



Student Attendance School Based Procedure

RATIONALE

It is widely recognised that students need to attend school on a regular basis to gain the maximum benefit from schooling in order to optimise their life opportunities. It is also widely recognised that attendance problems are best managed by early identification and intervention. Improving student attendance is an important component of the school's procedures.

The School Education Act 1999 and the School Education Regulations 2000 requires compulsory aged students to attend school on the days on which the school is open for instruction, unless an arrangement in writing has been entered into with the Parents/Carers.

The School is responsible for accurately recording and monitoring the attendance of all students and for implementing strategies to restore attendance if there are issues. The attendance information that is held at the school, forms part of the required reporting process to both the State and Federal Governments.

At St Joseph's, attendance is recorded and checked twice each day. This is critical in ensuring all children who are meant to be attending school have arrived safely.

PROCEDURES




At St Joseph's Primary School, student attendance will be recorded at the commencement of each day by **9.00am** (to cater for the morning session) and at **11.45am** (to cater for the afternoon session). Attendance is marked in half-day increments. These increments being before and after **11.45am**.




If students arrive to school after 9:00am or leave before the conclusion of the day, a parent or guardian must sign them in or out through the front office.

Recording of Attendance & Absences

Attendance events must be recorded using the Online Attendance Portal provided through the CEWA's system wide preferred method through SEQTA.

The following icons will be used on SEQTA at St Joseph's:

CATEGORY	ICON	EXPLANATION
In Attendance		The student has been marked as being physically present at school.
Unresolved Absence		If a child is absent and we have not received an explanatory note/email.
Resolved Absence - Medical		Reason for absence is illness/injury and note/email/SMS has been received.

Resolved absence – Other		If a child is absent (other than illness/injury) and note/email/SMS has been received.
Late		If child arrived at school late. Can also be used when child leaves early in the afternoon. Please record in SEQTA the time of arrival/departure.
Camp/ Transition Days		For use in Year 4/5/6 only for the days that students are on Camp or participating in an education program off site.

Parents must inform the school and resolve all absences via email, written note or by SMS if their child is absent from school. These resolutions will be printed in hard copy and placed in the class's Absentee Note File.

Long Term or Ongoing Absences

In the event that ongoing absences are not explained via a parent or caregiver and where contact with the family has not been made possible via email or telephone, the relevant authorities will be consulted.

Resolution of attendance difficulties may require more targeted school-based strategies including;

- meeting with the student and parents to identify and implement strategies that will address the learning and support needs for the student.
- referral to the school Chaplain.
- development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies.

Staff are not required to provide work for students who are absent during the course of a term, when a parent or guardian has chosen to take their child out of school.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers

Teachers have the responsibility of completing the SEQTA Attendance Register each day at two different intervals within the day.

- Teachers are to take the Attendance Register before 9:00 am and at 11:45 am. Specialist teachers must take attendance at these times during their lessons.
- Students who arrive to school after 9:00 am must be signed in through the front office, where any amendments to the class roll will be made.
- Teachers can resolve absences in SEQTA once written contact has been made by a parent or legal guardian. A note or email outlining reasons for a child's absence sent to school by a parent or legal guardian is to be initialled and dated by the classroom teacher and kept until the end of the year, when all hard copy absentee notes will be handed in to the Administration Officer for archiving.
- Teachers should notify the school principal if they notice a pattern of absences with any particular student so a meeting may be arranged with the family.

Attendance Officer

- At St Joseph's Primary, the Administration Officers take on the responsibility of the Attendance Officer.
- The Attendance Officer will monitor the completion of class attendance roles on SEQTA each day, communicating with class teachers and relief teachers as required.
- When parent contact is made to the front office regarding an absentee, the Attendance Officer will record the approved absence in SEQTA, inform the classroom teacher and provide a hard copy of the note, email or SMS to the classroom teacher for their records.
- The Attendance Officer will send out an SMS to parents regarding any unresolved absences by 9:15am each morning.

