



# Newcastle School Attendance Procedures

Revised May 2017

## **Aim:**

To implement procedures to record and monitor students' attendance, encourage regular attendance and improve poor attendance.

## **Responsibilities:**

### **Parents will:**

- Understand the legal requirements and educational necessity for regular school attendance.
- Accept help from the school and HSLO to overcome student attendance issues;
- Provide documentation explaining the reason for a student's absence by telephone, verbal communication with teacher or written communication, no later than 7 days after the first day a student is absent;
- Ensure students arriving late or leaving report to the administration office to have their attendance recorded using Ebs4;
- When possible, provide a written note of explanation prior to students being away for a period of more than 5 days;
- Provide proof of travel or illness if students are absent for a period of more than 20 days; and
- Provide valid medical certificates as requested by the school.

### **Students will:**

- Unless for valid reasons, attend school every day it is open;
- Take pride in regular attendance;
- Attempt to overcome problems that contribute to poor attendance; and
- Not leave school between their arrival and pick up, without a valid reason.

### **Teachers will:**

- Understand the importance of accurately recording and carefully, efficiently and effectively monitoring students' attendance;
- Ensure the class roll is marked daily by 9:30am using Ebs4; (casual staff without access to Ebs4 will send attendance information manually to administration staff)
- Ensure absence notes received are promptly recorded with the date and a letter symbol, as per DoE guidelines (e.g. L-leave), then securely stored for a period of two years;
- Seek an explanation of all absences either by direct communication with families or sending an absentee note on student return to school;
- After 3 consecutive days absent without explanation, contact families directly by phone and/or email and report any concerns to Principal or delegate if necessary;
- Be conversant with the school and Department's attendance policies;
- Contact parents/carers if there are regular unexplained absences;
- Discuss any attendance concerns with team leaders;
- Provide a caring, stimulating and successful learning environment which will encourage students' regular attendance and record the reason in the comments section on Ebs4 if notified by parents verbally of a student's absence

**The Attendance Administrator will:**

- Regularly oversee the accurate recording of students' attendance;
- Follow up instances of unsatisfactory attendance;
- Take all reasonable measures to contact families within 2 school days, after any 7 day timeframe has elapsed;
- Liaise with the Principal, Learning Support Team and the HSLO (Home School Liaison Officer) when attendance becomes a concern;
- In-service staff as to their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Attendance Policy;
- Notify parents if student(s) truant from school.

**The HSLO will: (Home School Liaison Officer)**

- Provide the school with support in its endeavours to improve school attendance.

**Administration Staff will:**

- If notified by parents directly or via a phone call of a student's absence, enter the reason into the comments section on the Ebs4 roll;
- Print outstanding absent notification letters for parents every even week of the school term;
- Ensure any absentee notes are filed securely and stored as per requirements;
- Under direction of the Principal, prepare and complete a Special Circumstances Register when the appropriate circumstances arrive, and
- Record students who arrive late or leave early on Ebs4.

**Roll Marking Procedures**

- Teachers will follow the attendance procedures as outlined in the 'Student Attendance in Government Schools Procedures'.
- Roll marking is to be recorded daily and accurately by teachers in Ebs4 before 9:30am.
- Casual teachers are to mark the roll on a class list and send to school office for office staff to enter through Ebs4.
- If casual teacher is to be on the class an extended period of time they will be provided access to Ebs4, and follow procedures for teachers and roll marking in Ebs4.
- Absent codes will be as outlined in the table, 'Attendance Register Codes'

Attendance Register Codes Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence	
Symbol	Meaning
<b>A</b>	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.
<b>S</b>	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a medical certificate is provided or</li> <li>- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation.</li> </ul> Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.
<b>L</b>	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- misadventure or unforeseen event</li> <li>- participation in special events not related to the school</li> <li>- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member</li> <li>- attendance at funerals</li> <li>- travel in Australia and overseas</li> <li>- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	The student was suspended from school

<b>M</b>	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
<b>F</b>	The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required to be at school. This could include participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HSC Pathways Program</li> <li>- Best Start Assessments</li> <li>- Trial or HSC examinations</li> <li>- VET courses</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work experience</li> <li>- school sport (regional and state carnivals)</li> <li>- school excursions</li> <li>- student exchange</li> </ul>
<b>H<sup>1</sup></b>	The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tutorial centre and programs</li> <li>- behaviour schools</li> <li>- juvenile justice</li> <li>- hospital schools</li> <li>- distance education</li> </ul>

**Procedures for Special Event Days/Excursions and Work Experience**

(Special events days are days which alter the school routine significantly.)

