



STUDENT ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

1. AIM

- To ensure all students are attending school to increase academic development
- To align school practices with government legislative
- This procedure provides details for the execution of the CECWA Student Attendance Guidelines.

Sources of Authority	
CECWA Policy	Student Attendance
Executive Directive	Community: Student Safety, Wellbeing and Behaviour Executive Directive

2. SCOPE

- Parents and caregivers
- Aranmore staff
- School Principal

3. DEFINITIONS

- Compulsory school age: from the beginning of the year in which the child reaches the age of 6 years and 6 months
- Refer to the CECWA Student Attendance Guidelines and Policy Hub

4. PROCEDURE

Part 1: Legislation and Policy

Attendance is measured as the number of actual full-time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Years One to Ten as a percentage of the total number of possible student days. Educational risk is defined as falling below 90%. Attendance below 90% can be further divided into the categories of:

- Indicated (80-89%)
- Moderate (60-79%)
- Severe (<60%)

Stakeholder Requirements

Each school is required to keep accurate attendance records for all its students. This includes taking attendance. Attendance must be recorded by teaching staff at least:

- twice per day in primary school



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Although all school staff are vital in supporting regular student attendance, the Principal is responsible for:

- Keeping accurate attendance records for every child enrolled in the school; these can be stored electronically but must be able to be reproduced in written form
- Maintaining records for the appropriate period of time under the School Education Regulations 2000
- Managing alternate attendance arrangements
- Implementing plans and strategies to encourage regular attendance

Records must include:

- If the student was physically present or not
- If the student was attending a different approved activity (the teacher running that activity must also record attendance)
- Any reasons given for an absence
- If the reason for the absence is reasonable
- A flag for unexplained absences (removed if a reason is given later)
- Information about any unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes
- A mark for half-day attendance if the student is present for at least two hours of instruction

Authorised absence (EXPLAINED) – A principal can record an absence as ‘Authorised’ if there has been a reasonable explanation for a student’s absence.

A reasonable excuse for the purposes of explaining a school absence can include:

- Medical or dental appointments
- Bereavement or attendance at a funeral, including Sorry Business
- Illnesses and accidents
- Unforeseen and unexplained circumstances
- Compliance with another law that results in the child’s absence
- The child is receiving distance education through a registered school
- The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment
- The child has been suspended
- The child is attending or observing a religious event, culture observance or obligation.

Unauthorised absence (UNEXPLAINED) – A principal can record an absence as ‘Unauthorised’ when there has been no reasonable explanation provided for the absence.

If a reason is given to the principal and it is not approved, then the school will notify the parent/carer in writing.

In general, it is expected that these absences would not be excused:

- The parent did not seek approval beforehand, or in accordance with school procedure.
- The student was absent due to leisure or social activities without approval.
- The conditions of an authorised absence were not met (for example, a student absence learning plan during a family holiday was not completed).
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences.

Principals should make sure attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to look for attendance patterns. Patterns of absences can be across the school, a class or at the individual student level. Having accurate data, including the reasons for absences, is important for:

- developing improvement strategies for students



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- reporting for funding requirements
- using as evidence when there are attendance concerns.

Parents/Carers responsibility

- Parents/carers must enrol a child of compulsory age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction
- Parents/carers must provide an explanation for any absence their child has and work in partnership with the school to support attendance

The parent/guardian of the student is required to:

- Ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless complying with an arrangement under section 24
- Provide an explanation for any absence their child has within three days

Part 2: Research

The importance of attendance

School attendance:

- is strongly related to increased academic development
- provides students with opportunities to develop social competence and relationships, be in a language-rich environment, work with others, and learn skills like problem-solving and persistence (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014)

School non-attendance:

- negatively impacts students' academic achievement in the current year but can also impact subsequent years
- is linked to increased social isolation for the student
- has a greater negative impact on young people's outcomes when it is an unauthorised absence (Hancock, Shepherd, Lawrence, & Zubrick, 2013)
- is correlated with leaving school with fewer qualifications which in turn can lead to unemployment, mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems and poor life outcomes

Causes of non-attendance

Causes of non-attendance are complex as they are often due to multiple causes, and these causes can overlap (Wilkins, 2008). Causes of non-attendance are also unique to each student and need to be understood in context. Reid (2013) suggests that students tend to have one clear reason why they start to miss school, but these reasons multiply over time. The factors that cause non-attendance at the individual, family, school, and community level are expanded in the CECWA Attendance Guidelines.