The Principal

- Ensure accurate records are kept for every student enrolled at the school for both morning and afternoon sessions including Kindergarten students.
- Ensure all attendance records are maintained and archived by the school.
- Send home attendance letters to families who have students whose attendance is below 90% at four intervals (week five of each term) throughout the year.
- Meet with families when school attendance becomes a concern to devise suitable strategies and support structures to increase school attendance.

Parents and Carers

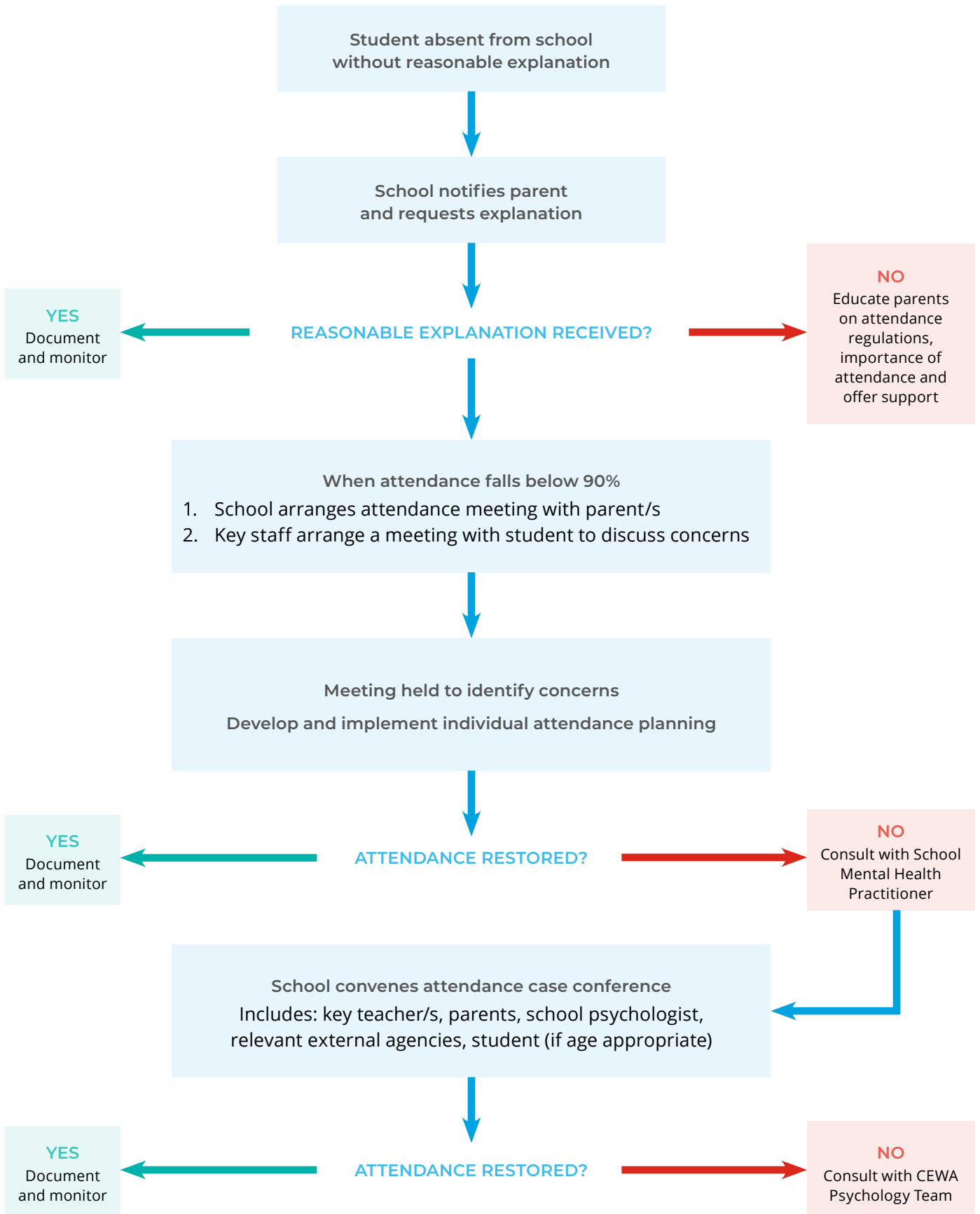
Parents and caregivers are required to meet the following expectations:

