



Attendance Policy

Document Date	Tuesday, 1 November 2022
Process Owner	Principal through Director of Wellbeing
Approval Authority	Education Standing Committee
Review Date	2024
Revision History	Attendance Policy (2019)

Purpose

The Attendance Policy upholds the *South Australian Education and Children's Services Act 2019* (the Act) that requires children of compulsory school age (“... a child who is 6 years of age and less than 16 years of age”) living in South Australia, to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless exempted by the Minister for Education. Students of compulsory school age between 16 and 17 years are required to be in attendance at school participating in an approved learning program, or a combination of school and other approved training or learning program, unless exempted by the Minister for Education. The Act stipulates the responsibility of families to ensure their child's/children's school attendance.

Mercedes College as a registered non-government school is obligated under the Schools Assistance Act 2008 Subdivision B – National school performance and transparency requirements to report on student attendance. Attendance, reasons for absence and exemptions granted, are reported to Catholic Education SA and to the Commonwealth Government during Census periods. Students with persistent non-attendance or non-participation are required to be reported to the Department for Education.

Policy

Mercedes College is committed to:

- Providing a safe, success orientated and supportive environment.
- Providing relevant and developmentally appropriate learning and pastoral programs for all students.
- Maintaining accurate records of attendance and reasons for absence.
- Ensuring absences are followed up through early identification and intervention strategies.
- Working with families to develop strategies to resolve attendance difficulties.
- Complying with student attendance reporting obligations.
- Complying with procedures for managing applications for exemptions and home schooling.

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies for all students of compulsory school age as defined in the Act, for the duration of their enrolment at Mercedes College and binds all parties as outlined in the associated Attendance Procedures.

Underlying Principles

Article 28 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989*, to which Australia is a signatory, applies for children under the age of 18 years and binds State Parties to ensuring that children and young people have the right to education regardless of race, gender or disability; residence in detention, or refugee status.

An approved learning program includes:

- International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs: Primary Years Program, Middle Years Program, Diploma Program.
- South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses, or accredited courses offered by Registered Training Organisations (RTO).
- Apprenticeships or Traineeships.
- University Degrees, Diplomas or other University award courses.
- Other programs authorised by the Minister for Education and Child Development.
- A combination of the above.

Daily school attendance is important for student learning, wellbeing and development. Patterns of attendance and absence that are set up in the early years, typically persist throughout education and life. Children and young people who are frequently absent are likely to miss opportunities to learn the skills necessary for their future education, which may lead to compromised wellbeing, learning, educational and employment outcomes. Young people with interrupted educational programs, or who leave school before completing Year 12 or an equivalent have significantly diminished options for their post school pathways.

Early intervention is critical in addressing emerging patterns of absenteeism. It is expected that college staff will follow up habitual student absenteeism defined as 5 per cent absenteeism and chronic absenteeism, defined as 10 per cent absenteeism, as indicators of potentially poor student outcomes.

Any day of school missed due to school refusal is concerning and requires prompt follow up from the student's Class/Home Group Teacher.

Persistent absenteeism is prescribed under Sections 68 (3) and 69 (3) of the Act, and the associated *Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020* (the Regulations) as when a student



of compulsory school age records 10 or more days unauthorised absence in a Term.

Families have a responsibility under the Act to ensure that their children attend school regularly. If a child or young person does not attend without a 'prescribed reason' for their non-attendance or an approved exemption, families may be guilty of an offence and liable to prosecution.

Attendance includes physically being present in class, as well as engaging in approved flexible learning arrangements, when online delivery of learning is required or provided. This could include where State and Commonwealth laws and regulations require students to engage in remote learning, which is considered school attendance for the purposes of this Policy.

Specified attendance requirements for recipients of Scholarships and bursaries outlined in the terms of acceptance must be met for continuation of that grant.

The Commonwealth Government through the Education Service for *Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* requires that registered training and education providers must safeguard the integrity of Australia's migration laws, by supporting international students to complete their course of study within the required duration and fulfil their Visa requirements for course attendance and course progress. Mercedes College stipulates a 90 per cent attendance requirement for international students. If this threshold is not met, the College enacts an intervention process, which if unsuccessful in addressing absenteeism may lead to student noncompliance with VISA requirements and if required, a report to the Department of Home Affairs (Immigration).

Acceptable School Absence

It is acceptable for a student to be absent from school when they are:

- Unwell with an infectious illness such as gastroenteritis, chicken pox, measles, Influenza or Coronavirus to comply with SA Health advice to remain at home to reduce contagion and are unable to participate in remote learning.
- Too unwell to leave their home and are unable to participate in remote learning.
- Required to attend medical, dental or specialist therapy appointments that cannot be made out of school hours.
- Engaged in elite sport training or competition following a written request, including a schedule to approve the absence to the relevant Head of School.
- Undertaking a family trip which has the prior approval of the relevant Head of School.
- Able to provide the Principal with a genuine reason that prevents them attending school.
- Externally suspended from school for disciplinary reasons.
- Granted an exemption from school.

Unacceptable School Absences

It is not acceptable for students to absent themselves from school due to:

- Truancy. This is a deliberate behaviour to avoid school and school organised events that form part of the academic and pastoral programs.
- Selectively opting out of school organised activities and events e.g., Retreats, Reflection Days, Camps, Athletics / Swimming Carnivals, even if this is parent sanctioned.
- Falling behind with work and taking time out of school to catch up.
- Avoiding assessment tasks, or assessment deadlines.
- School refusal.

Exemptions from school

- Families must apply to the Principal in writing for an exemption from school attendance if they wish to take their child out of school temporarily or permanently. Students must attend school regularly until the Principal approves the exemption in writing. The Principal may approve conditional and part-time exemptions, or permanent exemptions.

Supporting procedures or policy support documents

The Mercedes College Attendance Procedures outline stakeholder roles and responsibilities together with the procedures that apply for recording student attendance, following up student absence, reporting on student absence according to governing regulations, and approving applications for exemptions and home schooling.

The Attendance Policy is supported by a suite of Mercedes College Policies and associated Procedures that promote student wellbeing, learning and engagement.

Related documents

SA Education and Children's Services Act 2019

SA Children's Education and Services Regulations 2020

Schools Assistance Act 2008

Australian Education Act 2018

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

Education Service for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000

International Student Program Attendance Intervention procedure

Assessment Policy

Wellbeing Policy

Safe School Policy

Personal Responsibility Policy

Health Management Policy

Health Management Procedures

Learning Policy

Inclusion Policy