

Upper Lansdowne Attendance Policy



Evidence of policy implementation guidelines for School Attendance

Policy Implementation to meet student, staff & community needs at Upper Lansdowne PS

Upper Lansdowne PS maintains accurate records of the attendance of students in a format approved by the Minister e.g. student attendance register.

Staff are informed of their responsibilities related to student attendance and informed of the expectations and responsibilities of a classroom teacher to monitor and follow up student absences.

Upper Lansdowne School Attendance Policy is outlined in this document which has been distributed and discussed with staff members.

The school provides clear information to parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

A link to Upper Lansdowne PS Attendance Policy has been embedded into our Upper Lansdowne PS newsletter.

Also embedded into the ULPS newsletter is the link to the Department of Education's School Attendance Policy and link to "Compulsory School Attendance" policy.

Records of contact with parents where an absence is unexplained are maintained in the Attendance Parent Verbal log book and in copies of letters sent to parents and carers are kept.

Students with attendance patterns of concern are supported locally at the school in consultation with parents e.g. through the Learning & Support Team, with minuted records kept.

Upper Lansdowne PS - Observes & Applies School Attendance Policy Requirements

Upper Lansdowne PS observes School Attendance Policy Requirements by:

- Embedding our School Attendance Policy link in the ULPS newsletter - each semester.
- Contacting parents regarding student absences and keeping records of parent meetings eg meeting minutes, phone logs, copies of letters, and copies of requests for medical certificates.
- Keeping documentation outlining the escalation of attendance concerns requiring further intervention e.g. recurring agenda item on [Learning and Support Team](#) agenda, referral to or advice sought from [Home School Liaison Program](#), reports to the [Child Wellbeing Unit](#) and/or [Family and Community Services Child Protection Helpline](#), about suspected risk of harm relating to educational neglect.
- Maintaining Upper Lansdowne PS records of student attendance as outlined in the [School Attendance Policy](#)
- Annually reviewing, at a Staff Development day, the ULPS Attendance Policy with roles of responsibility discussed. The staff training register registers this PL.
- Informing new staff members of the school's Attendance Policy and their role/responsibilities - point of need.
- Reviewing documentation and requirements of compulsory school attendance at staff meetings - point of need.

Upper Lansdowne Attendance Policy

Objectives:

1.1 - Section 22 of the **Education Act (1990)** states that it is the duty of the parent of a child of **compulsory school-age** to cause the child:

- (a) to be enrolled at, and to attend, a government school or a registered non-government school, or
- (b) to be registered for home schooling with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.

1.2 - All students who are enrolled at school, regardless of their age, are expected to attend that school whenever instruction is provided.

1.3 - Section 24 of the Act requires principals to maintain an attendance register (roll) in a form approved by the Minister. Attendance registers must be available for inspection during school hours by a Board Inspector or by any authorised person.

2. Audience and applicability

2.1 - This policy applies to all NSW government schools, excluding preschools.

3. Context

3.1 - Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

3.2 - Encouraging regular attendance is a core school responsibility.

4.2 Principals

4.2.1 - must provide clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

4.2.2 - must ensure the school has effective measures in place to monitor and follow up student absences.

4.2.3 - or their delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly and within two school days of an absence being unexplained. An absence is **unexplained** if parents have failed to provide an explanation to the school within **7 days**.

4.2.4 - are responsible for ensuring that attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.

4.2.5 - must ensure that for students with attendance concerns, the learning and support needs of those students are addressed in consultation with parents.

4.2.6 - are responsible for ensuring that frequent absences are explained due to illness that:

- Consultation occurs with parents regarding the health care needs of the student.
- Medical certificates are sought for the absences.
- Where there are ongoing concerns, approval is sought from parents to contact the student's doctor so the school has all relevant information regarding the student's health care needs.
- Strategies are developed to ensure regular attendance at school.

4.2.7 - must ensure that school staff are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school.

4.2.8 - must ensure that any matter relating to school attendance where safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns arise for a student:

- Consideration is given to the requirements of the Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy
- All required reports are made to the Community Services Child Protection Helpline or contact made with the Child Wellbeing Unit (as required by the **Mandatory Reporter Guide**).

