DEECD School Attendance Guidelines 2014

Student Participation > School Attendance Guidelines 2014

Please note that these guidelines does not come into effect until 1 March 2014. For more information on the current guidelines, see: Student Attendance 2013

The school attendance 2014 guidelines:

• applies to all registered schools in Victoria (including non-government schools), parents of compulsory school-aged children, and School Attendance Officers

• supports schools and School Attendance Officers to meet their responsibilities and duties under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 and Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013.

Guidelines includes:

• strategies to encourage high levels of school attendance and how to improve attendance where an issue is identified

• an explanation of the legal requirements of school-age children to attend school, and the processes required to excuse or exempt their attendance

• procedures for schools to record, excuse, monitor and follow up student attendance in order to meet the requirements of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 and Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013.

• an explanation of the procedures a School Attendance Officer will follow as required by the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007 and Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013.

• advice for School Attendance Officers to aid their decision making when a parent has not met their obligations.

Note: Terms in these guidelines have the same definition as in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. Thus, unless specifically defined otherwise, the term “parent” includes “a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides”.

The importance of full time attendance

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted.

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

School participation is important as it 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 which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school, disruptive and delinquent behaviour and may lead to a cycle of rebellion against authority. These outcomes have later implications for employment, a range of health risk behaviours (drug and alcohol abuse), homelessness, poverty, welfare dependence, and involvement in the justice system. For more information, see: Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts

It is acknowledged that for some children and young people mainstream school environments may not always be the most appropriate settings. For the purpose of this document, participation in an approved re-engagement program is considered attendance at school. For more information, see: Re-engagement Programs

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, 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 engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.

Home schooling in Victoria is a legally recognised alternative to attending a registered school. Parents who wish to home school their child must satisfy the requirements of the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority. For more information, see: Home Schooling

For more information and resources to assist with improving attendance, see: Every Day Counts