

Attendance Policy 2019–2021



Taylors Lakes
SECONDARY COLLEGE

Rationale

Taylors Lakes Secondary College believes that students need to attend school regularly in order to gain maximum benefit from their schooling. Regular attendance enables students to access a comprehensive education, enabling them to reach their full potential. The College, in partnership with parents/carers, students and the wider community, is committed to provide active support for full student attendance and retention until the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent.

Aims

1. To ensure students are in attendance as required; are punctual to all classes including Home Group and other school activities; in order to receive and benefit from a continuous educational program.
2. To provide a process by which student attendance/absence is monitored, recorded and improved.
3. To provide clear guidelines and expectations regarding student attendance and the successful completion of programs.
4. To support staff in monitoring and following up all absences.
5. To provide organisational structures which support the early detection and identification of causes of student non- attendance.
6. To develop in the college community a culture that values all educational activities and to understand the importance of regular school attendance.

Implementation

1. Punctuality and Lateness

Students are required to be punctual to all classes. If students arrive late to school, they are required to “sign in” in the Attendance Office and receive a Late Pass, or via the Compass Kiosk. Likewise, when leaving early, students are required to “sign out” at the Attendance Office (or General Office if the Attendance Office is unattended) or via the Compass Kiosk. Students must present a note to the Attendance Officer signed by parents.

2. Attendance Recording Procedures

- a) At Taylors Lakes Secondary College, Compass is used to record student attendance and absences session by session, including Home Groups.
- b) All student absences are then aggregated on our CASES21 database from Compass and communicated to the DET (Department of Education & Training).
- c) DET and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records at any time, which may require teachers to submit their own period by period rolls to the auditors.
- d) All teaching staff are also required to keep their own accurate classroom attendance records for each class they teach. This enables a backup for the central electronic system and fulfills the requirements for DET auditors when necessary.

3. Attendance Rules and Absences

Students should attend 100% of school days or have a valid reason for non- attendance such as illness or another approved reason.

1) Types of non-attendance

Parent Approved Absences: Absence due to illness /family issue/bereavement must be verified by a note/telephone call from parent/guardian or by a medical certificate. External Suspensions will also be recorded as parent approved absences.

Parents/carers may also approve absences via Compass. In this case the absence will be noted as an approved absence.

College Approved Absences: Students may miss scheduled classes due to participation in a variety of College approved activities or due to internal suspension. A College approved activity may be defined as:

- Sport
- Camps and excursions
- Music lessons or performance
- Specialist numeracy/literacy support
- Speech Therapy
- School Production
- Student Wellbeing/welfare support
- Student Leadership activities
- Work experience or work placement
- Other approved activities arranged by teaching staff

An absence due to participation in a College approved activity must be verified prior to the activity by completing appropriate permission forms. The principal class member will grant final approval for any student to participate in a College activity where there is a need to clarify their participation. The student is permitted to participate in the activity so long as the class work set during the absence is completed to the satisfaction of the classroom teacher, and that there are no other concerns regarding work completion/attendance. Students, after an absence, may need to seek information from their class teachers on what needs to be done to catch up on missed lessons. The classroom teacher should notify the relevant Year Level Leader if this is a concern. Should the student not complete the set work as required, that student may not be permitted to participate in any further College approved activity until the outstanding work is redeemed.

Unapproved Absences:

Unexplained absences that cannot be authorised by any official means may lead to disciplinary action and will be recorded as unapproved.

ii) Consequences for Absences:

Year 7-10 Classes:

Where a student has an attendance record of <80% of their overall attendance in a semester, the College will examine the student's attendance pattern closely. In the event that a student's overall attendance falls below 80%, the student may be deemed to have an unsatisfactory result recorded for the subject.

Year 10 Accelerated students:

Where a student is completing a VCE subject in Year 10, the VCE rules will apply to that student.

VCE/VCAL Classes:

Where a student's overall attendance falls below 80% of a timetabled Unit, they may be deemed to have not satisfactorily met the course requirements of that subject and may have an N recorded for that subject Unit. This is regardless of whether the absence is approved or unapproved. As previously stated, approved absence includes: illness and medical reasons, family reasons or other explained absences, and unapproved absence consists of unexplained absences, truancy or reason that is not health/religious/cultural related. The class teacher will monitor each student's attendance and refer any student who falls into this category to the Year Level Leader, Sub School Leader or a relevant Assistant Principal to resolve the issue as in Attachment 2. If a student is absent and misses a SAC, a medical certificate or Statutory Declaration is required to be eligible to receive an extension of time or to reschedule the task.

a. Other Arrangements

i) Special Provision:

A student whose attendance is affected by periods of prolonged illness or other circumstances related to their personal situation/environment may apply to the Sub School Leader/Assistant Principal for special provision. The student will be required to provide supporting documentation. (e.g., medical certificate)

ii) Year 12 Early Leave and Late Start:

Year 12 students who provide the school with a Parent Consent Form, have permission to leave school at lunchtime if there is no scheduled class (study sessions) in Period 5 and 6 or when their afternoon

classes are cancelled. Likewise they can start school at recess if there is no scheduled class in Period 1 and 2. Students who have study sessions in Period 3 and 4 are not permitted to leave school and must be studying in either the Library or the Study Room at this time.