4.2.9 - have the authority to:

- Grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness
- Accept other explanations for absence and record the absence as "L"
- Decline to accept an explanation for absence and record the absence as unjustified
- Grant day/part day exemptions from school attendance for periods totalling up to **100 days in a 12 month period** for any one student provided certain conditions are met (See the **Exemption from School - Procedures**).
- Principals can decline to accept an explanation for an absence and record the absence as 'unjustified'. The parent should be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

4. School staff:

- Provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- Promote regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students.
- Maintain accurate records of student attendance.
- Alert the principal, or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance, when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer within required timeframes (see section 5).
- When nominated by the principal, liaise with external agencies, arrange referrals and coordinate involvement of the school with other services and agencies working with students. Nominated staff provide feedback about outcomes to the principal.
- Who have concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person must report their concerns to the principal.

4.3 Directors, Public Schools NSW

4.3.1 - have the delegated authority to grant exemptions from attendance at school under Section 25 of the Education Act (1990) totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period.

4.3.2 - support schools to maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister.

4.3.3 - approve the participation of a student in an alternative school based program, leading to full time attendance, prior to part day exemption from attendance at school being granted by the school principal (See the **Exemption from School - Procedures**).

4.5 Director, Child Protection Services

4.5.1 - has the delegated authority to grant exemptions from school attendance for any period of time, for students wishing to participate in employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite arts or sporting events. Principals are also able to consider applications for exemption in these circumstances. Principals should contact the Director, Child Protection Services if advice is needed on compliance with employment regulation of the Children's Guardian or exemption is sought for participation in a large scale production.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

5.1 - Schools, with support from attendance officers (home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers), monitor the regular attendance of students and develop and implement strategies to support students with identified attendance issues.

6. Contact

Leader, Child Protection, telephone **9269 9454**.

If there are frequent absences being explained as due to illness?

- Where frequent absences are explained as being due to illness consultation with parents must occur regarding the health care needs of the child.
- Principals can request the parents to provide a medical certificate if they have concerns with the explanation provided, or where there is a history of poor attendance.
- Where the principal has concerns about the medical certificates being produced for absences they can ask the parents to request that the doctor writes on the medical certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.
- Where principals have ongoing concerns they can request the parent's consent for a doctor to provide information to the school about their child's health condition. It is essential the school has all relevant information to ensure the learning and health care needs of the student are addressed. If the request is denied or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'. The principal must consider whether the habitual absence or parental attitude places the child or young person at suspected risk of harm.
- Principals can seek information from prescribed bodies under Chapter 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 where they have ongoing concerns regarding a student's safety, welfare or wellbeing. They should [contact the Child Wellbeing Unit \(CWU\)](#) or if they believe the student is at risk of significant harm the [Child Protection Helpline](#).

A student has an unsatisfactory pattern of attendance

- Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the [Education Act \(1990\)](#) the benefits of attending school regularly should be the focus of this consultation.
- A child is considered to have an unsatisfactory school attendance when they have:
 - regular absences without explanation (despite follow-up from the school)
 - regular absences and explanations provided by parents are not accepted by the principal, or
 - extended periods of absence without an explanation or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. An extended period of absence may be consecutive or irregular patterns of non-attendance.
- The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents on the same day or the following day of an absence. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this. The support document [Phone Intervention Program Guidelines](#) describes a program facilitating early telephone contact.
- Resolution of attendance difficulties may require more targeted school based strategies:
 - meeting with the student and parents
 - referral to the school's Learning and Support Team to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs for the student
 - development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents
 - engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality
 - referral to the school counsellor
 - requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies
 - use of interpreters and translated materials
 - seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them.
- The school should identify if other agencies are involved with the family and liaise with them when a student's attendance is of concern and where it is determined that the issues impacting on attendance are outside of the role of the school to address in isolation. The school may have a role in working collaboratively with the services to engage the family. Family case discussions should be attended by school representatives if the issues relate to students whose attendance is a concern. Meetings and interviews at the school may also involve representatives from support agencies. They may be initiated by school, other agency or departmental staff. Schools may also refer families to services, in discussion with families.
- If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful in resolving attendance difficulties the principal can request support by making an application to the Home School Liaison Program and submitting the application to the local program manager for consideration. Parents should be advised by Letter 1: Principal to parent advising of Application to the Home School Liaison Program. Copies of communication with parents and documented strategies that the school has implemented to address student attendance issues are to be included with the Application for Home School Liaison support.
- Schools, community members and agencies may also report children of apparent compulsory school age, who may not be enrolled, to the [Home School Liaison Program](#).
- Community members and agencies can report the matter to their local Department of Education and Communities office or government school who will refer the matter to the local manager of the home

school liaison program.

