

# Williamstown North Primary School

## Attendance Policy



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Williamstown North Primary School (No: 1409) and ask to speak with our office staff on 03 9397 5722.

### 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 Williamstown North Primary School has in place to:
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance.
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### SCOPE

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

### DEFINITION

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

### POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation 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 that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

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

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

Williamstown North 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.

Classroom teachers, the Attendance Officer, and members of the Wellbeing Team 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.

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

Williamstown North Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, communicate openly with the school and provide valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Williamstown North 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.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Williamstown North Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance by supporting engagement and inclusion.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Timely two day follow up phone calls by classroom teachers for Unexplained Absences.
- Early intervention identification of repeated patterns, family check ins etc.
- Cohort attendance awards
- Termly attendance incentives

## Recording attendance

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

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

Attendance will be recorded by classroom teachers within the first 10 minutes of the first lesson of the day and immediately after lunch at 2:30pm using COMPASS.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

## 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 Williamstown North Primary School of absences via one of the following methods:

- Record it on COMPASS. This is the primary method for recording absences.
- Phone the office on 03 9397 5722.
- Informing the classroom teacher if it's a planned absence.

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, Williamstown North Primary School will notify parents by a COMPASS text message. If the unexplained absence isn't explained by the parents after this notification, Williamstown North Primary School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.

Williamstown North 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 Williamstown North 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.

## **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**

Chronic Absenteeism:

The Department of Education defines chronic absenteeism as missing 20 or more days of school in a year, which equates to approximately 10% of the school year. Research shows that students who are absent at this level are at significantly greater risk of falling behind academically, socially, and emotionally. This threshold is not arbitrary – 20 days represents a tipping point where consistent attendance patterns strongly influence student achievement and engagement. As a school, we closely monitor students approaching this level of absence and work in partnership with families to implement strategies that support improved attendance.

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student's attendance drops below 80%, Williamstown North 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 (SSG).
- implementing an Attendance Improvement Plan with strategies and supports
- implementing a Return to School Plan.
- implementing an Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period.
- arranging for assistance from the Student Wellbeing Staff and Attendance Officer.
- arrangements for home visits to be conducted when contact cannot be established.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, we will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

The school strongly encourages families to plan holidays during scheduled school holiday periods wherever possible. Research shows that students who miss more than 20 days of school in a year (around one month of learning) are at significantly greater risk of falling behind academically and socially. While we understand that family circumstances can vary, we ask parents and carers to consider the long-term impact on student learning when planning extended absences during the school term.

**To support continuity of learning, any family holiday that extends beyond five school days will require a Student Absence Learning Plan. Parents/Carers are asked to notify the school at least a week (where practical) in advance of any absence so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place.**

## Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Williamstown North Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines, refer the non-attendance to a Health and Wellbeing Support Officer in the South Western Melbourne 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 the Health and Wellbeing Support 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.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website: <https://williamstownnorthps.vic.edu.au/>
- Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter

## MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	October 2025
Approved by	Principal - Richard Buckingham
Next scheduled review date	October 2028