Rationale:

The Department of Education and Training (DET) requires that children of school age (six-seventeen years) are in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless formally exempt. Our college requires that post-compulsory aged students also attend school unless a valid reason exists. We recognise that Mount Waverley Secondary College attendance is above the state mean.

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don’t fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School also helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school, disruptive and anti-social behaviour. These outcomes are likely to have an adverse impact on the future of young people and may lead to unemployment, a range of health risk behaviours (drug and alcohol abuse), homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system. Absenteeism contributes significantly to a lack of academic success.

Aims:

The purpose of the Attendance Policy is to:

- To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that children required to attend school do so regularly, and without unnecessary absences.
- Ensure regular lateness is minimised as the cumulative effect can have an impact on student learning.
- Minimise absences as this often means students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find ‘catching up’ difficult.
- Reduce absenteeism at it contributes significantly to student failure at school.
- Ensure all enrolled students are attending school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.

Implementation:

Parents/ carers have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary. Parents/ carers have a further responsibility to notify the college, in writing, of any absences with an explanation as to why the absence has occurred. Independent students not living with a parent or guardian are also required to provide a written note – this may be signed by the student and should include a written explanation regarding the absence. This will be followed up by the relevant Head of School or Subschool Leader. A student is required to attend school on any given school day and is also expected to attend all offsite curriculum programs or other activities organised by the college. This may include excursions or camps and may also include students involved in a re-engagement program. Parents/ carers are required to notify the college of student absences by phone or e mail before 8.30 am on the day of the absence. This absence should be followed up with a note which should be given to the Home Group Teacher. The absence note should be given in on the first day the student returns to school. If a parent or carer e mails the...
college this should be sent to the college e-mail (mount.waverley.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au) and 'student absence' should be placed in the subject heading.

The college closely monitors attendance. The Attendance Officer has responsibility for monitoring student absences. The Attendance Officer or a member of the relevant subschool will contact parents if communication regarding absences is not forthcoming. Prolonged or unexplained absences will usually mean that strategies and a planned approach may be implemented to support the student’s return to school.

Home group and classroom teachers take the roll in every class or home group. This information is used within the college and it also forwarded to the Department of Education and student attendance and absences are recorded on the mid-year and final reports.

The College has a required attendance rate. Students in Years 7 to 10 are required to have an attendance rate of at least 90%, the attendance rate for VCE students is 95%. Students, particularly those in VCE, may find that are unable to satisfactorily meet the requirements for the unit/s if unapproved absences result in less than 95% attendance.

Students engaged in VET programs as part of their study are also required to meet the attendance requirements of the program they are enrolled in including off campus classes and work placement where applicable. Further information on the attendance requirements for students completing a VCE subject or VET course can be in the VCE Policy Handbook.

Ongoing unexplained absences or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised. Unresolved attendance issues of post-compulsory students may result in the student’s inability to satisfactorily complete course requirements and may result in the student being exited from the college. Unresolved attendance issues for students required to attend will result in year level failure and may be reported by the principal to the Department of Human Services.

Approved and unapproved absences.

Principal can consider the excuse given for an absence and use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves a principal or their nominee:

- considering a request from a parent to approve an absence
- exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse the absence
- notifying the parent of the outcome of their request.

In exercising their discretion, the principal should take the following considerations into account:

- whether the absence is explicitly covered in section 2.1.3 of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- whether the student will complete the work required during the absence (see: Student Absence Learning Plan)
- whether or not the length of absence will affect the student’s learning and progress
- whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so how recently and how many times
- whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before
- cultural factors or details of the student and family’s circumstances
- the implications for not approving the absence
- whether an exemption would be appropriate, whereby the school should assist the parent apply for an exemption.

In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:
• medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not appropriate
• bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
• school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes
• cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
• family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:
• approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy
• the student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
• the conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed)
• the parent has provided no explanation for the absences

At the college all applications for approval of an extended absence or intended extended absence must be made, in writing, at least six weeks before the intended absence. The application must be addressed to the relevant Head of School who will determine whether, in conjunction with the Principal and/or Campus Principal, is approved. The application process covers absences such as those due to sporting or other external commitments, interstate and overseas travel and other exceptional circumstances. If the absence is approved a letter will be sent to the parents and a learning plan will be developed. If the absence is not approved parents/guardians will be notified in writing.

