

WULGURU STATE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

Our school encourages all parents and members of our community to support the State Government initiative to improve student attendance.

The program – *Every Day Counts* – has four key messages:

- all children should be enrolled and attend school on every school day
- schools should monitor and create ways to improve attendance in schools
- attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the community
- children may find themselves in unsafe situations if they choose not to attend or skip school.

While most students attend school consistently, there is a small number of students who are absent from school without an acceptable reason and this may affect their education. As we want every child to get the best education possible, we expect that every student will attend school every day, for the entire day.

Wulguru State School attendance policy aims to ensure all students are given the best opportunity to learn by outlining the responsibilities of the school, parents and students in managing attendance issues.

School community beliefs about the importance of attending school

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school.

Wulguru State School

- is committed to promoting the key messages of Every Day Counts
- believes all children should be enrolled at school and attend school all day, every school day
- monitors, communicates and implements strategies to improve regular school attendance
- believes truanting can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future
- believes attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community

Responsibilities

School responsibilities:

- Monitor and identify student absences as outlined in *SMS-PR-036: Roll Marking in State Schools*
- Follow up absences quickly and address absence issues with parents and carers
- Follow Education QLD policy and procedures for enforcing enrolment and attendance in *SMS-PR-043 Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State Schools*
- Encourage attendance through positive support programs and strategies
- Include key stakeholders, including appropriate external agencies and support groups

Student responsibilities:

- Attend school each day unless there is an acceptable reason for an absence
- Make every day count in their learning

Parent responsibilities:

- Ensure that your child is enrolled at school and attends Wulguru State School every day
- Ensure that your child arrives on time each day
- If you are planning for your child to be away from school for ten or more days, you need to contact the school and apply for an exemption from compulsory schooling and compulsory participation. This is then given to the principal to either approve or not approve.
- Only allow your child to be absent from school where a reasonable excuse has been given.
- Reasonable excuses include:
 - When children are genuinely too ill to attend and parents are encouraged to provide a medical certificate
 - If a child is subject to a direction or order given about an infectious or contagious disease or condition
 - Medical or dental treatments; however, every effort should be made to have appointments scheduled outside of school hours if possible.
 - Holidays; however, holidays are actively discouraged during the school terms, and the school should be notified of these in advance so that an 'Exemption from Compulsory Schooling' application can be made
 - Religious observance
 - Suspension
 - Attendance at a funeral or to attend to sorry business
 - Where the child is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements
- Unauthorised and unexplained absences are not acceptable. Unauthorised absences include, but are not limited to:
 - Leisure activities
 - Shopping
 - Visiting friends and relatives
 - Fishing etc.
- Contact the school prior to any planned absence or within 2 days of returning via the following methods:
 - **Student Absence Hotline: 4799 8760**
 - **Phone: 4799 8777**
 - **Email: admin@wulguruss.eq.edu.au**
 - **In Person: verbally or via a hand written letter by the parent or carer. Parents are encouraged to get a medical certificate to explain absences.**

Strategies

At **Wulguru State School** we promote 100% attendance by:

- Implementation of the School Attendance Policy
- Development of a safe and supportive school environment that promotes positive relationships, including the implementation of programs to develop social skills (School Chaplain, Buddy Classes, Bully Busters Program) and to provide support mechanisms for families (Guidance Officer, Indigenous Education Worker, Queensland Police, Department of Child Safety, CYMHS)
- Consistently recording and following up explained student absences
- Same day reporting of unexplained absences via text messages
- Monitoring of the schools attendance data to identify absenteeism trends and individual students with high levels of absenteeism
- Promote high expectations for school attendance to the school community by communicating that higher school attendance is associated with higher student achievement (school newsletter, parent meetings, school website, Facebook, parade)

- Recognition processes for individual and whole class achievements including:
 - Whole class attendance awards
 - Whole school parades recognising 100% attendance for students
 - Attendance stamps for students with chronic absences
 - Marker students for each teacher – teacher selects one student and attempts to contact families directly contacting the family each day of absence to encourage attendance
 - Attendance Celebration Activities

Appendix 1 contains the process staff are encouraged to use to improve attendance, depending on the rate of attendance.

