

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

POLICY and PROCEDURES

Rationale:

Students need to attend school regularly in order to participate fully and gain maximum benefit from schooling. Regular attendance enables children to access a full education and assists them to reach their full potential. Attendance at school is also a legal requirement for all children between 6 and 17 years of age.

Aims:

- To encourage and maintain strong attendance patterns and enhanced outcomes for all our students
- To keep an accurate record of each student's attendance at BCPS using the state attendance codes. This is a legal requirement

Responsibilities

Principal ensures:

- Parents and caregivers are made aware of their responsibilities to have their children attend school every day it is open. These responsibilities to be reinforced in interviews/meetings and newsletters throughout the year.
- All staff understand their responsibilities regarding student attendance
- All class rolls are completed in accordance with NSW DEC guidelines
- Class rolls are checked regularly for legal compliance
- Suitable procedures are in place to identify attendance patterns of students who could be at risk
- Attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students
- Parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements
- All cases of unsatisfactory attendance of part or full day absences of a student from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented
- Parents are contacted promptly and within three days of an unexplained absence occurring
- Establish structures and procedures that support teachers in addressing issues of student non-attendance
- The issue of continued unexplained or inadequately explained absences over a term or frequent late arrivals will be addressed by a meeting between parents and Principal

- Consideration of the conditions/consequences applicable to the acceptance of an Application for Leave.
- An explanation for a full day absence is satisfactory and if not the Principal may decline the request. The parent should be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.
- Medical certificates or other documentation are requested when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged. Medical certificates are not sacrosanct documents. Where Principals have concerns about medical certificates being produced for absences, they can ask the parent to request that the doctor write on the certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.
- When they have ongoing concerns, they can request the parents' consent to contact the doctor. 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'.
- That determining whether concerns about poor school attendance raise safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns requiring a report to Community Services - where a student is absent or partially absent for 30 days over a 100 day period (this can roll over terms) access the mandatory reporters section of the Keep Them Safe website www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au to determine whether a report is required.
- Minutes from an attendance meeting are kept in the student's file
- All staff are kept up to date with exemptions, extended leave applications and students who have departed the school and that the required forms are completed by the appropriate personnel and placed in the student's file
- Delegated authority from the Minister to grant an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling more than 15 days and less than 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student. Additional leave for students not of compulsory age may be granted at the discretion of the Principal
- Implementation of procedures for exercising the Minister's delegation under Section 25 of the Education Act
 - Application forms for exemption are completed
 - Maintains records of the exercise of the above delegation including copies of all certificates issued under the delegation.
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FAM ensures:

- where the destination of a student is unknown, that a Department of Education and Communities officer with home school liaison responsibilities has been notified of the student's full name, date of birth, last known address, last date of attendance, parents' names and contact details, an indication of possible destination, other information that may assist officers to locate the student, and

any known work health and safety risks associated with contacting the parents or student

FAMA ensures:

- Weekly hard copies of the class rolls are transferred to SAS
- Any absences on Fridays have an absence form attached to the following weeks attendance roll ready for the teacher to hand out
- The roll folder is fully stocked with absence forms and late notices each week and ready to be picked up by class teachers every Monday morning
- Any notes from telephone calls/late notices/emails/absence forms taken by the office are attached to the correct weeks hard copy roll
- Follow up calls to parents when a child has been absent from school for 3 days without notice are made
- Email teacher with response to follow up call. Email body to be printed and filed in student file and roll to be updated with correct attendance codes.
- Exemption/Extended Leave forms are given to parents who enquire

Classroom Teachers ensure:

- A caring, teaching and learning environment is provided, which fosters students' sense of belonging to the school community
- Accurate records of student attendance are maintained - including the hard copy class rolls marked twice daily in accordance with the current legal requirements and procedures and signed as correct at the end of every day
- Emails and diary entries concerning absences are copied and attached to roll
- Complete an 'Explanation of Student Absence' form or 'Notification of Late Attendance at School' form if there is no explanation from the Parent/Caregiver and send home with the student
- Interviews/meetings with parents mention attendance patterns of students
- Contact Principal/FAMA by email if a child is absent 3 days without explanation
- Principal intervention occurs when required
- Follow procedure to address attendance issues are implemented when they arise - see supporting the regular attendance of students at school
- Report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the Principal or nominee.
- Clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- No response from parents within 2 days once a 'Unexplained Absence' form or 'Notification of Late Attendance at School' form is sent home - refer to Principal
- Completed and accurate roll folder is handed to FAMA every Friday
- Any mention of students being absent for a length of time is referred to the Principal

Parents ensure:

- Their child attends school every day that school is open unless the school receives a valid reason for being absent
- Children are expected to arrive at school between 8.30am and 8.55am
- Explanatory notes, emails or phone calls are provided promptly when their child is absent from school
- When a student is late for school the Parent/Caregiver needs to explain the reason for the lateness: either by a written note or email or by a telephone call
- If your child brings home an 'Unexplained Absence' form or 'Notification of Late Attendance at School' form you complete the form and return it with your child the next day
- That their children attend school regularly
- They take measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children
- Exemption from attendance can be applied for if reasons for leave fall under:
 - Exceptional domestic circumstances
 - Other Exceptional Circumstance
 - Direction under Section 42D of the *Public Health Act 1991*
 - Employment in entertainment industry/participation in elite sporting event for short periods of time i.e. for one or two days, and at short notice
- As part of the implementation of the National Standards, holidays taken by students outside of school vacation periods will now be included as absences. A Certificate of Exemption can no longer be granted for this purpose.
- Holidays of 6 or more school days will require the completion of an Application for Extended Leave Form.
- Families are encouraged to holiday or travel during school vacations. If travel during school term is necessary the following considerations apply:
 - If the Principal accepts the reason for the absence, the absence will be recorded as "Principal's Approved Leave."
 - If the Principal does not believe the absence is in the student's best interests and does not accept the reason, the absence is unjustified and will be recorded as "Unexplained or unjustified leave."
 - If the period of absence is in excess of 50 days, the student may be eligible to enrol in Distance Education. For that period the student's enrolment transfers to the distance education school.
 - Note: A student cannot be enrolled in more than one school concurrently (including Distance Education). If a student enrolls in Distance Education they would not remain enrolled in Byron Community Primary School.
 - They would be able to apply to enrol again on their return. Enrolment would depend on a place being available in that class.
- Staff know how their child is leaving school if there is a change of routine and have written advice if leaving by taxi

Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

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 obligation under the Education Act (1990) the welfare of the student must be the focus of this consultation.

- The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this.
- Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school base strategies including:
 - student and parent interviews;
 - reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program;
 - development of a school-based attendance improvement plan;
 - referral to the school counsellor or outside agencies;
 - support from school based personnel.
- If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support may be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the regional Home School Liaison Program.

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Ratified by the School Council in...	March 2012
Ratified by Board of Directors	May 2014
Changes approved by Leadership Team	January 2015
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