- Ensure that their child attends school when required.
- Promote and provide organisational support to their child for full attendance and participation at the school on all designated school days.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school each day on time.
- Sign their child in and out of the front office if they arrive late and leave school early for any reason.
- Notification of a student's absence must be provided in writing. Parents should notify the school of their child's absence by signed note, SMS or email (admin@stj.wa.edu.au) as soon as possible on the first day of the child's absence.
- Notify the school in advance if an absence of any period is planned.
- Work cooperatively and collaboratively with the school to develop and implement improvement strategies when attendance has been inconsistent.
- Work cooperatively with the school in supporting the child to return to school and reintegrate after prolonged absence.
- Ensure that contact details for the child's family are correct and up to date.

This procedure is supported and informed by the CEWA Student Attendance Process and CEWA Student Attendance Guidelines (see attached).

Date of Last Review	Date of Next Review	Authorised By
2024	2026	Ashlee De Campo

Student Non-Attendance Flow Chart





CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Student Attendance

GUIDELINES FOR YOUR SCHOOL

“ Catholic Education Western Australia is a Christ-centred and child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel. ”

CECWA Strategic Directions 2019-2023



Attendance, Strategic Directions and Guiding Principles

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) schools are committed to educating students in a community of faith. The educational endeavour is to foster children's development as an expression of God's grace. Every child is held in God's infinite tenderness and He is present in each of their lives.

The Bishops' Mandate states: *The Catholic schools' concept of education should be the development of (students) from within, freeing them from that conditioning which would prevent them from becoming fully integrated human beings. The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.*

In this document, attendance is conceptualised within the context of CECWA's *Strategic Directions 2019 – 2023* and, specifically, the Guiding Principles which provide a framework for attendance policy and interventions:

- 1.** Our Catholic school communities are central to the Church's mission of bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to all. Attendance not only affects academic achievement but also each student's moral and spiritual development.
- 2.** At the heart of all our decisions and actions is the dignity of each child. The Catholic world-view perceives each human being as a unique person created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), having a dignity that is always to be respected. Students need to be given every opportunity to be affirmed in their dignity and worth, confirmed in their personhood and assisted to grow to their full potential.
- 3.** Central to our identity as a Christ-centred community are our partnerships with families, parishes and schools. Attendance is supported through strong relationships and effective communication with these partners.
- 4.** We respect the uniqueness of each person and community, ensuring that quality Catholic education is focused on engaged learning. As each person is unique, each approach to attendance should also be unique to ensure it matches the student's needs.
- 5.** We commit to the principles of subsidiarity, co-responsibility and participation in enhancing Catholic education across WA. While schools have policy and strategy, parents remain an important part of all attendance interventions.
- 6.** We seek to provide access to Catholic education, especially for the marginalised and disadvantaged. Attendance issues are over-represented in disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Consequently, targeted effort and attention are required to address attendance for these groups to ensure they have equitable participation.

Most importantly, in terms of attendance, the most important factor is that schools should be places where young people want to be.



PART 1: LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Education is recognised as a fundamental human right and an important building block in the development of children and society (United Nations, 1948). Those who do well in the early and elementary stages of education tend to do better in subsequent stages and develop the critical skills and abilities needed to become productive and responsible adults (*Keating & Hertzman, 1999; Zubrick et al., 2006*). Attendance is not only a fundamental human right; it is also mandated by law.

Key documents that guide attendance are:

- *Bishops' Mandate for Catholic Education*
- *School Education Act, 1999*
- *School Education Regulations, 2000*
- *Guide to Registration Standards and other Requirements for Non-Government Schools (2018)*

This legislation applies to the operation of public (government), private (non-government) schools and to families choosing to register as their child's home educator.

