

DOUGLAS PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Douglas Park Public School Attendance Policy

This policy sets out the requirements for the attendance of students at Douglas Park Public School, a NSW government school.

Objectives

Section 22 of the [Education Act \(1990\)](#) states that it is the duty of the parent of a child of [compulsory school-age](#) :

- To be enrolled at, and to attend, a government school or a registered non-government school, or
- To be registered for home schooling with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.
- All students who are enrolled at Douglas Park Public School, regardless of their age, are expected to attend that school whenever instruction is provided.
- Douglas Park Public School Principal will maintain an attendance register (roll) in a form approved by the Department of Education.
- Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximise their potential. Douglas Park Public School, in partnership with its parents and community, will be responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Douglas Park Public School views encouraging regular attendance as its core school responsibility.

Responsibilities and delegations

Parents must ensure:

- Their children of [compulsory school age](#) are enrolled in a government or registered non-government school or, they are registered with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.

- Their children who are enrolled at school attend every day the school is open for their instruction.
- They provide an explanation for absences by means such as a telephone call, written note, text message or email to the school within 7 days from the first day of any period of absence.
- They work in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school, including communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school.

Principals

The [School Attendance Policy](#) outlines core responsibilities of principals regarding school attendance. To effectively implement the school attendance policy principals must ensure:

- 1.1. All attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director Public Schools NSW, attendance officers and other personnel nominated by the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities, Director Public Schools NSW, or Audit Directorate.
- 1.2. The school regularly evaluates and addresses school attendance through the school plan.
- 1.3. Open communication on issues affecting student attendance is promoted with parents.
- 1.4. Effective strategies are in place to contact parents where there is a pattern of attendance causing concern or the parent has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence.
- 1.5. [Interpreters and translated materials](#), including letters are available when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English in matters relating to school attendance.
- 1.6. School staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised.
- 1.7. All cases of unsatisfactory attendance, including part day absences are investigated promptly and school based factors impacting on attendance are addressed.
- 1.8. Early identification of students at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns through strategies such as regular roll checks.
- 1.9. Attendance reports from roll checks are generated at least fortnightly and tabled at Learning Support Team or attendance meetings for follow up by appropriate staff members.
- 1.10. The school's Learning and Support Team in partnership with parents identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs of a student with attendance patterns of concern.
- 1.11. Parents, students and the school community are regularly informed of the importance of school and attendance requirements. A range of resources (refer to resource section) have been developed for schools to provide information to parents and key community groups about the requirements of school attendance.
- 1.12. Effective referral and support networks are established so that students whose attendance is

identified as being of concern and their families can be connected to relevant services within the department and with local external agencies in discussion with parents. Appropriate staff members may be nominated to meet with parents, arrange referrals and to be the contact points for consultation and coordination of school involvement.

1.13. Communication, collaboration and information sharing occurs with other services and agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with students and families.

1.14. Any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) are managed consistent with the [Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy and Procedures](#).

1.15. If concerns include not sighting the child principals must, as soon as possible contact the NSW Police Force to request that a child safety check be undertaken.

1.16. Consideration is given to the [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) (MRG), specialist advice and professional judgement, where there are concerns about suspected risk of harm. In accordance with the MRG Neglect Education - Habitual Absence is defined as 'The child/young person is of compulsory school age (6 years to current leaving age) AND is habitually absent'. 'Habitually absent' is a minimum of 30 days absence within the past 100 school days. However, principals should consider other factors, such as the student's age and learning support needs in deciding on action earlier than the 30 days indicated.

1.17. Other decisions trees can be used if the underlying issues impacting on school attendance are also of concern. For example, care concerns, neglect: supervision, or child /young person is a danger to self and others.

2. SCHOOL STAFF

2.1. Provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.

2.2. Promote regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students.

2.3. Maintain accurate records of student attendance by ensuring rolls are marked at the commencement of the school day.

2.4. Alert the principal, or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance, when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer within required timeframes (see section 5).