- Coordinators of special events are to inform classroom teachers, and the office staff of students who will be attending an event. These students are to be marked as 'School Business' on the roll.
- For small groups who have left the school, and where a student has been signed out from the group, the supervising teacher should inform the office, who will update Ebs4.
- In the instance of industrial action rolls will be marked at the beginning of the day and at the time action ceases. Students who arrive at school upon conclusion of industrial action, will be marked as attending a full day of school.
- Students attending school during industrial action will be entered on the "Special Circumstances" register and held in the Office.

**The following points should be noted:**

- The Attendance Supervisor on each stage is the Assistant Principal for that stage. The overall Attendance Administrator is the Principal.
- School development days and public holidays are deactivated in Ebs4, so as not to appear in the class roll as active.
- Students who arrive after 9:00am or leave before 2:45pm will be recorded on Ebs4 by administration staff.
- If arriving late, students should present to the school office where they will be escorted to class.
- Students must not leave early unless collected by a parent/caregiver or their approved nominated representative. Parents or carers picking up students should attend the office.
- If a student consistently arrives late or leaves early, the relevant Attendance Supervisor should be alerted by the class teacher.
- Unexplained or unsatisfactory reason for absences should be marked as 'A' and the relevant Attendance Supervisor alerted by the class teacher.
- When a student leaves the school, they are marked as "Left" in ERN. However, there will be a delay of a few days before the student leaves the Ebs4 system.

**Note: Exemptions can no longer be requested or approved for parents / caregivers going on holidays during a school term. These absences are marked as leave (L) and are counted in the student's attendance record.**

**Attendance Monitoring Procedures**

- Teachers are to monitor absences and unjustified lateness, and any concerns should be brought to the attention of the relevant Attendance Supervisor.
- The Attendance Supervisor will monitor rolls at 5 weekly intervals in Weeks 5 & 10 each term and bring any concerns to the attention of the Learning Support Team, the Principal and the HSLO (if required).
- Any roll marking anomalies will be investigated by an Attendance Supervisor.
- In the event that a student becomes an attendance concern, the follow strategies will be applied at the Attendance Supervisor's discretion;
  - Discussions with student/teacher;
  - Contact with parent;
  - Incentive program to improve attendance;

- Meetings with the student's parents; and/or Referral to HSLO.
- The HSLO will monitor attendance remotely using Ebs4 and notified the school of any students who are an attendance concern.
- All records will be maintained so that they are easily accessible for the HSLO.

### **Liaison with Parents/Caregivers**

- All explanatory notes must be dated. Teachers should date and initial any undated parental note.
- Verbal notifications of absence should be recorded in the comment section on the Ebs4 rolls.
- This information should be conveyed between the office and the class teacher. Where a student's consistent lateness causes concern, teachers should discuss this with the parents of the child. If the child continues to be late, the teacher should alert the relevant Attendance Supervisor.
- If no satisfactory explanation is received within 7 days of the first period of absence, teachers should contact the parent. If no satisfactory explanation is forthcoming, the teacher should alert the relevant Attendance Supervisor.
- Any contact with parents regarding attendance should be recorded in Ebs4.
- If no explanation for absence has been received, and the child has not returned to school for more than 3 days or there has been no request for a transfer, the teacher should notify the relevant Attendance Supervisor immediately.

### **Retain of class rolls**

- Class rolls will be kept for the period of time as outlined in School Attendance Policy (PD20050259)
- Class rolls will be stored as outlined in School Attendance Policy (PD20050259)

### **Strategies for Good Attendance:**

- Teachers will provide a caring and stimulating learning environment in which students are able to achieve success and recognition for success every day.
- Teachers will provide praise and incentives to encourage good attendance.
- Class teachers will provide awards for 100% attendance each semester.
- Procedures for notification of absence and the importance of prompt arrival will be regularly inserted into the newsletter and regularly reported on at parent meetings, P&C meetings etc.
- A pamphlet from the NSW Department of Education regarding student attendance is distributed at the start of each year to all families, via the newsletter, and is included in orientation packages.

### **Parent Awareness of the Importance of Attendance**

Throughout the year there are several opportunities to raise parent and community awareness of the need for excellent attendance and the impact of poor attendance on academic performance. These include:

- Inclusion of a session on attendance at the Parent Information Evening in Term 1;
- Reminders regarding the requirement of attendance in newsletters;
- Publication of Attendance Census data when compiled in Terms 2 and 4;
- Letters to specific years, such as Kindergarten;
- Letters and attendance reports to parents of children with an attendance pattern of less than 85%
- at the end of Terms 1, 2 and 3; and/or
- Inclusion of attendance data on the semester reports.
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## Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance

### ***School Measures***

Newcastle School implements a wide range of strategies to support the regular attendance of students, including extensive contact with parents to resolve issues of non-attendance. These strategies can include letters, phone calls, interviews and family support.

