



ELTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

POLICY DOCUMENT *Attendance Policy*

INTRODUCTION

By law all children aged between six and 17 in Victoria must be enrolled at a registered school or registered for home schooling unless there is some reasonable excuse.

Eltham High School aims to ensure that all students enrolled at the school attend regularly to maximise access to learning opportunities. The purpose of this policy is to clearly outline the processes used to monitor student attendance.

PHILOSOPHY

Daily school attendance is important for all students to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Students who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes throughout their lives. It is important that students develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

Eltham High School acknowledges school participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for students by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of disengaging from education. This may have later implications for employment and a range of health and social risks including homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system.

POLICY STATEMENT

Students at Eltham High School are expected to attend school during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp), or where the student is attending a re-engagement program or another school part-time to make up full-time attendance.

At Eltham High School, student absence, lateness and truanting are taken seriously. Eltham High School has developed a staged response to managing non-attendance.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

Eltham High School's Attendance Policy outlines the shared responsibilities in promoting attendance and encouraging engagement and participation at a whole school level. This policy recognises that effective monitoring and early intervention is crucial in managing non-attendance. Eltham High School recognises that chronic absences are commonly a sign of stress factors either in a student's life outside school, and/or in the immediate learning environment and identifies early warning signs for disengagement including poor attendance in primary school or kinder, frequent lateness, leaving school early, missing lessons, siblings with poor attendance, unresolved issues with staff or students, difficulties at times of transition, social or emotional issues and chronic health issues in student and /or family members. The school acknowledges that responding quickly with offers to work in partnership with students and their families is the most effective way to manage non-attendance so that patterns do not become entrenched.

Types of absence

Absence due to illness/family issue - approved

Approved absence due to illness/family issue will count as both a school absence and a class absence.

Students may miss scheduled classes due to illness or a family issue that temporarily prevents them from attending school.

Absence – unapproved

Unapproved absences will count as both a school absence and a class absence. A student who misses a scheduled class without the permission of the school or parent/guardian is considered truant.

A student may not leave the school premises at recess and/or lunch times. The school does not accept parental/guardian permission to leave the school grounds at recess and/or lunchtime.

Absence - due to School approved activity

Participation in school-approved activities will not count as a school absence or as a class absence as long as the official permission form and payment (where applicable) have been submitted prior to the event.

Students may miss scheduled classes due to participation in a variety of school-approved activities.

A school-approved activity includes the following;

- Sport
- Music lessons/performance
- Work experience/work placement
- Camps and Excursions
- Student Leadership
- Community Service
- Suspension

Shared Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians	Students	Eltham High School
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure that their child attends school on every school day for the program in which they are enrolled. ○ Monitor their child's attendance through Compass and inform the school of any discrepancies. ○ Provide a satisfactory explanation for all absences - that is, any time during which a student is not attending or participating in their educational program. ○ Support their child's attendance at school by; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Contacting the school in advance prior to any planned short-term absence. · Providing the reason for any unplanned absences before 10.00am on the day of absence. · Providing a written note to the Sub-School, if their child is required to leave school early. · Providing a written note explaining any lateness. · Contacting the Sub-School if student absence is to be for an extended period of time (e.g. family reasons or illness) and request schoolwork. ○ Contact the Sub-School or Student Services Leader if a student is refusing to attend school or issues arise that may affect their child's attendance. ○ Initiate or attend meetings to seek support and discuss attendance concerns. ○ Advise the school Registrar of any change of address or phone numbers to ensure school records are accurate. Up-to-date data is essential in an emergency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attend school (under the Education [General Provisions] Act 2006, students must attend school each day). ○ Arrive on time and have all necessary equipment. ○ Register and collect a late pass from the Compass Kiosk in the case of late arrival. In the case of ongoing lateness issues consequences will be put in place. ○ Obtain approval where there is a need to leave school within the school day. A dated and signed letter from a parent/guardian must be provided to the Sub-School office. ○ Ensure all schoolwork missed due to absence is completed. ○ Ensure the absence records on Compass are accurate and report any inaccuracies. ○ Understand specific attendance requirements (Senior School - VCE/VET/VCAL studies). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform the school community about the EHS Attendance Policy and Procedures and make this publicly available to parents/guardians through the school's website and newsletters. ○ Monitor student attendance daily through marking the roll at the beginning of each lesson, using Compass. ○ Ensure that student participation in any school-based out of class activities is documented on Compass. ○ Respond in a timely manner to unapproved non-attendance issues using a staged response: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Where a parent/guardian has not explained student absence, the Sub-School Coordinator will make contact the family. · Where the explanation for student absence is unsatisfactory, the Sub-School Coordinator will notify the Sub-School Leader. · Where attendance has become a problem, the Sub-School and Student Services team will discuss individual attendance with students and offer support and help to parents/guardians and students. · Where non-attendance persists the sub-school will inform the DET Attendance Officer. ○ The Sub-School will arrange for teachers to provide students with schoolwork when they are absent for legitimate extended periods.