Students who arrive late due to having spares periods 1 and 2 need to sign in via Compass Kiosk or Attendance Office. Students with spares in the afternoon who leave at lunch or during periods 5 or 6 need to sign out via the Compass kiosk/Attendance Office.

iii) Year 10/11 Study Sessions:

All Year 10/11 students are required to attend school from 8:50 (home group) to the end of the school day. Year 10 students who are undertaking a VET subject and Year 11 students undertaking Unit 3/4 subject(s) or a VET subject and thus have study sessions on their timetable must be studying in the Library or the Study Room. No Year 10/11 students are allowed to either leave school early or come to school late at this time.

iv) Attendance and VET classes:

Students undertaking subjects under these arrangements will be required to adhere to the attendance requirements for completion of the VET study within the cluster of schools.

v) The last official day:

Students are required to attend school regularly until the last official day in Term 4. Students and parents will be notified by the school of the official dates each year as required.

b. Responsibilities of Staff in relation to Attendance

Outlined in more detail in Attachment 1: Responsibilities in relation to Attendance

c. Notification to the College of an absence by parents

- i. This is normally completed by a written note once the student returns to school, or by a telephone call on the same day of the absence. Parents are asked to telephone the school or email the Attendance Office prior to 8.30am if their student is going to be absent from school on that day.
- ii. An absence note or Medical Certificate is required to explain all absences. Absence notes should be provided to the Attendance Office and the Home Group teachers should regularly prompt students to bring notes as required.
- iii. Where a telephone call has occurred between the parent and the Attendance Officer, and a valid reason for absence is provided at that stage, this will be recorded as an approved absence.
- iv. Parents can log in to Compass and state the reason for and approve absences remotely.

d. Notification from the College to the parent of an absence

The Attendance Officer and the Sub School Leaders will examine daily attendance records. The College will attempt to make contact with the parent of any student (Years 7-12) who has been absent on that day unless the reason for the absence has been notified. Parents will be contacted on the first day of absence. In addition, where there is a need to query a reason for absence or lateness to school, parents will be contacted.

e. Parent Access to Attendance Data

Parents may request a copy of their child's attendance record at any stage. This can be arranged through a request to the Attendance Office. The school community can also access live and summary attendance data via logging into the parent Portal on Compass.

f. Extended Travel

Students may on occasion be granted authority by the Principal to be absent from school to undertake travel or activities which, although not part of the school program, are considered by the school to represent worthwhile educational or personal development opportunities for the student. Examples would be where students are to travel overseas with their parents, and interstate sporting or musical trips not associated with the school.

In granting authority for such absences, the chief consideration should be the effect of the absence on the educational progress of the student. The following procedures apply:

- i. Parents make a request to the Principal for the extended absence to be classed as "approved".
- ii. Where the period of absence and circumstances are deemed to have a detrimental effect on the student's educational progress, the student may be required to complete the unit/year level the following year.

iii. The dates of such absences will be relayed to classroom teachers, who may put a learning plan in place over the duration of the absence

iv. Approval for VCE students will be given extra consideration due to requirements for attendance.

g. Resolution of Issues related to Non-attendance

Outlined in more detail in Attachment 2: Processes for responding to unsatisfactorily explained student absences

Evaluation

Review of Policy: Next Review 2021

Approved by College Council: December 5th 2018

References

School Attendance Guidelines 2018

The legislative bases affecting student attendance are as follows:

- In accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.
- 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.
- Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:
- There is an approved exemption from school attendance or attendance and enrolment for the student, or
- The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.
- A Principal or Regional Director (depending on the circumstances) may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance or attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time
- For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. The school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- The Family Law Act 1975 section 61(c), which provides that each of the parents of a child under 18 has parental responsibility for the child. A 'parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
- The Community Services Act 1970 section 74(c), which also specifies that parents of school age children must send them to school unless there is a reasonable excuse.

Attachment 1: Responsibilities in relation to Attendance

Expectations of Parents by the College

Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary. Parents are required to provide official notification to the College if their child is absent.

