



EMERALD SECONDARY COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 Emerald Secondary College 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 Emerald Secondary College.

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 Emerald Secondary College, 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 Emerald Secondary College 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 Emerald Secondary College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Emerald Secondary College for particular activities.

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

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

Our College 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 approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Emerald Secondary College parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the College and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Emerald Secondary College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the College 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

Emerald Secondary College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Articulating high expectations of attendance to all members of the College community
- Creating safe, supportive learning environments which promote success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning
- Adopting consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence
- Implementing data-driven attendance improvement strategies
- Providing early identification and supportive intervention for students at risk of poor attendance
- Linking with local community groups and agencies to maximise program and individual support
- Accessing specialist support for individual students with identified behavioural, health or social issues
- Providing a staged response to non-attendance
- Supporting students to return to school after absences

Recording attendance

Emerald Secondary College must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Emerald Secondary College's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by:

Sub-School Admin Support Person

- Monitor each student's attendance and punctuality
- Maintain accurate attendance records

Classroom Teacher

- Mark class roll accurately within the first 10 minutes of class
- Monitor student attendance in classes
- Promptly relay any attendance concerns to Year Level Coordinator/Sub School Leader as they arise

Year Level Coordinator/Sub School Leader

- Address attendance/punctuality concerns early through attendance/punctuality improvement strategies
- Determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the student's education and wellbeing are supported following a school absence
- Coordinate Student Absence Learning Plan if absence is planned and approved
- Identify students who are at risk of disengaging from school
- Make a referral to the School Attendance Officer as required
- Ensure processes are in place to document further enforcement proceedings around non-attendance including referral to the School Attendance Officer, issuing of a school attendance Notice, infringement notice (and any appeal), court proceedings

Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator

- Make DHS/ChildFIRST notifications where appropriate and in consultation with YLC/SSL and school leadership
- Refer the student to engagement programs, supports or interventions (eg: Headspace), explore alternative settings

Assistant Principal/s

- Manage escalation of attendance concerns as per College Staged Response to Non-Attendance and Late Arrivals

Principal/Principal Nominee/School Leadership responsibilities

- Ensure that Compass is used to record student attendance and late arrivals
- Ensure student attendance and late arrivals are recorded accurately in every class and a reason given for each absence is recorded in writing
- Consider the explanation given for an absence and whether it is reasonable in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at whole school level
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at individual level in student's file e.g. home visits, phone calls, Attendance SSG's, SOCS referrals, DHS/childFIRST notifications

Student responsibilities

- Attend school every school day
- Arrive at school and classes on time and be prepared
- Talk to a teacher if there are issues that might impact on their ability to attend school/class

Parent responsibilities

- Ensure student attends school every day when instruction is offered
- Ensure student arrives at school by 8.50am

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 Emerald Secondary College of absences by:

- Provide a timely & valid explanation for a student's absence/lateness by contacting the College in writing or by Compass, phone, email or note
- Provide the College with advanced notice if there is a planned up-coming school absence
- Communicate openly with the College about a student's ongoing medical condition that may result in ongoing absence or medical appointments during school hours
- Alert the College early to issues that may impact on a student's attendance
- Work in partnership with the College to address attendance concerns

If a student is absent on a particular day and the College has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Emerald Secondary College will notify parents by SMS/push notification message, email, telephone, or other methods as appropriate. Emerald Secondary College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the College will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the College, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Emerald Secondary College 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 Emerald Secondary College considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

If the College 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 College in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the College 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.

Parents should note: *VCAA guidelines state that the only approved absence at VCE is on two grounds – Religious & Medical. Parents who take their child out of school risk compromising their son/daughters VCE certificate on the grounds of the minimum attendance requirements not being met. Please refer to the VCE Attendance Policy.*

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, Emerald Secondary College 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 Student 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,

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Emerald Secondary College 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 School Attendance Officer at NEVR for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the College, 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.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)

- [School intranet](#)

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 19th June 2018 and is scheduled for review every 3 years (June 2021)