Non-attendance

Non-attendance can be broadly categorised into three areas. These areas often overlap. It is important to develop an understanding of which of these areas particular cases of non-attendance fall under in order to match an intervention that has the most chance of success.

School refusal

When a child or young person does not want, or actually refuses, to go to school and experiences a high level of stress and/or anxiety about school attendance. Parents know their child is staying home over a prolonged period because the prospect of going to school causes them emotional distress. Parents generally support a return to school but may feel powerless and unsure about how to support their child. There are different types of anxiety (for example, separation anxiety or performance anxiety) that require different interventions therefore an assessment and treatment plan from a mental health practitioner is appropriate. A graded approach to exposure to feared situations guided by a professional paired with shared family-school messages about attendance and the promotion of a coping approach can be successful in improving attendance here.

School withdrawal

A regular pattern of not attending school with parent/guardian consent often due to factors such as: generational family poverty (difficulties buying uniforms, books, transport, food), care duties in the home, lack of recognised value in education, bullying, school failure and disengagement, family violence, family practices and structure (adultification of children, boundary dissolution), trauma, mental health issues or psychosomatic illness / physical illness of student or family members. In families where these complex issues are impacting on attendance the situation can seem intractable and the management is often very draining for schools. Strong partnerships giving the family consistent messages about attendance, exploring flexible learning options and alternative educational pathways, effective use of secondary consultation, families engaging with support, and maintaining a positive school-home relationship are often crucial to improving attendance here.

Truancy

This refers to non-attendance without parent/guardian knowledge or permission. Missing classes, avoiding certain subjects/teachers can be pre-cursors to a pattern of truancy being created. Truancy is often about school failure and engaging in activities that give more positive re-enforcement than attending school. Peer influence can play a role in the disengagement. A rapid and consistent response to truancy that factors in possible peer influence, offering re-engagement programs, individualised and flexible learning options and engaging the support of parents and can be successful in improving attendance here.

Staged Response to Non-attendance

STAGE ONE – Unexplained/unauthorised absence from school/ class

- In the case where the parent/ guardian has not contacted the school, SMS contact will be made using Compass.
- Teachers are required to inform the sub-school coordinator where a student has been absent from their class without approval for three consecutive periods.

STAGE TWO – three - five days unexplained absences school

- Phone/ email contact made with parent/guardian contact by the sub-school Coordinator.
- Use informal contacts to investigate situation
- Record actions on Compass Chronicle.

STAGE THREE – five days or more of unexplained absences

- Phone/ email contact as per level two
- Increase offer of, or re-offer, support. Liaise with existing family service / seek support for family.
- Written request to parent/guardian regarding absences. The letter to be signed by the sub-school Leader.
- Consult with Student Services team.
- Record actions on Compass Chronicle.

STAGE FOUR – ongoing unexplained absences

- Continued contact with offers of support.
- Letter to parent/guardian regarding continued unexplained / unauthorised absences formally requesting presence at an Attendance Student Support Group. To be signed and sent by the Assistant Principal.
- Hold Attendance SSG: establish causes of non-attendance, develop Student Absence Learning Plan and/or Attendance Improvement Plan or Return to School Plan to support attendance as per DET School Attendance Guidelines 2014
- Request secondary consultation or direct intervention from Student Services team. This may lead to referral to external agency, such as HealthAbility /CAMHS /ChildFIRST /Berry Street.
- Consider an individual tailored program. Explore Flexible Learning Options/Re-engagement programs at a school level or in the community.
- Continue to support the student’s education with the development of a Student Absence Learning Plan.
- CASES21: DET Excusing non-attendance due to school refusal
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/managingabsence.aspx>
“ in general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:.....school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes.....”
- Record actions on Compass Chronicle.