**Evaluation:**
• This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in...  
**June 2014**

**VCE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS**

There is a 95% VCE attendance requirement at MWSC. If a student falls below that, the VCAA makes the following provision: *Where a student has completed work but there has been a substantive breach of attendance rules and the school therefore wishes to assign N to the unit, the school must assign N for one or more outcomes and thus the unit.* This is to be decided in consultation with the Head of Senior School.

To support VCE students achieving this requirement, VCE students are required to adhere to the following:

**YEAR 11**
All year 11 students are expected to arrive at school by 8.30 so they can organise themselves and be ready to attend home group at 8.40. Year 11 students who classes are cancelled period 5 and 6 on a Monday or Friday are permitted to go home, however, if they remain on site, they are to sign the attendance book in the library. (as per the Emergency Management Plan).
**YEAR 12**

All year 12 students are to arrive by 9am- with exception of Year Level Assembly days where arrival time is by 8.30 and seated by 8.40 for Year Level Assembly.

Students who have designated study periods – periods 1 and 2 are to sign in at the VCE office and remain on site.

Students who have study periods or cancelled classes are not permitted to leave the school grounds before 12.40 on any given day.

Students who have study periods after lunch- periods 5 and 6 are permitted to leave at lunch time, however, students who elect to remain on site, must sign in at the VCE office. This is to meet the college’s obligations in regards to the Emergency Management Plan.

Any VCE student who has a cancelled class period 5 and 6, on a Tuesday or Thursday, must remain on site (Year 11’s required to sign in at the library) (Year 12’s required to sign in at VCE Centre and go to Year 12 study area) so that they can attend their scheduled period 7 classes.
A) APPROVAL OF ABSENCE LETTER

Dear

Re: [name of student]

Thank you for your request regarding your child’s absence from school on [insert date]. Your request has been approved.

While the leave has been approved in this case, there are attendance requirements as per the college Attendance Policy (which can be found on the college web site) and the Department of Education and Training guidelines. Changes in legislation introduced in 2014 require students to be in school.

An ‘Absence Learning Plan’ will be developed to support your child during this period of absence. Teachers will provide work and activities to allow your child to keep up with the work completed in class.

If you have any general questions regarding attendance please contact the Senior Campus Attendance Officer, Bree Thomas (tbk@mwsc.vic.edu.au) or Junior Campus Attendance Officer, Rhonda Palstra (prf@mwsc.vic.edu.au). In addition you may contact the relevant Head of School if you have any further questions about the learning plan. The contact details are; Head of Senior School, Mrs Judy Anderson (anr@mwsc.vic.edu.au), Head of Middle School, Mr Chris Knight (kng@mwsc.vic.edu.au) or Head of Junior School, Mr Michael Alexis (ale@mwsc.vic.edu.au).

Yours sincerely

Julie Cain

Senior Campus Principal
B) UNAPPROVED ABSENCE LETTER

Dear

Re: (name of student)

Thank you for your request regarding your child’s absence from school on (insert date). Your request has not been approved.

The college Attendance Policy (please see the school web site for the full policy) and the requirements of the Department of Education and Training outline the reason/s and circumstances where absences can be approved. An accumulation of absences may result in the Department of Education and Training issuing a fine of approximately $70 for each day of unapproved absence.

Daily school attendance is important as it maximises opportunities for young people by providing them with education and other support networks.

If you have any general questions regarding attendance please contact the Senior Campus Attendance Officer, Bree Thomas (tbk@mwsc.vic.edu.au) or Junior Campus Attendance Officer, Rhonda Palstra (prf@mwsc.vic.edu.au).

If you have any questions regarding this decision please contact the relevant Head of School. The contact details are;
– Head of Senior School, Mrs Judy Anderson (anr@mwsc.vic.edu.au), Head of Middle School, Mr Chris Knight (kng@mwsc.vic.edu.au) or Head of Junior School, Mr Michael Alexis (ale@mwsc.vic.edu.au).

Yours sincerely

Julie Cain

Senior Campus Principal