Home Group Teachers

- a) To accurately and consistently mark the roll at the start of home group each morning.
- b) To mark a student late if they arrive after 8.50am.
- c) To follow up consistent lateness with a chat to the student/s in question and a consequence
- d) To promote the importance of attendance and punctuality
- e) To access Compass unexplained absence reports on a weekly basis and follow up unexplained absences with students and ask them to bring in a note from home/approve absences via Compass
- f) To remind students that absence notes and medical certificates should be provided to the Attendance Office (Year 7-12)
- g) To bring to the attention of the Year Level Leader any student whose attendance is irregular, any students who do not provide written notes or adequately explain absences, or whose absences appear unwarranted.

Classroom Teachers

- a) To electronically record student attendance within the first 15 minutes of every class as well as maintaining their own record of attendance
- b) To be accountable for timely and accurate roll marking for every class
- c) Follow up consistent lateness with consequences
- d) To raise any concerns, issues or discrepancies when a student is absent to the Year Level Leader, or by forwarding notification immediately to the Attendance Office
- e) To monitor and report via Compass when a student becomes in breach of the attendance requirements for satisfactory course completion where applicable, to be followed up by YLLs, SSLs and APs.
- f) To follow the correct procedures in relation to attendance when organizing and running excursions, camps, sports teams or incursions or any other activity that students are not attending their regular classes.

Year Level Leaders

- a) Implement appropriate consequences when incidents for truancy have been identified
- b) Use Compass to generate attendance reports. Analyse, make appropriate changes and follow up where deemed necessary.
- c) To record attendance information/approvals on Compass in a timely manner when particular students are dealt with by a Year Level Leader
- d) To contact home when a student's attendance falls below a specific requirement as outlined in Attachment 2.
- e) To provide the attendance office with the names of a selected group of students from their year level for daily monitoring, that have been identified as having irregular day-to-day attendance patterns or who have a very low overall attendance.

Sub School Leader

- a) To monitor and respond to student attendance including lateness at a group level, ensuring that Year Level Leaders and other student management staff are provided with appropriate and timely data to identify and respond to poor attendance.
- b) To identify early students who are 'at-risk' of not satisfactorily meeting attendance requirements.
- c) To coordinate, monitor and support home group teachers, classroom teachers, students and parents to implement attendance procedures and policy.
- d) To identify attendance issues with particular students and timely response to the identified issues, for instance, by communicating with parents and convening a conference as in Attachment 2.

- e) To co-ordinate the collection of timely, accurate and reliable attendance data
- f) Tracking the overall attendance data within each Sub School cohort reporting findings to stakeholders as required.
- g) To oversee the entering/updating of attendance data on CASES21 in a timely manner
- h) To initiate strategies to enhance student attendance and promote school attendance in the school community.
- i) To work intensively with a selected group of 'at risk' students to improve their attendance by
 - Determining the reasons for non-attendance.
 - Working with parents to solve problems related to attendance.
 - Working on a case-by- case basis with the student to address the issues related to their non-attendance.
- j) To liaise with relevant staff, student counsellors and outside agencies to improve the attendance of these students.
- k) To be a source of advice to Year Level Leaders and Home Group teachers to improve the attendance of other students who are not part of students at risk but have the same attendance issues on an individual case basis.
- l) To take responsibility for progress towards accountability targets with specific reference to
 - Absence data, Lateness data
 - Development and documentation of students at risk identification procedure
 - Fortnightly attendance monitoring procedure
 - Improving attendance to 90% or above at each year level
 - Improving overall attendance to 90% or above
- m) To report to College Council on progress towards targets in the relevant area of responsibility.
- n) To prepare the relevant data and information required for the Assistant Principal to make a referral to the Regional Attendance Officer in the case of a student accruing an unacceptable number of unexplained absences or when the whereabouts of a student is unknown.
- o) To support all staff members in any issue relating to roll marking and attendance.

Principal Class Members

- a) To ensure that accountability requirements are being complied to by staff responsible for student attendance.
- b) To be informed and act upon serious attendance issues referred by teachers, Year Level Leaders, Sub School Leaders, Student Welfare personnel or Attendance Officer.
- c) Analyse attendance data to determine which students have not satisfactorily met attendance requirements. In conjunction with YLLs and SSL, identify attendance issues with particular students and timely response to the identified issues, for instance, by communicating with parents and convening a conference as in Attachment 2.
- d) To liaise with Sub School Leaders and analyse student absence data.
- e) To collect copies of teachers' class attendance rolls on a semester basis for auditing purposes.
- f) To record attendance information/approvals on Compass in a timely manner when particular students are dealt with by a Principal class member.
- g) To provide the ES Staff information to record any internal or external suspensions electronically.
- h) To be responsible for ensuring that attendance processes are being implemented and reviewed.
- i) To be responsible for determining and communicating when students have not met attendance requirements for the satisfactory completion of a class/Unit.
- j) To submit referrals to the Regional Attendance Officer after consultation with YLL, SSL and upon the determination that the College has met its requirements in looking to improve the attendance of particular student/s with no reasonable improvement.

