Student Attendance & Engagement Policy

2021

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Document Context

The Student Attendance Policy for Waroona District High School should be considered in the context of:

- *The School Education Act (Part 2 – Division 3) – "the Act"*
- *The Student Attendance in Public Schools Policy & Procedures (July 2021)*
- The School Education Regulations 2000– *"the Regulations"*

Rationale

The Department of Education (the Department) monitors the attendance of all students enrolled in school, and works with others agencies to maximise student engagement with learning. It does this in a way that builds shared responsibility between schools, students, parents and the broader community.

Background

Where a student is enrolled in a public school, the School Education Act 1999 (the Act) requires that the student attends the school on site or an educational program of the school elsewhere as directed by the Principal.

The parents (or responsible person) of a child who is enrolled in a school are responsible under the Act for ensuring their child is attending on a daily basis. Parents (or responsible person) may be asked to provide an acceptable explanation for any absence to the Principal. For the purpose of this policy, parent is defined as the parent at law. Further information about the terms parent and responsible person can be found in the definitions section at the end of this policy.

The Principal is responsible for creating and maintaining a safe and positive learning environment which promotes the importance of school attendance, engagement and participation, and for the management of regular school attendance.

Consistent attendance and participation at school are essential factors in achieving social and academic learning outcomes. Schools that develop a supportive learning environment and an engaging and relevant curriculum create conditions conducive to regular school attendance.

Approaches to Attendance

At Waroona District High School we have the following shared expectations regarding attendance:

- *We expect student to attend 90% or more of the time to increase their chance of success*
- *Students must attend and engage in learning for academic, social and emotional growth and inclusion*
- We must maintain a high standard of attendance and encourage and reward regular attendance
- *Absence must be explained, for valid reason and promptly followed up*
- *Attendance below 90% must be investigated and/or case managed*
- *Students must catch up on missed work due to absence.*
- *Punctuality is important to maintaining regular attendance*

We are committed to developing approaches to attendance relevant to their particular context to support student attendance. This will include:

Promotion Approaches	Prevention Approaches	Response Approaches
Promotion approaches that focus on building student, family, school and community resilience, and the promotion of protective factors.	*Prevention approaches that are designed to prevent poor attendance for those students most at risk.*	*Response approaches that provide support or interventions for those students who are not attending.*
• Develop **shared understandings** and expectations regarding school attendance • Strong focus on attendance in early years	• Maintain accurate attendance records • **Early identification and intervention** by teachers and through the use of	• **Case Management** of students at risk (below 90% attendance) • **Incentive programs** for individual students and families

• Apply a **whole school approach** to achieve sustained increases in student attendance including promotion of whole school attendance rewards	data (Student Attendance Reporting - SAR)	• **Tailored interventions** for specific cohorts and individuals
	• **Literacy and Numeracy** programs, particularly in the Early Years	• Letters of concern
• Promote sense of belonging and social connections	• Provide a **breakfast/lunch program**	• **Documented Attendance Improvement plans** for students below 90% attendance
• **Communicate** importance of attendance to students, parents at assemblies, in newsletter articles, Facebook posts	• Incorporating **cultural activities**	• **Support structures** in place for students returning to school after prolonged absence
	• Whole school incentive and reward for 90+ attendance	
• Provide an **engaging and supportive learning environment**	• Use of attendance decline report	• Address both in and out of school factors contributing to low attendance
	• Extra-curricular programs	• Home visits and student collection where appropriate
• Work with the community to increase student attendance	• Maintain School Chaplain program	
	• Build relationships and strong communication channels with families	• SWU referrals
• Collaborate with local Aboriginal community members to develop strong, sustainable education partnerships that reflect the aspirations of Aboriginal students	• Encourage a growth mindset so that all progress us valued	• Use of Student Attendance Toolkit
		• Responsible Parenting Agreement
		• Attendance Advisory Panel

Attendance Records

The Principal or their nominee will:

- keep accurate attendance records for every student enrolled at the school (including attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions for Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Primary students; and every lesson/period for Secondary students). These attendance records must be able to be reproduced in a written form;
- ensure that all attendance records are stored for a period of 7 years from the last date of enrolment for a student (Regulations – Division 3, 21(1));
- ensure that all explanations for absence from a parent (or responsible person) are stored for no less than two years on the official Student File in Administration;
- record whether a student's absence was authorised or unauthorised;
- record whether a student's absence is acceptable or unacceptable;
- regularly provide all parents (or responsible person) with updates of their child's attendance rate and a schedule of their child's unexplained absences so that the absences can be appropriately explained as soon as possible.
- where parent (or responsible person) has provided permission, issue a Leave Pass to any student leaving the school during school hours and retain a record of all Leave Passes provided; and
- record a student as:
  - present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction;
  - attending if they are on a school-approved activity;
  - an authorised absence during the period of suspension;
  - an authorised absence if they are absent due to cultural/religious events.
- If student cannot be located and parents cannot be contacted, within 15 days of start of an absence:
  - complete SWV Request form and submit electronically;
  - retain student on current enrol register until notification that student placed on SWU list;
  - record unexplained absence until notified that student can be removed from register from last date of attendance or authorised absence.