Requirements for School Attendance in Western Australia

The Western Australian school system, of which Catholic Education WA is a part, encompasses Kindergarten (two years prior to Year One) to Secondary schooling. School is compulsory from Pre-Primary (one year prior to Year One) until the end of secondary schooling. *The School Education Act (1999)* requires compulsory aged students to participate in the educational program of a school.

Under Section 23 of *The School Education Act 1999*;

A student must on the days on which the school is open for instruction:

(a) either —

- I. attend the school at which he or she is enrolled;

or

- II. otherwise participate in an educational program of the school whether at the school or elsewhere, as required by the principal; or

- (b) comply with an arrangement under section 24 (Arrangements Alternative to Attendance).

Attendance is measured as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years One to Ten as a percentage of the total number of possible student days. Educational Risk is defined as falling below 90%. Attendance below 90% can be further divided into the categories of:

- Indicated (80 – 89%)
- Moderate (60 – 79%)
- Severe (< 60%)

Stakeholder Requirements

School Responsibility

Each school is required to keep accurate attendance records for all its students. This includes taking attendance. Attendance must be recorded by teaching staff at least:

- twice per day for primary and specialist schools
- in every class for secondary schools

Although all school staff are vital in supporting regular student attendance, the **Principal** is responsible for:

- Keeping accurate attendance records for every child enrolled in the school; this can be stored electronically but must be able to be reproduced in written form
- Maintaining records for the appropriate period of time under the *School Education Regulations 2000*
- Managing alternate attendance arrangements
- Implementing plans and strategies to encourage regular attendance

Records must include:

- If the student was physically present or not
- If the student was attending a different approved activity (the teacher running that activity must also record attendance)
- Any reasons given for an absence
- If the reason for the absence is reasonable (see examples)
- A flag for unexplained absences (removed if a reason is given later)

- Information about any unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes
- A mark for half-day attendance if the student is present for at least two hours of instruction

Authorised absence (EXPLAINED) – A Principal can record an absence as ‘Authorised’ if there has been a reasonable explanation for a student’s absence. A reasonable excuse for the purposes of explaining a school absence can include

- Medical or dental appointments
- Bereavement or attending a funeral (including Sorry Business)
- Illnesses and accidents
- Unforeseen and unexplained circumstances
- If the absence was a result of complying with another law
- The child is receiving distance education through a registered school
- The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment
- The child has been suspended
- The child is attending or observing a religious event, cultural observance or obligation

Unauthorised absence (UNEXPLAINED) – A Principal can record an absence as ‘Unauthorised’ when there has been no reasonable explanation provided for the absence. If a reason is given to the Principal and it is not approved, then the school will notify the parent/carer in writing.

In general, it is expected that these absences would not be excused:

- The parent did not seek approval beforehand, or in accordance with school policy
- The student was absent due to leisure or social activities without approval
- The conditions of an authorised absence was not met e.g. a student absence learning plan during a family holiday was not completed
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences

Principals should make sure attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to look for attendance patterns. Patterns of absences can be across the school, a class or at the individual student level. Having accurate data, including the reasons for absences, is important for:

- Developing improvement strategies for students
- Reporting for funding requirements
- Using as evidence when there are attendance concerns

Parents/Guardians Responsibility

Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction. Parents/guardians must provide an explanation for any absence their child has and work in partnership with the school to support attendance.

