates).

Authorisation of exemptions

In some circumstances, the principal has authority to approve an exemption from school. This can be for periods of 1 month up to and including 12 months. Exemptions of more than 1 month (not holidays) must be approved by the department's central office.

Before asking for an exemption, families should talk to a site leader. Students must attend school until an exemption is approved.

- Absences between 3 days and 1 month (term time only) - notify the Principal in writing (no exemption form is required)
- Absences between 1 month and 12 months - complete the Exemption Form and submit the request with travel itinerary to the Principal. Forms are available from the front office. The principal/delegate will advise families in writing of the decision. A copy is kept in the student record folder.
- Absences over 12 months please contact the Principal for further discussions.

Note: Exemptions are counted as student absences from school.