Teachers will:
- maintain a hard copy roll which can be accessed, independent of the school network and mains power, during an evacuation or other significant event.
- enter attendance through Student Registration in SIS within the first 10 minutes of:
  - ➢ the day and the end of lunch for Primary School students; or
  - ➢ the start of a lesson for Secondary School students.
- verify the accuracy of attendance data at the end of each day through the Expected Absence report in SIS.
- provide supplementary attendance information as required to support the planning for individual students and school-wide attendance improvement.

Management of Attendance
Our school is committed to working in partnership with families to acknowledge students with excellent attendance, support improved attendance for students with need and manage students where their attendance is unacceptable. Evidence shows that where we work with families to improve and maintain attendance we are likely to have the greatest success. Intervening early where attendance has dropped below an acceptable standard is essential. Teachers engaging at the classroom level to provide a safe environment, engaging lessons and curriculum, as well as building relationships with students is critical. Our school will manage attendance in a coordinated and positive manner to encourage the behaviour of regularly attending and engaging.

The Deputy Principals will:
- review weekly the attendance of all students, paying particular attention to those with attendance below 90%;
- case manage student attendance for those in 'at risk' categories
- develop an Attendance Improvement Plan, Group Education Plan and/or Individual Education Plan at least each semester for:
  - ➢ students in the care of the Commissioner for Child Protection and Family Services;
  - ➢ students at educational risk because their attendance is below 90%.
- engage families and the wider community in conversation and strategies to improve the attendance and engagement of our students via Case Management Meetings.
- provide the school structures, resources and procedures necessary to effectively engage students and improve their attendance.
- engage in strategic planning and evidence review that supports improved attendance and engagement for students who come to school less than 90% of the time;
- strategically allocate resources to improve attendance and engagement;
- provide reasonable and appropriate adjustments to curriculum access for students with mental or physical illness/health care needs which may impact ability to attend school site.

Teachers will:
- monitor the attendance and engagement of students in their class(es);
- reward/acknowledge students who attend between 90 and 100% of the time;
- engage with students and their families when attendance falls below 90% to bring about improvement;
- engage with students and their families when a student truants from their class to bring about improvement;
- notify the Deputy Principals when a student's attendance falls below 90%, where they truant or where there are any other anomalies;
- apply all processes as outlined in the Waroona District High School *Attendance and Engagement Procedures*.

The Engagement Officer and AIEO will:
- monitor the Attendance and Engagement of all students in our school. As appropriate the *Attendance and Engagement Policy and Procedures* will be applied to support appropriate student attendance and engagement;
- make daily follow up phone calls for absent students;
- support teachers by acknowledging those students who have attendance above 90%;

- engage with teachers, students and families support improved attendance and engagement of students; engage the community, where appropriate, in the delivery of programs that support improved student engagement and educational outcomes;

- engage external agencies, where appropriate, in the delivery of programs that support improved student engagement and educational outcomes.

We encourage parents/caregivers and families to:
- make attending and engaging positively at school a priority in the home;
- reward your child(ren) for attending and engaging positively at school;
- explain absences where they occur;
- discuss attendance and engagement with teachers and our school when you become concerned;
- work in partnership with our school to support good attendance and positive engagement.

Definitions

Attendance Panel - A small group of people appointed under the School Education Act 1999 to provide advice and assistance to students and the parents of students who are not fulfilling the legal requirements of school attendance. An attendance panel may recommend (via a Regional Executive Director) that the Director General make an application to the Children's Court for a Responsible Parenting Order. An attendance panel is not required prior to commencement of prosecution of a parent under the Act.

Authorised Absence - An absence where the reason provided by the parent or Department is considered to be legitimate and deemed acceptable by the Principal or their nominee.

Children Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown (CWU) List - A list, usually referred to as the CWU List, contains the names of children who are missing from schools and educational programs in Western Australia. This list is distributed to administrators in private schools and some agencies by agreement.

Employee - A person who is currently employed under the School Education Act 1999 or the Public Sector Management Act 1994.

Parent - A person who at law has responsibility:
a) For the long-term care, welfare and development of the child; or
b) For the day to day care, welfare and development of the child.

Responsible Person - A person:
- who is a parent of the student;
- who, in the case of a student who has turned 18 or is a prescribed child, the student; or
- who is an adult, responsible for the child and whose details have been provided on enrolment.

Responsible Parenting Agreement - A formal written agreement between a parent and an authorised officer in one of the Departments of Education, Child Protection or Corrective Services. Parents may be asked to enter into a Responsible Parenting Agreement where the child is under 15 years of age and demonstrating anti-social or offending behaviour, not attending school where there is no reasonable cause for the absence or is at risk of developing such behaviours. Agreements document support to be provided by the Department (and/or other agencies) and actions to be undertaken by parents.

Responsible Parenting Order - A Responsible Parenting Order compels a parent(s) to take up the support offered by agencies and to meet their responsibilities in exercising appropriate control over their child's anti-social, offending or truanting behaviour. A Regional Executive Director may endorse a Principal's recommendation to the Director General that an application for an order be made in respect of the child, where every effort to engage the parent voluntarily has failed and it is considered that it will make a positive difference to the child's behaviour.

Unauthorised Absence - Unauthorised absences encompass truancy, those not considered acceptable by the Principal, nominee or the Department and where an explanation has not been provided by the parent.