The Parent/guardian of the student is required to:

- Ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless complying with an arrangement under section 24
- Provide an explanation for any absence their child has within three days





PART 2: RESEARCH

The impact of attendance

School attendance:

- is strongly related to increased academic development
- provides students with opportunities to develop social competence and relationships, be in a language-rich environment, work with others, and learn skills like problem-solving and persistence (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014)

School non-attendance:

- negatively impacts students' academic achievement in the current year but can also impact subsequent years
- is linked to increased social isolation for the student
- has a greater negative impact on young people's outcomes when it is an unauthorised absence (Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence, & Zubrick, 2013)
- is correlated with leaving school with fewer qualifications which in turn can lead to unemployment, mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems and poor life outcomes

Causes of non-attendance

Causes of non-attendance are complex as they are often due to multiple causes, and these causes can overlap (Wilkins, 2008). Causes of non-attendance are also unique to each student and need to be understood in context. Reid (2013) suggests that students tend to have one clear reason why they start to miss school, but these reasons multiply over time. The factors that cause non-attendance at the individual, family, school, and community level are expanded below.

Individual Factors

In its document *Attendance Matters*, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) states that individual factors that influence student absenteeism relate to a student's attitudes and motivations. The individual factors identified by Reid (2013) and Wilkin (2008) that are most likely to predict a student's non-attendance include:

- Poor physical health
- Mental health
- Academic self-concept
- Diagnosed disability
- Poor social skills
- Low sense of belonging
- Low self-esteem
- Low sense of safety at school
- Low motivation
- Interest in activities outside of school

Family Factors

Factors within the home environment provide a setting for attendance and non-attendance. If parents do not value education and are not involved in their child's schooling, children may adopt similar attitudes, which could impact decisions about whether to attend or not. The family factors that are most likely to predict a student's non-attendance include:

- Family conflict and instability
- Poor housing
- Low parent interest in education
- Negative parent attitudes towards education
- Low family involvement in school
- Low socioeconomic status
- Family holidays during term
- Family death, illness, disabilities
- Cultural barriers

School Factors

The school factors that are most likely to predict a student's non-attendance include:

- Unsuitable curriculum
- Poor teacher quality
- Poor behaviour management
- Low sense of safety/bullying
- Low school community engagement
- Low socio-economic school context
- School climate
- Institutional factors
- Lack of adjunct support in school

Community

Community factors also influence attendance. In general, the community becomes a risk when it does not provide the necessary support for students to be motivated to attend school. These factors can include:

- Socio-economic disadvantage
- High levels of family mobility
- Violence
- Low community value of education
- Mistreatment of children
- Crime
- Drug abuse
- Hopelessness in the community.

Aboriginal students

Aboriginal students experience the same causes noted above and within each, as well as additional cultural factors. Specifically, Aboriginal student absence can be explained by:

- Cultural maintenance (such as funerals)
- Face-saving
- Family dysfunction
- *Sorry Business* commitments
- Changes in family circumstances and
- Illness and/or illness-related factors
- Child health



Drivers of non-attendance

In addition, to understand the causes of non-attendance, it is also necessary to understand the drivers of behaviour:

- escape – escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations
- avoidance – avoid school related stimuli that provoke negative feelings
- reinforcement – to get attention from significant others, and to obtain tangible rewards outside of school

These drivers act as push and pull factors that impact attendance (Reid, 2009). Students are pulled towards school because they know it is important but pushed away due to bullying, ineffective or powerless teachers, boring lessons, or not enough practical vocational learning.

Remember the person not just the category

The categories above provide a useful framework to identify causes of non-attendance. It is important to remember these factors are only a guide and do not necessarily explain each student's situation. Accurately identifying needs ensures that interventions are well suited to the issues that cause attendance problems.

PART 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Causes of non-attendance are complex so require a complex response (*Reid, 2013*). The following principles are recommended to address non-attendance effectively:

A systems approach

- At the school level, develop processes, procedures and standards to manage attendance within your school
- Include strategies to address local challenges with attendance
- Use data to analyse attendance and absence patterns and to inform decision-making
- Have simple and clear communication to families about the importance of attendance
- Have clearly mapped processes and systems that are understood and implemented by all
- Ensure parents/carers, schools and community understand their roles and responsibility to support attendance
- Develop partnership with communities, parent groups and other parties/agencies to address attendance challenges

Monitor attendance

- Nominate a staff member who is responsible for monitoring attendance.
- Monitoring attendance frequently and follow up non-attendance.
- An Attendance Officer may be of some benefit to schools. The role of the School Attendance Officer would be to assist school communities with processes that ensure non-attending students participate, are engaged in educational programs, and collaborate with school staff, parents, regional office and the community to identify student absenteeism and truancy.
- Examine school attendance data for a representative period and analyse the attendance patterns for girls, boys, Aboriginal students, different ethnic groups, different year levels, and Mondays and Fridays.