Drivers of non-attendance

In addition, to understand the causes of non-attendance, it is also necessary to understand the drivers of behaviour:

- escape – escape from aversive social and/or evaluative situations
- avoidance – avoid school related stimuli that provoke negative feelings
- reinforcement – to get attention from significant others, and to obtain tangible rewards outside of school



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These drivers act as push and pull factors that impact attendance (Reid, 2009). Students are pulled towards school because they know it is important but pushed away due to bullying, ineffective or powerless teachers, boring lessons, or not enough practical vocational learning.

The categories above provide a useful framework to identify causes of non-attendance. It is important to remember these factors are only a guide and do not necessarily explain each student's situation. Accurately identifying needs ensures that interventions are well suited to the issues that cause attendance problems.

Part 3 and 4: Recommendations, Strategies for Prevention and Intervention

To address non-attendance effectively, the school will:

Monitor attendance

- Teachers will monitor attendance rate through the SEQTA programme
- Teacher identifies students below 90% and begins to gather data
- Identify the causes of non-attendance
- Treat each case as unique
- Identify the fundamental drivers from the data
- Consider causes from multiple levels rather than just the student

Universal Support (Tier 1): Prevention

Universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students (promotion and prevention) including students whose good attendance could be maintained and cultivated as long as universal, prevention-oriented supports are in place.

- School climate strategies
- Safety-oriented strategies
- Building relationships
- Health-based strategies
- Mental health and social-emotional learning
- Parental involvement
- Attendance Monitoring (twice a month)
- Promoting attendance in schools

Early Intervention Support (Tier 2)

Provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence (specific groups). Students who have a history of moderate chronic absence (missing 10% or more of school) or present with a risk factor (e.g. a chronic illness like asthma) which makes attendance more tenuous may need a higher level of more individualised support in addition to benefiting from the universal supports.

- Adjunctive support to reduce distress (psychologist/counsellor)
- Identify and remove obstacles for non-attendance
- Establish regular parent contact
- Utilise mentoring (tutoring, advocacy)
- School/class restructuring
- Work on student engagement (liking school, interest in school work)
- Monitoring (daily or weekly)



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INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT (TIER 3)

Offers intensive support for individual students facing the greatest challenges in getting to school. Students with severe levels of chronic absence (missing 20% or more of school in the past year or during the first month of school) and/or facing a risk factor (such as involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice system, homelessness or having a parent who has been incarcerated).

Similar to Kearney and Graczyk (2014), NSSE (2007) stated principles of effective intervention for non-attendance, rather than strategies. These principles include:

1. Specialised and/or intensive case management
2. Family involvement
3. Sanctions for truancy and rewards for good attendance