2.5. When nominated by the principal, liaise with external agencies, arrange referrals and coordinate involvement of the school with other services and agencies working with students. Nominated staff provide feedback about outcomes to the principal.

2.6. Who have concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person must report their concerns to the principal.

3. WHEN SHOULD PARENTS BE CONTACTED IF AN EXPLANATION FOR ABSENCE HAS NOT BEEN RECEIVED?

3.1. The class teacher will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents on the same day or following day of an absence where parents have not contacted the school. Contact may be made by means such as providing the parents with an [Absentee Notice-Compulsory School Attendance](#), by telephone, email or SMS text message.

3.2. If within 7 days of the first day of any period of absence an explanation has not been received and no contact has been made with parents, the class teacher, assistant principal, principal or delegate must ensure parents are contacted within the next 2 school days.

3.3. The [Telephone Interpreter Service and translated materials](#), including letters can be used as required when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English if an explanation for absence has not been received.

4. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF THERE ARE FREQUENT ABSENCES BEING EXPLAINED AS DUE TO ILLNESS?

4.1. Where frequent absences are explained as being due to illness consultation with parents must occur regarding the health care needs of the child.

4.2. Principals can request the parents to provide a medical certificate if they have concerns with the explanation provided, or where there is a history of poor attendance.

4.3. Where the principal has concerns about the medical certificates being produced for absences they can ask the parents to request that the doctor writes on the medical certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.

4.4. Where principals have ongoing concerns they can request the parent's consent for a doctor to provide information to the school about their child's health condition. It is essential the school has all relevant information to ensure the learning and health care needs of the student are addressed. If the request is denied or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'. The principal must consider whether the habitual absence or parental attitude places the child or young person at suspected risk of harm.

4.5. Principals can seek information from prescribed bodies under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 where they have ongoing concerns regarding a student's safety, welfare or wellbeing. They should also [contact the Child Wellbeing Unit \(CWU\)](#) or if they believe the student is at risk of significant harm the [Child Protection Helpline](#).

5. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF A STUDENT HAS AN UNSATISFACTORY PATTERN OF ATTENDANCE?

5.1. Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the [Education Act \(1990\)](#) the benefits of attending school regularly should be the focus of this consultation.

5.2. A child is considered to have an unsatisfactory school attendance when they have:

- regular absences without explanation (despite follow-up from the school)
- regular absences and explanations provided by parents are not accepted by the principal, or
- extended periods of absence without an explanation or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. An extended period of absence may be consecutive or irregular patterns of non-attendance.

5.3. The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents on the same day or the following day of an absence. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this. The support document [Phone Intervention Program Guidelines](#) describes a program facilitating early telephone contact.

5.4. Resolution of attendance difficulties may require more targeted school based strategies including:

- meeting with the student and parents
- referral to the school's Learning and Support Team to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs for the student
- development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents
- engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality
- referral to the school counsellor
- requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies
- [use of interpreters and translated materials](#)
- seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them.

5.5. The school should identify if other agencies are involved with the family and liaise with them when a student's attendance is of concern and where it is determined that the issues impacting on attendance are outside of the role of the school to address in isolation. The school may have a role in working collaboratively with the services to engage the family. Family case discussions should be attended by school representatives if the issues relate to students whose attendance is a concern. Meetings and interviews at the school may

also involve representatives from support agencies. They may be initiated by school, other agency or departmental staff. Schools may also refer families to services, in discussion with families.

5.6. If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful in resolving attendance difficulties the principal can request support by making an application to the Home School Liaison Program and submitting the application to the local program manager for consideration. Parents should be advised by Letter 1: *Principal to parent advising of Application to the Home School Liaison Program*. Copies of communication with parents and documented strategies that the school has implemented to address student attendance issues are to be included with the Application for Home School Liaison support.

6. WHAT ARE THE RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?

6.1. School attendance records must include:

- A.** a Register of Admission to be retained permanently (now maintained on the Enrolment Registration Number System - ERN)
- B.** written notes, records of verbal explanations and records of electronic explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt
- C.** an Attendance Register (roll), to be retained for three years. In a case where a student has an accident requiring an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years
- D.** information detailing a student's absences each year, kept on the student's file until seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, the record should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.

