



## TRARALGON SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### 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; and
- Explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Traralgon South Primary School has in place to:
  - Support, monitor and maintain student attendance; and
  - Record, monitor and follow up student absences.

#### SCOPE:

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It is applicable to all students and staff.

This policy applies to all students at Traralgon South Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's (DET) [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Traralgon South 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:

1. Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).
2. 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.

3. Students are expected to attend Traralgon South Primary School during normal school hours every day of each term unless:
  - a. There is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student;
  - b. The student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Traralgon South Primary School, or
  - c. The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Traralgon South Primary School for particular activities.
4. Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.
5. Traralgon South 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Traralgon South 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.
9. Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Traralgon South Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.
10. 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.
11. Traralgon South Primary School's 'Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy' supports student attendance.
12. **Recording Attendance:**

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

- Meet legislative requirements; and
- Discharge Traralgon South Primary School's duty of care for all students.

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of the school day (before 9:30am) and after lunch (before 2:30pm) using eCASES. The teacher will also maintain a hardcopy attendance register for use during an emergency.

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

### 13. **Recording Absences:**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

It is preferred that parents notify Traralgon South Primary School of planned absences prior to the day of absence by a written note, handed to the classroom teacher.

Parents should notify Traralgon South Primary School of unplanned absences before 9:30am of the day of absence by:

- A message to the classroom teacher using Class Dojo;
- An email to the classroom teacher; or
- A phone call to the school.

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, Traralgon South Primary School will notify parents by SMS, email, phone call and/or Class Dojo message. Traralgon South 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.

Traralgon South 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 Traralgon South 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; and
- 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.

#### **14. 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, Traralgon South 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; and/or
- Arranging for assistance from relevant support staff, including the DET Student Support Services or other external agencies.

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.

#### **15. Referral to School Attendance Officer:**

If Traralgon South 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 DET Regional Office (Moe) 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.

#### **REVIEW CYCLE:**

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 19 October 2020 and is scheduled for review in 2023.

In primary school, some students **miss** on average **3 weeks** of school **per year**. That's **half a year** of school by the end of **year 6**.



# EVERY DAY COUNTS

## Primary school attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things at school every day – missing school puts them behind.

### Why it's important

We all want our students to get a great education, and the building blocks for a great education begin with students coming to school each and every day.

If students miss school regularly, they miss out on learning the fundamental skills that will set them up for success in the later years of school.

There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes.

Each missed day is associated with progressively lower achievement in numeracy, writing and reading.

### Getting in early

Attendance patterns are established early – a child regularly missing days in kindergarten or in the early years of school will often continue to miss classes in the later years, and receive lower test scores than their classmates. It's vital that students go to school every day – even in the early years of primary school.

### What we can do

The main reasons for absence are:

**Sickness** – There are always times when students need to miss school, such as when they're ill. It's vital that they're only away on the days they are genuinely sick, and setting good sleep patterns, eating well and exercising regularly can make a big difference.

It's vital that holidays are planned during school holidays where possible, and not during the term if it can be avoided.

**"Day off"** – Think twice before letting your child have a "day off" as they could fall behind their classmates – every day counts.

**Truancy** – This is when students choose not to go to school without their parent's permission. There can be many reasons for truancy. The best way to address this is for schools and parents to work together.

If for any reason your child must miss school, there are things you can do with your school to ensure they don't fall behind:

- Speak with your classroom teacher and find out what work your child needs to do to keep up.

- Develop an absence learning plan with your teacher and ensure your child completes the plan.

Remember, every day counts. If your child must miss school, speak with your classroom teacher as early as possible.

Openly communicating with your child's school about all absences is a good way to prevent attendance issues being escalated to a School Attendance Officer. A School Attendance Officer is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regional Director who has authority to follow up attendance issues. Attendance issues that are escalated can lead to an Infringement Notice.

If you're having attendance issues with your child, please let your classroom teacher know so we can work together to get your child to school every day.

**For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:**

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx)

Department of Education and Training



Education  
and Training



## HOW IS MY CHILD'S ATTENDANCE?

**1 or 2 days off school a week does not seem like much but...**

If your child misses...	That equals...	Which is...	And over 13 years of schooling, that is...
1 day per fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Almost 1 ½ years
1 day per week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years of school
2 days per week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years
3 days per week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Almost 8 years

**How about being a little bit late each day?**

He/she is only missing just...	That equals...	Which is...	And over 13 years of schooling, that is...
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Almost 1 ½ weeks per year	Nearly ½ a year
20 minutes per day	1 hour 40 minutes per week	Over 2 ½ weeks per year	Nearly 1 year
30 minutes per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1 ½ years
1 hour per day	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2 ½ years

**EVERY DAY COUNTS – If you want your child to be successful at school then, YES, attendance does matter!**