Identify the causes of non-attendance

- Treat each case as unique
- Have a clear and well-structured system to identify student needs and causes of non-attendance/attendance. This could include:
 - Survey
 - Interview
 - Focus groups
- Identify the fundamental drivers from the data
- Consider causes from multiple levels rather than just the student

Focus on prevention

- Have active prevention programs so that students feel safe in, and connected to, their school and therefore want to attend school. This should include addressing school climate, having a sense of belonging and community, and ensuring engaging instruction.
- Include student, parents, and staff at all levels. Understanding the drivers of attendance from varying perspectives will provide a more holistic understanding.

Interventions

- See Part Four Strategies for Prevention and Intervention below.
- Provide interventions at level 1, level 2, and level 3.
- All level 2 and level 3 interventions need to match student needs.

Collect and analyse data

- Examine bottom 10 per cent. What is the impact of poor attendance on student achievement and school achievement?
- Review level 2 and level 3 interventions for efficacy.
- Compare school attendance analysis with the nationwide picture and other like schools.
- Examine the correlations between attendance patterns and student achievement for specific groups.
- Gather and analyse data to ensure school processes for monitoring and supporting attendance are effective.
- Examine the characteristics of students who have excellent attendance. Does this understanding help raise the levels of the attendance of others?
- Ask students about attendance. What is 'poor attendance'? What helps students attend school? Is there a need for a change of perspective?
- Survey parents to determine their understanding of the importance of school attendance

Case Management

- A solution-focused case management approach for students with chronic or persistent low attendance that involves key stakeholders (i.e. school, family, and where appropriate, outside agencies) to support school re-engagement

Communicate

- Provide staff and board with regular snapshots of absence issues.
- Communicate to parents about the importance of attendance and when there are issues with their child's attendance.
- Communicate to students about the importance of attendance and how the school can help with barriers to attendance.





PART 4: STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Attendance occurs along a continuum, which ranges from “full engagement to school dropout, with absenteeism located somewhere along that continuum” (*Tanner-Smith & Wilson, 2013, p. 469*). Consequently, responses to attendance need to occur across all parts of this continuum, with a multi-tiered focus on prevention, early intervention, and individualised support. A multi-tiered approach provides a more holistic and comprehensive process to attendance and non-attendance is identified early (*Kearney & Graczyk, 2014*).

The three-tier multifaceted model includes:

UNIVERSAL SUPPORT (TIER 1) – universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students (promotion and prevention) including students whose good attendance could be maintained and cultivated as long as universal, prevention-oriented supports are in place.

- School climate strategies
- Safety-oriented strategies
- Building relationships
- Health-based strategies
- Mental health and social-emotional learning
- Parental involvement
- Attendance Monitoring (twice a month)

The following resources are available to assist with a universal approach to promote attendance:

- Resource 1: Tier 1 Promoting Attendance in Schools Strategies
- Resource 2: Audit Tool for Schools
- Resource 3: Newsletter Message Template to Promote Attendance (Kindergarten/Pre-Primary)

EARLY INTERVENTION SUPPORT (TIER 2) – provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence (specific groups). Students who have a history of moderate chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school) or present

with a risk factor (e.g. a chronic illness like asthma) which makes attendance more tenuous may need a higher level of more individualised support in addition to benefiting from the universal supports.

