

# SURFSIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE POLICY



### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this 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 and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Surfside Primary School has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### 2. SCOPE

- This policy applies to all students at Surfside Primary School.
- 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 Surfside Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

### 3. DEFINITION

- *Parent* – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

### 4. BACKGROUND

- Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted.
- 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 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. These outcomes have later implications for employment, and a range of health risk behaviours.

## **5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

Students are expected to attend Surfside Primary School 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 Surfside Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Surfside Primary School for particular activities.

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

### **5.1 The school:**

Surfside Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school 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.

The school will articulate high expectations to all members of the school community by:

- Proactively encouraging high rates of attendance at school through newsletter articles
- Regularly communicating with parents about expectations for attendance
- Promoting awareness that absence results in quantifiable lost learning time and opportunities
- Modelling punctuality across the whole school
- Acknowledging high levels of attendance and punctuality

### **5.2 Our Students**

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

We expect students to

- Attend normal school hours every day of each term.
- Be on time by arriving at school at school by 8:30 am to be unpacked and ready for learning at 8:45 am
- Enter via the office should a student arrive late

### **5.3 Parents**

Surfside Primary School 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 Surfside Primary School 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.

#### **5.4 Supporting and promoting attendance**

Surfside Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

#### **5.5 Recording attendance**

Surfside Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Surfside Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by teachers marking the roll twice daily, morning and afternoon entering the following code using Compass Software Program:

- If a student is present place a 'P' or 'NP' if absent.
- Mark as late any student arriving after the morning music has finished.
- Mark as not present from all sessions where a student leaves school early

Staff will inform the Leadership team of any student with a pattern of ongoing absence

**Note:** Where a teacher is absent the relieving teacher will be given a paper roll to mark.

#### **5.6 Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Surfside Primary School of absences by:

- Notifying the school in writing, entering the absence on Compass, or telephoning the school

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Surfside Primary School will notify parents by SMS/push notification by 9:30 am.

Surfside Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The 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 Surfside Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

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

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal 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.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

### **5.7 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, Surfside Primary School 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 wellbeing staff. We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

### **5.8 Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Surfside Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, the school may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the Barwon South West Region 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.

## 6. RESOURCES

Student Engagement Policy

[School Attendance Guidelines](#)

The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](#)



Non-attendance  
flowchart.pdf



Positive  
Engagement & Atte

## 7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

**This policy is reviewed annually by school council.**

**This policy was last updated and ratified by School Council on June 15 2021 and will be reviewed in March 2022.**