



ILLO INFANTS SCHOOL

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DARE TO CARE

ATTENDANCE POLICY – Updated 2021

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/school-attendance-policy?refid=285839>

Policy Context

The *Education Act 1990* requires the parents of children of compulsory school age to enrol them at a government school, or registered non-government school or to register them with the Board of Studies for home schooling. The Act also requires parents to ensure the regular attendance of their children at school. It is an offence for parents to fail to meet these obligations unless they can show they have a defence (for example, illness or accident). Parents convicted of this offence, may be fined up to \$1,100 for each offence.

The Department undertakes legal action in the case of parents who do not fulfill these obligations despite all reasonable measures being undertaken by school and regional staff to support them.

Maintenance of Attendance Rolls

Classroom teachers mark an attendance sheet each day using a computer program, ebs ontrack. The school rolls are maintained and updated by administration also using ebs ontrack.

Partial absences are recorded at the school office and then transferred to the computerised roll system. Students who are late or who leave early are issued with a Partial Absence slip which must be given to the teacher as an indication that the partial absence has been recorded centrally.

Monitoring

Regular roll checks will be made by both the Principal and the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) to ensure that all students maintain an acceptable attendance pattern.

If a classroom teacher is concerned about lack of attendance or consistent lateness they should seek advice from their team leader or the Principal so that rectification measures can be taken or a referral made to the Learning Support Team (LST). When a child has 2 consecutive unexplained days of absence the classroom teacher must report it to administration and a phone call will be made to the parents/guardians.

Procedures for Dealing With Unacceptable Attendance

School Measures

Illo Infants 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 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. This documentation will take the form of the *Sydney Region Attendance Checklist for Schools*. See Appendix One.

For students with an unacceptable level of attendance this checklist is kept by the Principal.

When classroom teachers feel a student has an unacceptable attendance pattern and the student is not already being monitored, they should make a referral at the staff meeting during LST. The LST will discuss and implement strategies to improve attendance. This **MUST** include the use of monitoring with the Sydney Region Attendance Checklist for Schools 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 suspects a child is at risk of harm, the officer must make an immediate report to the Department of Community Services.

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;
- Publication of Attendance Census data when compiled in Annual School Report;

- Letters to specific years, such as Kindergarten; and or
- Letters and attendance reports for parents of children with an attendance pattern of less than 85% at the end of Terms 1, 2 and 3.

Parents also need to be made aware of:

- the need to provide a written explanation of all absences; and
- the need to apply for a Certificate of Exemption for when students require leave for extended periods of time i.e. for overseas travel.

Recognising Improved Attendance

In some circumstances the HSLO will recognise an improved attendance pattern. This recognition will form part of an attendance behaviour modification program.

Attendance Award

Each year, the student/s with best attendance record will receive the Attendance Award at the Annual Presentation Assembly.

Reviewed and updated July 2021

Appendix One

Attendance Checklist for Schools

Please attach this to your application for Home School Liaison Program assistance

Student: _____ School: Nillo Infants School

Principals and Learning Support Teams should ensure that a full range of strategies to restore school attendance has been implemented prior to applying for support from the Home School Liaison Program (Home School Liaison Program Guidelines 2.4 Student Welfare Directorate 2008).

Intervention	Yes/No	Date	Comment
1. Absentee Notice/Compulsory School Attendance Note sent to parent/caregivers after 2 days unexplained absence. *			
2. Student Interview with teacher/SW co-ordinator to identify cause of poor attendance. *			
3. Contact parents/caregivers by phone or letter to involve them in resolving the attendance issue. *			
4. School personnel organise attendance meeting with parent/caregiver. *			
5. Individualised attendance monitoring e.g. Student placed on an attendance care, Reports to a designated teacher, provided With a mentor, SC, LaST, ESL support. *			
6. Student discussed at LaST/School welfare meetings to discuss attendance strategies and support required. *			
7. Request for medical certificates – these should be carefully monitored.			
8. Involvement of outside agencies (as Appropriate) e.g. FACS, Community Health, Housing, Juvenile Justice, local Community organisations.			
9. Incentive program initiated i.e. reward for Improved attendance.			
10. Curriculum/timetabling issues examined and amended if appropriate.			
11. Involvement of regional support staff (if appropriate) e.g. APLA, DSTLA, STB, CLO, ACLO			

* Indicates minimum school based intervention prior to submitting application

Please note that the application for support can only be signed by the principal or the relieving principal (as per new attendance procedures).

Appendix Two: Principal to parent letter advising of referral to HSLP

Addressee
Address 1
Address 2

Dear xxxxxxxxx

I refer to the attendance of your son/daughter, xxxxxxxxx at school.

The *Education Act (1990)* requires parents to ensure that children between the ages of six and fifteen attend school on each day that the school is open for instruction. If children are absent from school, parents are required to provide the school with an acceptable explanation within seven days of the absence.

You have previously been advised that xxxxxxxxx attendance is a matter of concern. The school has implemented a range of strategies to encourage xxxxxxxxx full attendance at school without success.

At a recent school Learning Support Team/Student Welfare Team meeting xxxxxxxxx pattern of attendance was reviewed and it is clear that xxxxxxxxx attendance is still at an unacceptable level.

I am obliged to report apparent unresolved non-compliance with the *Education Act (1990)* to the local manager of the region's Home School Liaison Program for further investigation by a home school liaison officer to help resolve the matter. The local manager will consider if further action is necessary. This may include the development of an Attendance Improvement Plan with specific targets, strategies and timelines.

If an Attendance Improvement Plan is to be implemented, you will be advised by the school education director and provided with a copy of the plan. The local manager and home school liaison officer will review progress within the plan over a four week school period.

If you do not meaningfully engage in the plan and there is no improvement in the xxxxxxxxx attendance during this time, the matter will be referred to the Department's solicitors for legal action.

It is important that you work with us to resolve the issue.

Yours sincerely

Name
Principal
Date