Attendance Officer

- a) To be responsive to attendance issues as they arise
- b) To act upon the daily absence data by notifying all parents where a child is absent.
- c) To intensively monitor the daily attendance of students identified by YLLs/SSL's that have been identified as having irregular day-to-day attendance patterns or who have a very low overall attendance.
- d) To support in following up any specific issues as raised by Year Level Leaders/Sub School Leaders in line with their responsibility to deal with issues.
- e) To enter any reason for absence as provided through absence notes or medical certificates
- f) To enter any reason for absence on Compass for the day if it is provided by the parent through a telephone call or email.
- g) To ensure that communication with parents is logged via Compass.
- h) To issue sign-in and sign-out passes to students as required and assist with students signing in/out electronically via the Compass kiosk.
- i) To archive all absence notes as required.
- j) To maintain attendance record of external VET students.
- k) To mail out unexplained absence letters when it has been determined necessary to do so.
- l) To prepare absence summary data when requested.
- m) To update rolls as required.

Attachment 2: Processes for responding to unsatisfactorily explained student absences and/or where students are in breach of attendance requirements for course completion

The following steps can be seen as progressive and need to continue only where preceding action has not resolved the attendance problem.

1. General Student Absences

Parent Contact via the Attendance Office

Where a satisfactory explanation is not provided, parents or guardians will be contacted by the attendance officer on the day of the absence.

Parent Contact via the Year Level Leader

- If the reason for a student's absence remains unresolved after an initial attempt at contact, or in the case where a student's attendance falls below 90%, the school (Year Level Leader) will contact parents/guardians and student via a phone call. This will be documented on Compass via General Attendance Observation.
- The aim of contact is to: ensure that the parents/guardians are aware of the absence and fully appreciate its implication, examine the reasons for non-attendance and identify whether further assistance will be needed to re-establish attendance.
- The outcome of the contact should lead to informal arrangements to improve the student's attendance. YLL's can use their discretion and organise a meeting if they deem it to be necessary.
- If student's attendance does not improve within 4 weeks, YLL will refer the matter to SSL and SSL will make contact with parent/guardian and arrange a meeting.

Parent Contact via Sub School Leader (SSL)

- If a student's attendance does not improve after 4 weeks, or if a student's attendance is below 80%; SSL will contact parent/guardian via phone call and an official SSL letter/Compass letter of less than 80% will be sent home requesting a meeting.
- The meeting will focus on:
 - supportive intervention
 - individual student goals entrenched in a data target
 - a return to school plan could be utilized during this meeting to include such as action as
 - Modification of the curriculum
 - Modification of student's timetable
 - Increased supervision of the student
 - Personal support and counselling for the student
 - Referral to other support agencies
 - Child First referral and assistance

If a parent/guardian fails to attend a scheduled meeting, SSL will refer the matter on to the Assistant Principal.

If attendance does not improve within 4 weeks, the student will be referred to the Assistant Principal who will make a referral to the Regional School Attendance Officer.

This will be documented via Compass under "Concern Regarding Attendance".

Assistant Principal

- To use data and Compass entries to support a written application to the Regional School Attendance Office regarding the student's absence
- This will be documented under "Concern Regarding Attendance".

2. Students appearing in breach of attendance requirements for a particular VCE subject/Unit

Where a student has been identified by a classroom teacher/YLL/SSL/AP as being in breach of attendance rules meet course requirements the Year Level Leader will verify the accuracy of the attendance record, confer with the Sub School Leader/Assistant Principal. The Sub School Leader will contact the parent and send Compass letter.

3. Attendance of students in special circumstances

Clarification of guardianship

Where a student is a ward of the state or where someone other than the parent has guardianship, the Principal should ascertain who has the legal responsibility for the student when considering action to be taken in relation to attendance problems.

Students who live independently

Students who live independently are generally able to give consent to formalities normally approved by parents or guardians. Attendance concerns should also be negotiated directly with the student. This circumstance does not prevent the Principal seeking assistance through the Department of Human Services or other community agencies where he/she feels that the educational well-being of the student aged less than seventeen years is in jeopardy through attendance irregularities.