- When a case is accepted onto the Home School Liaison Program the principal must ensure that the school continues to implement strategies to support the student's regular attendance at school. Regular communication must be maintained between the school and attendance officers.
- In managing attendance concerns consideration should be given to whether the pattern of unsatisfactory attendance may on its own or with other risk factors impact on the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the student. Contact with the [CWU](#) should be made or a report to the [Child Protection Helpline](#) if they believe the student is at suspected risk of significant harm.

Additional actions to support regular attendance of students

Legislative amendments effective in January 2010 increased the range of options available to deal with unsatisfactory attendance and non-enrolment at school.

A. Compulsory Schooling Conferences are conferences directed by either the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities (or delegate) for the purpose of ensuring a student is provided with compulsory education. It aims to bring together the parents, student, a member/s of the school executive nominated by the principal, and where appropriate, relevant agencies to help parents to resolve the underlying issues that have led to the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Conferences are convened by an authorised person appointed by the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities. Students under the age of 12 are not required to attend compulsory schooling conferences

B. Undertakings are written agreed commitments regarding action that will be taken to resolve the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Undertakings can be obtained with parents at any time and independently of the conferencing process. Undertakings are also a key outcome of a compulsory schooling conference and are often given by conference participants in addition to parents. They can be entered into evidence in any future court action

C. Compulsory Schooling Orders. Application for a Compulsory Schooling Order to the Children's Court can be considered where previous measures have been unsuccessful in improving student attendance. It is an extension of efforts aimed at addressing any welfare issues deemed to be adversely affecting a child's attendance at school. The Application to the Children's Court can also include an application for a Court Ordered Attendance Conference

D. Prosecution in the Local Court is only undertaken when all other avenues have been exhausted, or where there is no likelihood of an Application to the Children's Court rectifying unsatisfactory attendance.

Record keeping requirements for school attendance

School attendance records must include:

- A.** Register of Admission to be retained permanently (maintained on ERN)
- B.** Written notes, records of verbal explanations and records of electronic explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt
- C.** Attendance Register (roll), to be retained for three years. In a case where a student has an accident requiring an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of **25 years**
- D.** Information detailing a student's absences each year, kept on the student's file until seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an

accident report, the record should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.

- Records for Certificates of Exemptions from attendance and enrolment must be kept consistent with the requirements of the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#).

Special Circumstance Registers

- Attendance Registers must be maintained each day the school is open for instruction; however Special Circumstance Registers should be used:
 - A.** Full or part day industrial action involving teachers
 - B.** Approved school development day
 - C.** Days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. Principals should consult with the Director Public Schools NSW, prior to deciding that a school is inaccessible
 - D.** Students with a shared enrolment are attending specialist education settings and that setting is not the home or census school
 - E.** Students attending another NSW government school for a short period of time, while enrolled in their local school. The Attendance Register Code 'H' should be used on the local school's Attendance Register (roll)
 - F.** Students who attend a Suspension Centre who are suspended from school in accordance with the Department's Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures. The Attendance Register Code 'E' should be used on the school's Attendance Register (roll) to denote the days the student was suspended from school

Resources to Support the Regular Attendance of Students

- [Every Student, Every School](#) is an initiative providing better learning and support for students with a disability, additional learning or behaviour support needs in our public schools. Addressing the learning and support needs of students with a disability strongly supports regular attendance at school.
- A [Guide to Effective Roll Marking](#) is a resource developed to provide further information to principals and school staff with delegated authority for maintaining School Attendance Registers (rolls) so that they reflect the accurate attendance of students.
- [Attendance Register Codes](#)
- [Application for Home School Liaison Support](#)

Information for Parents:

The following document is available from the [School Attendance](#) webpage on the [Schools Internet](#) site.

- [Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Parents](#)

Information for schools:

- [Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Schools](#)
- [Attendance of Aboriginal Students- Working with families and communities](#) (intranet only)
- [Legal Issues Bulletins](#)

Documentation Links

[School Attendance Policy](#)

[Exemption from School Procedures](#)

[Exemption from School - FAQ](#)

[Student Attendance in Government Schools - Procedures](#)

[Absentee Notices](#)

[Attendance Register Codes](#)

[Completion of School - Special Circumstances](#)

[Special Circumstances Register](#)

[Sample Policy of Implementation](#)