



# Attendance Policy Implementation

## Rationale

Regular attendance at school is essential for students to achieve quality life outcomes. Schools, in partnership with parents are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Parents of children of compulsory school age are responsible for ensuring their child attends school every day. In this policy implementation document, the term 'parent' or 'parents' includes any person or persons having the custody or care of a child.

## School procedures and expectations

Attendance is everyone's business. At Les Powell School, it is every staff's responsibility to support parents by monitoring student attendance and helping to address attendance issues when they emerge. In order to ensure that as a school community we meet our obligations under the department's policy and the Student Attendance in Government Schools Procedures

(<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policylibrary/policies/school-attendance-policy>), the following are to be sustained:

**An informed school community:** Communication to parent in relation to compulsory school attendance is outlined in school information booklets and orientation programs. Yearly reminders are provided through school newsletters and information sheets (Appendix 1) are available through the school's website. Parents are provided with copies of the Student Absence Note Booklet (Appendix 2), at the start of each school year or as required. This will include translated formats for parents as required.

Staffs are informed of their responsibility throughout the year at staff meetings and information is provided to all new staff through the school's staff orientation package.

**Accurate record keeping:** Teachers mark class rolls daily before 10am using the School Bytes electronic platform (see below attendance of register codes). Absence notes should be signed and dated by the teacher when received and sent to the office. Office staff will enter the details into School Bytes.

If an absent note is not received with the student when returning to school, it is the teacher's responsibility to obtain a reason for the student's absence by phoning the parents. Reasons for absences given verbally or over the phone by parents are to be recorded using the school's 'phone in absence slip' (Appendix 3). The completed slip should then be forwarded to the office staff, who will update information on School Bytes.

After 2 days of absence, the class teacher will call the parent. When a student is away for more than 2 days without an explanation from the parent, or an attendance pattern of concern emerges, a referral to the school learning and support team will be

activated to follow up procedures, according to the department's attendance policy. This may include a referral to the home school liaison program.

Office staff will generate letters through School Bytes to remind parents of days that their child has been absent and parent feedback is pending (Appendix 4). This will occur once a term or as deemed necessary by the school learning and support team.

**Records are maintained in an accurate format using the correct codes:**

<b>Attendance Register Codes</b> Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence	
<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>A</b>	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.
<b>S</b>	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a medical certificate is provided or</li><li>- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation.</li></ul> Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.
<b>L</b>	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- misadventure or unforeseen event</li><li>- participation in special events not related to the school</li><li>- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member</li><li>- attendance at funerals</li><li>- travel in Australia and overseas</li><li>- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.</li></ul>
<b>E</b>	The student was suspended from school

**Leaving early/late arrival**

Students going home during school hours should be collected by an adult at the front office. Should the adult collecting the student, not be the students' parent, the adult must be identified in the school records as having the parent's permission to pick up their child.

A note signed by the parent will be kept as a record of the early pick up (Appendix 4). All partial absences are recorded in School Bytes by school office staff. Parents are to wait at the office while the teacher or SLSO brings the student to the office.

When student arrives late for school, parents are to sign in the student at the front office and provide a reason for being late (Appendix 5).

**Students travel or holidays taken during the school term**

From the beginning of 2015 as aligned with department policy, family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the 'Exemption from School – Procedures'. Travel and holidays taken by students outside of school vacation periods will now be included as absences. A 'Certificate of Exemption' can no longer be granted for this purpose. Families are encouraged to holiday or travel during school vacations.

Where the principal considers that the travel is appropriate during the school term, the principal will issue the parent with an 'Application for Extended Leave – Travel' (Appendix 6), for completion and inform the parent that if the application is accepted, the absences will be recorded as 'L' and a 'Certificate of Extended Leave – Holiday' will be issued.

If the principal does not believe the absence is in the student's best interests and does not accept the reason provided, the absence will be recorded as 'A' and a 'Certificate of Extended Leave – Holiday' will not be issued.

**Exemption from school**

As stated in the 'Exemption from School - Procedure: School Attendance Policy' PD 2005 0259, 2015 ( [https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associateddocuments/exempt\\_gui.pdf](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associateddocuments/exempt_gui.pdf) ), students may be exempt from being enrolled at and attending school if the Minister or delegate is satisfied that conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable that a Certificate should be granted. A 'Certificate of Exemption' will only be granted when it has been clearly demonstrated that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term.