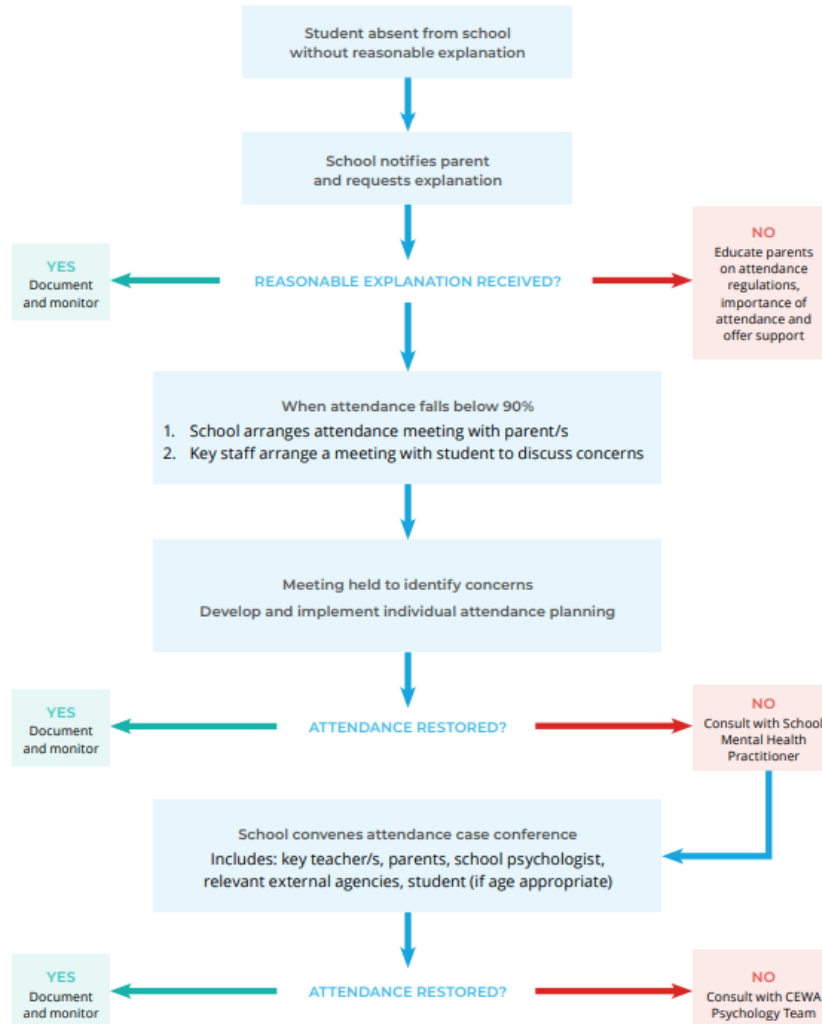
For specific steps the school with undertake for each Tier, see below.

For more information on strategies or templates, refer to the Student Attendance Guideline Resources.

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Student Non-Attendance Flow Chart





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Attendance Percentage	Tier Support	School Specific Steps
90% Average 5 Days of Term	Tier 1 Support: Promoting Attendance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Questions to ask self: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I providing a positive and safe classroom • Am I creating engaging lessons • Is the student happy in my classroom 2. Ensure all absentees have been resolved and start to investigate data: Is there a clear reason? 3. Informal phone call to parents and send Letter 1 home 4. Inform leadership
80% Average 1 day per week 10% or more of school	Tier 2 Support: Early Intervention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Send Letter 2 home 2. Teacher and a member of Leadership Team will meet with student's parents and complete Attendance Interview 3. If needed, teacher or member of Leadership Team will interview student to gather data 4. Complete Non-Attendance Checklist (Cewa Resource 12)
Below 70% Average 2 day per week (Missing 20% or more of school year in the past year)	Tier 3 Support: Intensive Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure above steps have been completed 2. Use Cewa Resource 13: Supporting students with High Levels of Non-Attendance 3. Use Cewa Resource 14: Checklist for Managing Tier 3 Non-Attendance 4. Use Cewa Resource 15: Primary Student Attendance Improvement Plan 5. Use Cewa Resource 16: Primary Student Rewards Chart

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Letter to Parents/Carers – Tier 1

Date

Every School Day Counts

Dear Parent/Carer,

We are contacting you to notify you that we are concerned about your child's attendance. Currently, they have missed **xx(days)** out of **xx(days)** this term.

At Aranmore CPS, we recognise that attendance matters. Studies show that good levels of attendance are linked to academic achievement and positive social outcomes.

How can you help?

- Plan holidays for non-school days
- Try to schedule appointments for the end of the school day
- Make sure they go to school every day unless they are ill
- Ensure your child has a good routine before school (alarm, breakfast, pack bag night before, etc.)

How can we help?

- Teachers show a genuine interest in your child's well-being and future success
- Teachers support your child to build positive relationships with other students
- Teachers support your child's learning to ensure they feel confident in the classroom and achieve their full potential.

If you or your child are experiencing any difficulties related to attendance, we would like to be able to support you. Please contact school contact on phone number or email.

Yours truly,

Principal name/Teacher name



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Letter to Parents/Carers – Tier 2

Date

Dear Parent/Carer,

Attendance for **Child's Name**

At Aranmore CPS, we recognise and are sympathetic to the fact that legitimate illness is a valid reason for reduced attendance. However, as partners with you in the education of your child, it is important to point out that reduced attendance has a large impact on academic learning.

If your child has received this letter, it means that their attendance rate for the period mentioned below is under 90%, which Catholic Education WA classifies as being at-risk.

