



# 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 Bellaire 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 Bellaire 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 Bellaire 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 Bellaire 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 Bellaire Primary School, or
- The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Bellaire primary school for particular activities.

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

Bellaire 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.

Our school 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.

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

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Bellaire 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

Bellaire Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- articulate high expectations to all members of the school community by:
  - regularly communicating with parents about expectations for attendance
  - promoting awareness that absence results in quantifiable lost learning time and opportunities
- modelling punctuality across the whole school
- create safe, supportive learning environments where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning by:
  - developing collaborative and empowering relationships between teachers, students and parents
  - implementing effective and supportive transition programs, including student transitions between different learning areas and levels within the school, and pathways and careers support programs
  - developing class and home group structures and environments that enable opportunities for increased connectedness to individual teachers and peers
  - encouraging parents to get involved in the life of the school
  - immediately following-up any problems identified by students and parents in a transparent manner
- adopt consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence by:
  - following-up individual student absences in a timely manner
  - correctly using student attendance data management systems (e.g. CASES21, eCASES)
  - delegating responsibilities to all staff, with a key member of staff leading attendance improvement initiatives
- implement data-driven attendance improvement strategies, for example:
  - monitoring and analysing school attendance records regularly and using tools for early identification of students at risk of poor attendance
  - discussing student attendance records in staff meetings and in the staff performance and development review process
- provide early identification of and supportive intervention for students at risk of poor attendance by:
  - understanding the causal factors of absence and the need for targeted interventions
- link with local community groups and agencies to maximise program and individual support by:
  - collaborating with other schools, community groups and agencies
- access specialist support for individual students with identified behavioural, health, or social issues by:
  - utilising Student Support Services or external community services where appropriate
- provide a staged response to non-attendance by:
  - focusing on prevention and early intervention by creating a positive school culture
  - intervening and providing targeted responses for individual students
- support students to return to school after absences through:
  - setting individual student attendance goals and data-driven improvement plans
  - formal procedures for supporting the learning of a student absent for an extended period
  - positive and flexible support and follow-up with students on their return to school, including the use of Return to School Plans and modification of learning outcomes where required

### **Student Support Services**

Student Support Services are available in Victorian Government schools to assist children and young people, facing a range of barriers to learning, to achieve their educational and developmental potential through the provision of strategies and specialised support at individual, group, school and network levels.

Student Support Services comprise a broad range of professionals including psychologists, guidance officers, speech pathologists, social workers and visiting teachers. Student Support Services officers work as part of an integrated health and wellbeing team within networks of schools, focusing on providing group based and individual support, workforce capacity building and specialised services.

### **Koorie Engagement Support Officers**

Koorie Engagement Support Officers assist in building communication links with parents to facilitate an increased awareness of school policy, encourage greater communication between parents and teachers and promote more parental involvement in school community activities and school decision making. They can also provide expert advice to school communities and kindergartens about models of effective support for Koorie children and young people.

### **Community partnerships**

Community expectations can play a significant role in school attendance. Linking to the local community can give schools access to an extended network of community members and encourage and promote school attendance by presenting a consistent message to young people.

Young people with a meaningful connection to a particular community tend to be more resilient when facing issues such as school and family stress. Partnerships between schools and community-based service providers can enable more streamlined and efficient delivery of services to vulnerable students.

Partnerships via school networks and community service provider networks are an important way for schools to assist students at risk of disengagement from education and non-attendance by sharing approaches and resources.

### **Recording attendance**

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

- Meet legislative requirements
- Discharge bellaire primary school's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by classroom teachers at the start of the school day (by 9.15am) and after lunch (at 2.30pm) using Sentral (which syncs to CASES21/eCASES).

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

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, Bellaire Primary School will notify parents by Sentral push notification message / email. Bellaire Primary School 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 school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Bellaire 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 Bellaire 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**

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Bellaire 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
- 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/insert appropriate terminology for your school].

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 Bellaire 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 School Attendance Officer in the Barwon South Regional Office 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 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](#)
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](#)
- [School intranet](#)

### **REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION**

This policy was last updated in 2021 and is scheduled for review in [month/year].