- Adjunctive support to reduce distress (psychologist/counsellor)
- Identify and remove obstacles for non-attendance
- Establish regular parent contact
- Utilise mentoring (tutoring, advocacy)
- School/class restructuring
- Work on student engagement (liking school, interest in school work)
- Monitoring (daily or weekly)

The following resources are available to assist with early intervention support regarding student attendance:

- Resource 4: Tier 2 – Supporting Students with Poor School Attendance
- Resource 5: The Importance of Engaging Parents/ Carers in Attendance
- Resource 6: Parent Attendance Nudge Letter 1 Template
- Resource 7: Parent Attendance Nudge Letter 2 Template
- Resource 8: Student Meeting Prompts
- Resource 9: Analysing Student Non-Attendance Push and Pull Factors
- Resource 10: Discussing Attendance with Parents/ Carers
- Resource 11: Parent/ Carer Meeting Planner
- Resource 12: Causes of Non-Attendance Checklist

INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT (TIER 3) – offers intensive support for individual students facing the greatest challenges in getting to school. Students with severe levels of chronic absence (missing 20% or more of school in the past year or during the first month of school) and/or facing a risk factor (such as involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system, homelessness or having a parent who has been incarcerated).

Similar to *Kearney and Graczyk (2014)*, *NSSE (2007)* stated principles of effective intervention for non-attendance, rather than strategies. These principles include:

1. Specialised and/or intensive case management
2. Family involvement
3. Sanctions for truancy and rewards for good attendance

The following resources are available to assist with individualised support regarding student attendance:

- Resource 13: Tier 3 – Supporting Students with High Levels of Non-Attendance
- Resource 14: Checklist for Managing Tier 3 Non-Attendance
- Resource 15: Primary Student Attendance Improvement Plan
- Resource 16: Primary Student Attendance Rewards Chart – Sample
- Resource 17: Tier 3 Case Conference
- Resource 18: Tier 3 Processes
- Resource 19: Tier 3 Support Services and agencies

Combined, these principles underscore that it is not the strategy for intervention that matters most, it is whether it is matched to student needs with evidence collected to assess efficacy. Each student's reasons for non-attendance is different. Therefore, each solution needs to be modified to accurately cater to each student's diverse needs.

- Include tier one and tier two responses
- Continue adjunct support
- Parent support
- Expand youth skills
- Extra educational support
- Alternative education programs
- Case management
- Frequent monitoring



Alternative school settings

An alternative school may be considered when the current setting is not well matched to the student's needs (*Tanner-Smith & Wilson, 2013*). *Wilkins (2008)* defined alternative 'schools that work' as those with:

- a positive school climate
- flexible, interested, caring, and approachable teachers
- a calm academic environment
- students who support each other
- fair and non-punitive discipline
- smaller school size

Key attributes of successful alternative education programs include (*Wilson, Stemp, & McGinty, 2011*):

- choice – voluntary participation by teachers, students and families;
- autonomy and control – horizontal rather than vertical hierarchy of authority and decision-making;
- curriculum and skills – curriculum relevant to students' needs and life experiences; and
- a spirit of common enterprise – purposeful emphasis on school as community.

Aboriginal students

Dreise, Milgate, Perrett, and Meston (2016) suggest the following additional strategies for Aboriginal students:

- Set expectations early and establish patterns in early childhood education.
 - Build bridges between homes and schools in Aboriginal communities.
 - Foster high-performing culturally responsive and externally engaged school leadership.
 - Support joint school–community collaborative initiatives.
 - Emphasise fostering and stimulating community demand for high-quality and culturally responsive lifelong learning.
 - Think creatively and laterally about community-based solutions and then seed and fertilise innovation by investing in community-based human and financial resources.
- Embrace whole-child and place-based models.
 - Integrate children’s academic development with their health, wellbeing and safety by supporting schools and the Aboriginal non-government community sector simultaneously.
 - Improve data systems by making them transparent and regularly reported.
 - Refine and sharpen the data relating to why children and young people are missing school.
 - Innovate and open up choices for teenagers to retain their engagement in school education through vocational education and training programs and also through project-based programs, creativity learning, work studies and entrepreneurial education.
 - Create reward and recognition systems for regular school attendees.