Attendance Percentage for the period **xxx to xxx = xxx%**

In order to access the full curriculum, and give your child the best chance of success, Catholic Education WA recommends the rate of 90% - 100% as 'Regular Attendance'. When attendance falls below this level it indicates a student may be at risk of not reaching their full potential. The chart below gives a breakdown of the amount of time missed in a year, and if maintained, how it impacts on the future education of your child.

Period of Absence (Years 1 – 10)	Rate of Attendance	Equivalent School Missed	Level of Educational Risk
Average of 5 Days per Term	90%	1 Year	Classified as regular attendance
1 Day per Week	80%	2 Years	Indicated At-Risk
1.5 Days per Week	70%	3 Years	Moderate Risk
2 Days per Week	60%	4 Years	Moderate Risk
3 Days per Week	50%	5 Years	Severe Risk
5 Weeks per Term	40%	6 Years	Severe Risk

Once a student falls below the classification of 'Regular Attendance' their weekly attendance is monitored. If the absenteeism continues, I will contact you by phone to discuss any problems with getting your child to school.

Parents will then be required to attend a meeting at the school to discuss ways we can support you to improve your child's attendance.

Please contact the school if you require any further assistance in helping your child to improve their attendance so that together we can optimise their learning opportunities.

Yours truly,



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Principal Name/Teacher Name _____

Student Meeting Prompts

Student: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

Questions	Student Response
How do you feel when you are at school?	
What makes you feel like coming to school?	
What makes you feel like staying at home? Do you feel safe and comfortable at school?	
What would make school a better/easier place to be? (If there was a video recording what was happening if school was a better place and we sat down to watch the tape, what would we see happening? What would be different to right now?)	
How happy are you with your life right now? If you were to put it on a scale between 1 and 10 where would you be right now? What might it take to move you up a bit? If a miracle happened tonight and you were to feel really good about your life what would that be like? What would be different to right now?	
Are there any particular issues/topics that you would like to find out more about/talk to others about? Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dealing with worries• Getting along with other people• Solving/sorting out fights• How to relax/chill-out/look after yourself• Making stuff/being creative	
Are there any issues you wouldn't want to discuss?	



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Is there anything else you would like to tell us? That you would like the school to know?	
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PARENT MEETING Tips for an Effective Meeting

1. Approach the issue of absences out of concern, rather than compliance.

Say: "Thank you for talking/meeting with me today to discuss... with your help, together we can support your child at school."

2. Refer to what you have noticed in regard to the student's attendance and report absences by month, rather than by year.

Say: "Missing 4 days a month is concerning and is really just too many days for ____"

3. Become curious with parents regarding what is happening in regard to their child's attendance.

Say: "I'm just wondering is everything ok and what might be happening for ____ at the moment?"

4. Highlight the downsides of absences, not the upside of attendance.

Say: "We want your student to be successful at school and missing too many days can be harmful" instead of "attending every day is beneficial".

5. Give parents specific reasons why absences matter, rather than making vague statements.

Say things like: "We find students cannot make up for too many absences with homework or take home assignments and it is hard for students to catch up once he returns to school"

6. Be realistic about what you are asking parents to do. Avoid implying that parents should send children to school when they're sick.

Say: "Students get sick and should not attend school, but there might be times when your student wasn't contagious and was well enough, we would really expect to see them at school?"

7. Describe how school builds a foundation for future success.

Say: "What the students are learning today will help them in tomorrow's lesson"

8. Encourage parents to do everything they can to ensure their child does not miss school.

Say: "I'm wondering if there is anything you might suggest that would help ____ in regard to their attendance, is there anything you feel the school could do?"



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9. Use simple, easy to understand language. Avoid complicated statistics, hyperboles, or metaphors.

PARENT MEETING Questions

Student: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Participants of meeting: _____

Can you let us know what is happening for [student] given they have missed school?	
Can you think of anything that may help [student] with attendance?	
How is [student] going with their learning at school? (too easy/too hard/certain subjects)	
Are there any issues at school that cause [student] to miss school?	
Is there anything the school can do to support [student] attendance?	
Is there anything we can do to support you in supporting [student]?	
Additional Questions <i>More specific to child</i>	
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