STAGE FIVE – unresolved on-going non-attendance

- Letter to parent/guardian summarising all intervention and support offered. To be signed and sent by the Principal. The letter is to offer an opportunity to meet with the school for an Attendance Student Support Group Meeting and advising the parent/guardian unless there is improvement the matter will be referred to School Attendance Officer. Parents required to respond within 7 days.
- Letter to be sent registered post
- Continue with secondary consultations/phone calls/home visits
- Record actions on Compass Chronicle.

STAGE SIX – Referral to School Attendance Officer

- A principal does not have to make a referral for all absences that meet the criteria but may continue to manage the absences at a school level

Senior Sub-School Requirements

Student absence in the senior school is managed somewhat differently due to the fact that attendance is linked to whether or not a student satisfactorily completes a unit of study (this will include Year 10 students enrolled in any VCE Unit of Study). The process used to manage student attendance in the Senior Sub-School is outlined below:

- All students must attempt six units per semester in Year 11, and five units per semester in Year 12;
- Students must attend all lessons punctually and be aware that if a student is late to class on three occasions, this equates to one absence;
- Students must attend all scheduled classes. Failure to do so may result in the awarding of an “N” result due to insufficient class attendance;
- Students must attend all Tutorial sessions and Timed Restoration Assessment blocks and all assemblies held during these Timed Restoration blocks.
- Unauthorised absences of greater than five periods from a unit in any semester will lead to a review of the student’s progress and to the possible awarding of an “N” result for the unit due to absences.
- Families must refrain from organising holidays / events during the scheduled Term dates as this will impact student’s attendance and outcomes results.

Medical Certificates

- If a student is absent due to a medical concern on the day of a SAC or SAT he / she is required to obtain a medical certificate dated on the day of the absence in order to be eligible for a scored assessment.
- Failure to obtain an appropriately dated medical certificate for an absence from a SAC or SAT will result only in a S or N result with no scored assessment.
- If a student has been absent when a SAC/SAT was held in class, the SAC/SAT will be scheduled for redemption within one week. The redemption must occur within the week of the student’s return to school. A medical certificate dated on the day of the absence must be presented in order for the assessment to be awarded a numeric score.
- On non SAC / SAT days if a student is absent due to a medical concern and if there are other absences from a subject it advisable to obtain a medical certificate in order that the absence is covered as an authorised absence.
- The Department of Education identifies the following as acceptable Medical Certificates or certificates in lieu: a Certificate issued by a registered doctor, dentist, physiotherapist, chiropractor, osteopath, optometrist or psychologist who is a member (or eligible for membership) of the board of the Clinical Branch of the Australian Psychological Society; a patient declaration statement from a medical clinic will not be accepted as a medical certificate.
- Students who become ill and will need an absence of two or more consecutive days must contact the VCE Coordinators by telephone to discuss their situation;
- Where there is a known school absence parents/guardians are requested to advise the school by entering the details into Compass through the parental portal, emailing the relevant Co-ordinator or by telephoning the school attendance line on ph.9430 5299 by 10:30am on the morning of the absence.

BASIS OF DISCRETION

The School Council has responsibility for the establishment, evaluation and review of school policies. The School Principal has the responsibility to ensure that school policies are implemented effectively.

Minor changes to the policy (changes that will not affect the spirit of the policy) may be made at the discretion of the Principal.

The Policy Review and Evaluation process will recommend any major changes to the policy to School Council.

RELATED POLICIES

Teaching and Learning Policy

Student Engagement Policy

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/everydaycountsprimary.PDF>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/parents/everydaycountssecondary.PDF>

Anxiety information for parents:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/everyday.aspx>

How can I get my teenager to school?

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/everyday.aspx>

REVIEW

This policy should be reviewed every 3 years.

Date Endorsed: 14/12/16

Executive Officer

Eltham High School Council

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND WORKING PARTY INFORMATION:

This policy was written by: Fran Mullins

Consultation has taken place with the relevant group(s) in the following list:

Group	Consultation ✓
School Operations Committee	
Staff	✓

Students (randomly selected group)	
Parents (randomly selected group)	
Members of the Community	
Other (where relevant please specify)	
Planning and Policy Review Team of Council (Mandatory)	✓
School Council (Mandatory)	✓

PROCESS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The Policy is developed or reviewed by the Policy Writer or Policy Writing Team using the agreed "Policy Template"

The policy is presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Relevant groups are consulted in relation to the policy by the Policy Writer / Policy Writing Team

Feedback is addresses by the Policy Writer /Policy Writing Team

The policy is re-presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Approved

The policy is presented to the School Council for endorsement

The policy is endorsed by the School Council

Further Clarification

Additional Feedback

Re-presented