6.2. Records for Certificates of Exemptions from attendance and enrolment must be kept consistent with the requirements of the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#).

7. HOW MUST ATTENDANCE REGISTERS (ROLLS) BE MAINTAINED?

7.1. Registering the attendance of students

- A.** The Education Act (1990) (Section 24) requires that attendance registers (rolls) be maintained in a form approved by the Minister. These may be either manual or electronic rolls
- B.** Attendance registers (rolls) must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events
- C.** Attendance information must be recorded on the Department's electronic attendance register, or SALM/eb4 or compliant third party systems (SENTRAL) or an approved manual roll (special circumstances register) on a daily basis
- D.** Principals may delegate responsibility to staff for the maintenance of the attendance register (rolls). Staff must be trained on the requirements of Student Attendance in Government Schools –

Procedures, and the School Attendance Register Codes. Advice and further information may be obtained from attendance officers

- E. Only the approved codes listed in the [Attendance Register Codes](#) are to be used.

7.2. Recording student attendance in compliant third party systems

- A. Third party system software must comply with the Department's requirements
- B. Attendance registers must be transferred at least weekly and accurately to the Department's electronic attendance register, SALM/ebs4
- C. Weekly and semester attendance register transfers must include students who have left the school during the year
- D. Schools must contact IT Helpdesk if they have concerns regarding data transfers.

7.3. Record keeping requirements for student attendance?

- A. Attendance registers (rolls) must reflect the highest professional standards
- B. The teacher or other nominee of the principal responsible for maintaining a manual attendance register is required to sign the register each day. The principal or delegate should countersign the register each week. This becomes the formal record of attendance
- C. The principal or delegate will ensure that explanations for absences are recorded within 7 days of the occurrence of the absence. Explanations that have been accepted by the principal which are provided after the 7 day period should be retained
- D. School attendance must be recorded on the attendance register (roll) at the commencement of the school day
- E. The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all schools when using a manual roll or OASIS. Schools using SALM/ebs4 should record both presence and absence
- F. In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance register codes
- G. Principals may grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness, or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. Principals can request the parents provide a medical certificate if the explanation is doubted or where there is a history of poor attendance. **Please Note:** Refer to the document [Attendance Register Codes](#) for further guidance on the use of approved attendance register code

7.4. Where errors occur in roll marking:

- A. In an electronic attendance register – an amendment should be made within 7 days of the absence
- B. In a manual attendance register – a line is to be ruled through the existing entry and the correct entry made above within 7 days of the absence. Correction fluid must not be used

7.5. School sport is an integral part of the curriculum and principals must ensure adequate attendance monitoring practices occur for the safety of all students. Specific sports rolls must be marked at the beginning and conclusion of each sports session. Attendance information contained on sports rolls must be transferred to the attendance register (roll).

7.6. Security of attendance registers (rolls)

- A. Manual Attendance registers (rolls) must be stored in a secure location within the school.
- B. Attendance registers (rolls) must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood. School staff must not take attendance registers (rolls) home.
- C. The loss of a manual attendance register (roll) is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to the Director Public Schools NSW. A new attendance register (roll) should be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to commencement of the new register must not be included.
- D. A notice signed by the principal must be attached to the new attendance register (roll). The notice must state the period for which the original register was a record of student attendance (e.g. 1 February – 30 March 2014) and the date from which the replacement attendance register (roll) commences.
- E. At the end of each school year the principal must ensure that the attendance register (roll) and attached Special Circumstances Registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.

7.7. An attendance officer will conduct regular roll checks of individual student attendance. In addition, they will conduct an audit of the school's attendance procedures and records at least annually in conjunction with a member of the school executive. The report of the audit is for the advice of the principal.

Please click the following link for more detailed information about procedures the school uses to successfully implement the Student Attendance in Schools policy.
<..\..\Student-Attendance-in-Government-Schools-Procedures-2015-word-version.pdf>