In the case of a student who has been identified with unacceptable attendance (an attendance pattern of less than 85%), it is necessary to document the measures taken to monitor and improve attendance. The school is required to provide documentary evidence of its interventions before making a HSLO referral.

When classroom teachers feel a student has an unacceptable attendance pattern, and the student is not already being monitored, they should make a referral to the L&ST (Learning and Support Team). The L&ST will discuss and implement strategies to improve attendance. This **MUST** include the use of monitoring and documenting any attendance initiatives and discussions so that appropriate documentation is available if a referral needs to be made to the HSLO.

### ***HSLO Intervention and Investigation***

Where the school has taken all reasonable action to support the regular attendance of a student of **compulsory** school age but the student continues to attend erratically, the matter should be referred to the Home School Liaison Program for investigation. Investigation, including a review of school documentation, must be completed within five school days of referral.

If appropriate, and within five school days of completing the investigation, home school liaison officers must develop an attendance improvement plan for the student. The plan will be developed in consultation with the school and will identify targets, strategies and timelines.

If the investigation indicates that home school liaison intervention is not warranted, the home school liaison officer **must**, within five school days, provide the school with advice on additional strategies to be implemented by the school.

### **Legal Action**

It is important that legal action to resolve attendance issues is not delayed unnecessarily. School Education Directors must, as soon as possible and within five school days, refer the matter for legal action if the student's attendance remains poor **and** the parents have not meaningfully engaged in the attendance improvement plan within 20 school days of the commencement of the plan.

Conciliation conferences are currently convened prior to referral for consideration of prosecution. However, these conferences have rarely been successful in resolving matters quickly. While attendance meetings may continue to be convened if appropriate, it is now recommended that formally convened conciliation conferences occur as a result of a decision by the court. Any attempt to convene a conciliation conference after a court appearance notice has been issued, should only be done in consultation with the lawyer dealing with the prosecution case, and subject to any orders or recommendations a court makes in any

particular case.

**Referral to Department of Community Services**

If at any stage any officer of the Department, including teachers or the principal, suspects a child is at risk of harm, the officer must make an immediate report to the Department of Community Services.

This Policy is based on the *School Attendance Policy (PD20050259)* and follows the procedures as outlined by the *Student Attendance in Government Schools: Procedures -2015* and *School Attendance Register Codes 2015*. The policy will be reviewed annually.

**References:**

*School Attendance Policy (PD20050259)*

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/school-attendance-policy>

*Student Attendance in Government Schools: Procedures -2015*

*School Attendance Register Codes 2015*



## Newcastle School Student Absence Procedures

### Student Absence Occurs

#### Phone Advice:

Parent contacts School to notify pending absence



Date, Reason and Informant details are entered on Phone Register and Teacher notified.

(Register to be kept for 2 yrs)



Roll marked accordingly  
"S"ick or "L"eave  
(Principal consultation may be required)

If there is **no contact** from families after **3 consecutive days** teacher will contact family directly via phone contacts and report any concerns to Principal or delegate.

#### Student Returns from Absence with Note:

Teacher checks note for details, initials, dates and indicated type of leave on note.

"S"ick or "L"eave  
(Note to be kept for 2 years)



Roll marked accordingly  
"S"ick or "L"eave  
(Principal consultation may be required)

#### Student Returns from Absence with NO Note:

Teacher contacts parents or sends Reminder Note in Communication Book.

(Proforma One)

(Copy to be kept as proof of request)



Note RETURNED within two days



Teacher checks note for details, initials, dates and indicated type of leave on note.

"S"ick or "L"eave  
(Principal consultation may be required)

#### No explanation provided after 5 days of initial absence:

School sends home Absentee Notice 2 – Compulsory School Attendance (Proforma Two)

(Copy to be kept as proof of request)



Note RETURNED within two days



Teacher checks note for details, initials, dates and indicated type of leave on note.

"S"ick or "L"eave  
(Principal consultation may be required)

#### Notes:

**Partial Absences:** Late arrivals and early leaver attendance information is processed through the Office. All parents are requested to drop off or pick up students via the Office, to ensure the attendance information is recorded on the attendance register.

**Suspensions:** Staff will be advised when a student has been officially suspended from school and the absence will be recorded as "E".

**Exemptions:** Should any student be granted an Exemption from Attending School by the Principal staff will be informed and the absence will be recorded as "M". The certificate of Exemption MUST be filed in the PRC.

**NOTE:** If no valid explanation is received within seven days of the absence the roll is marked as; "A" – Unexplained or Unjustified.