Education &  
Communities

# Compulsory School Attendance

## Information for parents

Education for your child is important and regular attendance at school is essential for your child to achieve their educational best and increase their career and life options. NSW public schools work in partnership with parents to encourage and support regular attendance of children and young people. When your child attends school every day, learning becomes easier and your child will build and maintain friendships with other children.

### What are my legal responsibilities?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age. The *Education Act 1990* requires that parents ensure their children of compulsory school age are enrolled at, and regularly attend school, or, are registered with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards for homeschooling.

Once enrolled, children are required to attend school each day it is open for students.

### The importance of arriving on time

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students do not miss out on important learning activities scheduled early in the day
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Give students time to greet their friends before class
- Reduces classroom disruption

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained by parents.

### What if my child has to be away from school?

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral)

Following an absence from school you must ensure that within 7 days you provide your child's school with a verbal or written explanation for the absence. However, if the school has not received an explanation from you within 2 days, the school may contact you to discuss the absence.

Principals may decline to accept an explanation that you have provided if they do not believe the absence is in the best interest of your child. In these circumstances your child's absence would be recorded as unjustified. When this happens the principal will discuss their decision with you and the reasons why.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when frequent or long term absences are explained as being due to illness. Principals may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to collaboratively develop a health care plan to support your child. If the request is denied, the principal can record the absences as unjustified.

### Travel

Families are encouraged to travel during school holidays. If travel during school term is necessary, discuss this with your child's school principal. An *Application for Extended Leave* may need to be completed. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year.

In some circumstances students may be eligible to enrol in distance education for travel periods over 50 school days. This should be discussed with your child's school principal.







### **My child won't go to school. What should I do?**

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school's learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The principal may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

### **What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?**

It is important to understand that the Department of Education and Communities may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- Compulsory Schooling Conferences

You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan (known as Undertakings) to support your child's attendance at school.

- Application to the Children's Court – Compulsory Schooling Order

If your child's attendance at school remains unsatisfactory the Department

may apply to the Children's Court for a *Compulsory Schooling Order*. The Children's Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- Prosecution in the Local Court

School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child's full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

### **What age can my child leave school?**

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10 or its equivalent. After Year 10, and up until they reach 17 years of age, there are a range of flexible options for students to complete their schooling.

### **Working in Partnership**

The Department of Education and Communities recognises that working collaboratively with students and their families is the best way to support the regular attendance of students at school.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.

**If a student misses as little as 8 days in a school term, by the end of primary school they'll have missed over a year of school.**

**Further information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:**

### **Policy, information and brochures:**

Please visit the Department of Education's *Policy library*

### **The school leaving age:**

Please visit the Department of Education's *Wellbeing and Learning website*

### **Do you need an interpreter?**

Interpreting services are available on request, including for the hearing impaired. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 131 450. You will not be charged for this service.

For further advice and questions contact your educational services team

T 131 536

Learning and Engagement

Student Engagement & Interagency Partnerships

T 9244 512


[www.dec.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au)

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## Appendix 2: Absence Note Booklet for Parents

Cover:

	<b>LES POWELL SCHOOL</b>  Dear Parents/Caregivers,  Please find attached a Student Absence Booklet for you to use when your child is absent from school.  Complete the note when your child is absent for one or more whole days and send to the class teacher when your child returns to school. Please retain the Parent Copy for your records.  A reminder note towards the back of the booklet can be used when you require another book.
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Booklet body:

<b>Parent Copy</b>  Date Note Sent: .....  First day of Absence: .....  Last day of Absence: .....  Reason Given ..... ..... .....	 <b>Les Powell School</b> <b>Student Absence Note</b>  Student Name:.....Class: .....  First day of Absence:..... Last day of Absence:.....  Reason for Absence: <i>(please tick the appropriate box and give details).</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> Sickness:.....(e.g flu, seizure)  <input type="checkbox"/> Family reasons: .....(e.g attending funeral)  <input type="checkbox"/> Other reason:.....(e.g attending religious ceremony)  Name of Parent/Carer:.....  Signature:.....Date:.....
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### Appendix 3: Phone in Absence Slip