Responses to absences

When a student is absent without explanation or a pattern of absences has been identified, Wulguru State School will take the following actions:

- The parent or carer will be contacted by the class teacher, office staff or Indigenous teacher aide (by note, SMS message or telephone call) to determine if there is a reasonable excuse for the absence/s (*Director General's Guidelines ss176 and 239 of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*)
- Inform families by letter of their child's attendance rate and the impact that this may have on their child's education and possible strategies/actions.
- Home visits by the Indigenous Education Worker and/or a member of the administration team may occur to discuss attendance issues and to identify possible solutions to difficulties
- Administration will send home letters to identify average rate of attendance and impact on schooling
- Records of contact with parents and carers regarding unexplained absences will be recorded in OneSchool

If, after proactive attempts to improve attendance have been undertaken, the student is still not attending school regularly, the school will follow the processes for managing student absences as outlined in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 – SMS-PR-043*. This includes the reporting of persistent and/or unexplained absences to Education Queensland, The Queensland Police Service and the Department of Child safety.

Any child whose attendance falls below 80% will be managed in accordance with the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 – SMS-PR-043*.

Some related resources

Every Day Counts

<http://education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/index.html>

Departmental Policies

SMS-PR-017: Enforcement of Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation Phase

<http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/students/smspr017/>

SMS-PR-029: Managing Student Absences

<http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/students/smspr029/>

SMS-PR-036: Roll Marking in State Schools

<http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/students/smspr036/>

Every Day Counts!

Appendix 1 – Attendance Strategies

Identify students who are in the

- Red Zone – below 80% and are at risk of not achieving academic success (C or above in English, maths and science)
- Yellow Zone – 80.1% to 91.9%. Monitor attendance and academic achievement. Use classroom strategies to encourage attendance.
- Green Zone – 92% or above. Safe unless a change of circumstances occurs.

Red Zone Students

1. If a student is away for three consecutive days, contact office so that a phone call home occurs
2. Record all family contacts regarding attendance on OneSchool
3. Discuss possible strategies with Admin staff to improve attendance
4. If there is no identifiable improvement in attendance after two family contacts or families do not respond to calls/home visits/emails, then relevant Admin staff will follow the processes for managing student absences as outlined in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 – SMS-PR-043*.
5. *Where attendance improves, reinforce this behaviour using appropriate means*

Yellow Zone Students

1. If a student is away for three consecutive days, contact office so that a phone call home occurs
2. Record all family contacts regarding attendance on OneSchool
3. Implement classroom based activities for encouraging attendance including, but not limited to:
 - a. setting specific goals eg improve attendance from 8 absences in the term to only 5, tracking this with the student
 - b. celebrate 10 consecutive days at school
 - c. welcome student by name to class every day, telling them how pleased you are to see them
 - d. contact parents throughout the term as attendance has improved to thank them. This could be a phone call, email or letter in the mail (postcard)
4. Share with other staff any strategies that appear to be working

Marker Students

1. Select one or two students whose attendance you are going to aim to improve
2. Set a personal goal with the student
3. Talk with them or their parent to attempt to identify why absences occur
4. Brainstorm ways of reducing absences with child/family
5. Contact family directly every day the child is away. Record all contact or attempted contact on OneSchool
6. If child is in the Red Zone and attendance does not change, inform relevant Admin staff so that the processes for managing student absences as outlined in the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 – SMS-PR-043* can be implemented
7. *Where attendance improves, reinforce this behaviour using appropriate means*

Green Zone Students

1. Positively reinforce continued good attendance
2. Check attendance in week 5 and week 9 to ensure attendance is still in the green zone
3. If attendance appears to be dropping, contact families to see if there are any issues. Respond accordingly