



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## PURPOSE

The Department of Education and Training (DET) requires that children of school age (six to 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.

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.

## AIMS

The purpose of the Attendance Policy is to:

- Ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- Ensure students, staff, parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- Explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Mount Waverley Secondary College has in place to;
  - Support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - Record, monitor and follow up student absences
- 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 as it contributes significantly to a lack of academic success
- ensure all enrolled students are attending school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.

## SCOPE

This policy applied to all students at Mount Waverley Secondary College

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of Mount Waverley Secondary College, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation of the School Attendance Guidelines.

## POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.



Students are expected to attend Mount Waverley Secondary College during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Mount Waverley Secondary College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Mount Waverley Secondary College for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Mount Waverley Secondary College believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the college is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our college will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a Year Level Coordinator or teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Mount Waverley Secondary College parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Mount Waverley Secondary College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Mount Waverley Secondary College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Attendance will be recorded by Compass each period by the classroom teacher, in homegroup (Years 7-9) on and CASES21/eCASES. If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Mount Waverley Secondary College's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

### **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 of any absences with an explanation as to why the absence has occurred in writing or through Compass. Independent students not living with a parent or carer 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 Sub School 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 a student's absence by phone or through Compass before 8.30am on the day of the absence. This absence should be followed up with a note which should be given to the Home Group Teacher or entered on Compass. The absence note should be given in on the first day the student returns to school.

The college closely monitors attendance. An Attendance Officer has responsibility for monitoring student absences. An Attendance Officer or a member of the relevant sub school will contact parents/carers 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.

Attendance information is used within the college, forwarded to the Department of Education and Training, and student attendance and absences are recorded on the semester 1 and 2 student reports.

The college has a required attendance rate. All students in Years 7 to 12 are required to have an attendance rate of at least 90%. 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 are contained in the VCE Policy Handbook.

Mount Waverley Secondary College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The College Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If the college considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused or approved absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unapproved absence**'.

The college will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or 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 and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

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 a review of progression and may be reported by the Principal to the Department of Human Services.

## **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**



Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, the college will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing or subschool team.

If the college decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the North-Eastern Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

## Year 7-10 Attendance Requirements

All absences must be explained by parents/carers. For absences of two days or more, the college must be notified in advance where possible.

For absences of two or more days, students will not be able to sit a CAT unless a medical certificate and/or bereavement notice is provided.

Any Common Assessment Task (CAT) missed due to extended absence will be marked as NA (Not Assessed) and may affect the students' ability to pass the subject. In order to pass the subject, a student must be able to show the teacher their understanding of the required skills and knowledge as demonstrated in classwork from that unit and/or work completed as part of an Absences Learning Plan.

Principals may consider the excuse given for an absence and use their discretion to decide if the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations or does not have a reasonable excuse.

The college does not support the scheduling of absences during the school day and/or school term, including routine medical and dental appointments and family holidays, where these may be arranged for holiday periods.

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

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

In exercising their discretion, the College Principal will 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/carer 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
- whether an exemption would be appropriate, whereby the college should assist the parent/carer apply for an exemption.

In general, it is expected that principals would approve 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/carer to address causes
- cultural observance, if the parent/carer notifies the college in advance

At Mount Waverley Secondary College all applications for an extended absence must be made, in writing, at least **six weeks** before the absence. The application must be addressed to the relevant Head of School who will, in conjunction with the College Principal and/or relevant Campus Principal, determine if the absence 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/carers and a learning plan will be developed. If the absence is not approved parents/carers will be notified in writing.

### **VCE (Year 11 and 12) Attendance**

**Success in VCE starts with attending each day.** Attendance in class ensures that our students have access to instruction and set work to keep up to date with their studies. While the college understands that some absences are unavoidable due to health, medical, legal or family reasons, students in Years 11 and 12 are required to attend 90% of scheduled classes to satisfactorily complete a unit of study.

This means that:

- **Eight or more** 'unapproved' absences in a unit of study will result in withdrawal from the unit. Please note that missing a double lesson will count as 2 absences.
- **Fifteen or more** absences in total (ie approved/unapproved) excluding legitimate college activities such as sport or excursions and excluding extended illness approved by the Head of School (eg time in hospital) will result in withdrawal from the unit.
- **Documentation** to support an approved absence must be submitted **within 5 days** of the return to school or the absence will be recorded as unapproved.
- **Arriving late to class** counts as  $\frac{1}{2}$  **an unapproved** absence.



An approved absence may be:

- an illness which requires medical treatment and for which there is a valid medical certificate
- an approved college excursion or sporting event or
- a serious problem which the Head of Senior School has been notified, and which can be shown to have resulted in the student suffering significant hardship

**Medical Certificates:**

- If you are absent from school, you must submit a valid medical certificate from a doctor to the VCE Centre.
- If you are absent from school on the day of a SAC you **must** produce a valid medical certificate from a doctor for the absence to be approved.
- The Medical Certificate must be dated **for the day of the absence and cannot be back dated.**

**REVIEW CYCLE**

This policy was last updated in May 2022 and is scheduled for review in May 2025.