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#### Phone in absence note

We received a telephone call on \_\_\_\_\_ Time

\_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to say

\_\_\_\_\_ will be/was absent from school on/from

\_\_\_\_\_ because

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 4: Student Absence Reminder to Parent Letter

### ABSENTEE NOTICE (1)

#### COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Re: {student\_name}

Absence date(s): {absence\_dates\_list}

Dear {recipient\_name},

Regular attendance at school is important for students to reach their potential. The school is required to record the reason for any absences as a way of ensuring that students are absent from school only when they are able to provide another good reason for missing school.

Your child was absent from school on the date or dates shown above and no explanation has been received. Please assist us by indicating a **reason for your child's absence in the [parent portal](#)**, or alternatively you can email the school with the reason for the absence.

If you need an interpreter to assist you to contact the school, please call the Telephone Interpreter Service at 450 and ask for an interpreter in your language. The interpreter will call the school and stay on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

{school\_name}

e: {school\_email}



## Appendix 5: Late or Early Student Pick Up Note

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### Late Arrival / Early Departure

Early

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Late Arrival

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Departure

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Reason \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_Signed (parent/guardian)

## Appendix 6: Application for Extended Leave – Travel

APPLICATION FOR EXTENDED LEAVE – TRAVEL					
		<b>NOTE:</b> <u>PART A</u> is to be <u>completed by the student's parent</u> and returned to their child's school principal. Separate applications are to be completed for each school if siblings do not attend the same school.			
PART A: STUDENT DETAILS					
Please complete table below with details of all students associated with the period of travel:					
FAMILY NAME	GIVEN NAME	DOB	AGE	GRADE	SRN
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			
Student address: _____					
Postcode: _____					
School name: _____					
Dates of extended leave applied for: From ____/____/____ to ____/____/____					
Number of school days: _____					
Reason for travel: _____					
Relevant travel documentation such as an e ticket or itinerary (in the case of <u>non flight</u> bound travel within Australia only) must be attached to this application.					
DETAILS OF PRIOR EXEMPTIONS/EXTENDED LEAVE – TRAVEL (if applicable)					
Date of prior exemption/extended leave: From: ____/____/____ to: ____/____/____					
Number of school days: _____					
Copy of Certificate of Exemption/Extended Leave-Travel attached (Please tick <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
PARENT DETAILS (Applicant)					
Family name: _____ Given name: _____					
Address: _____ Postcode: _____					
Telephone number: _____ Relationship to student: _____					
As the parent and applicant, I hereby apply for a <i>Certificate of Extended Leave-Travel</i> and understand my child will be granted a period of extended leave upon acceptance by the principal of the reason provided.					

I understand that if the application is accepted:

- I am responsible for his/her supervision during the period of extended leave
- The provided period of extended leave is limited to the period indicated
- The provided period of extended leave is subject to the conditions listed on the *Certificate of Extended Leave-Travel*
- The period of extended leave will count towards my child's absences from school

I declare the information provided in this application is to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate and complete. I recognise that should statements in this application later prove to be false or misleading any decision made as a result of this application may be reversed. I further recognise that a failure to comply with any condition set out in the *Application for Extended Leave- Travel* may result in the provided period of extended leave being cancelled.

Signature of parent/s: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

#### PRIVACY STATEMENT

The Department of Education and Communities is subject to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. The information that you provide will be used to process your child's *Application for Extended Leave-Travel* during the period indicated.

It will only be used or disclosed for the following purposes.

- General student administration relating to the education and welfare of the student
- Communication with students and parents
- To ensure the health, safety and welfare of students, staff and visitors to the school
- State and National reporting purposes
- For any other purpose required by law.

The information will be stored securely. You may access or correct any personal information by contacting the school. If you have a concern or complaint about the way your personal information has been collected, used, or disclosed, you should contact the school.

#### PART B : TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PRINCIPAL

I accept this *Application for Extended Leave- Travel*. (Please tick one box ☒):

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please provide more detail here (if required):

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Principal's name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Note: Please complete the Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel if requested leave is to be provided.**