

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Endeavour Hills Specialist School 9113 4100

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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Endeavour Hills Specialist School for particular activities.

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

Endeavour Hills Specialist 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.

Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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

Endeavour Hills Specialist School's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- School-wide Positive Behaviour Supports (S-WPBS) which aims to create a positive school climate, a culture of student competence and an open, responsive management system for all school community members.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for each student.
- Student Support Group meetings at least twice a year, with further meetings available on request.
- Values influence the development of the Expectations Matrix and are embedded in school language and activities.
- Ongoing staff professional development on welfare issues, mental health issues, and student engagement and support.
- Specialist training and refreshers for all staff in School-Wide Positive Behaviour Supports, Restorative Practices.
- delivering an engaging and diverse curriculum to ensure that students are able to participate in subjects and programs that are structured to their interests, strengths and aspirations.
- creating learning opportunities within a model of explicit teaching and based on an agreed shared model of instruction to ensure that evidenced-based, high yield teaching practices are incorporated into all lessons.
- utilising an agreed range of teaching and assessment practices to effectively respond to the diverse learning styles, strengths and needs of students.
- following the standards set by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
- embedding the Statement of Values into the curriculum by explicitly teaching and modelling to ensure shared expectations and understanding of the values within the school community.
- providing students with the opportunity to be involved in making decisions about their school through the Student Representative Council and other activities. Students are encouraged to speak with their teachers, Health and Wellbeing staff, Assistant Principal or Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns.
- creating opportunities for cross-age connections amongst students through whole-school events such as House activities, music, sport and lunchtime programs.
- explicitly teaching health and social skills development as a key component of the curriculum.
- Positive learning programs, such as the Five Finger Rule and You Can Do It.

- encouraging self-referrals from students to the Health and Wellbeing Group, Assistant Principal and Principal if they would like to discuss a particular issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind.
- explicitly teaching positive behaviour programs, including:
 - Respectful Relationships
 - Bully Stoppers
 - Safe Schools
- presenting programs, incursions and excursions that address issue-specific behaviour (i.e. anger management programs).
- offering student support activities and programs including buddy and peer support programs.

Targeted

Endeavour Hills Specialist School acknowledge that our students may need extra social, emotional or educational support at school, and that the needs of students will change over time as they grow and learn. These can include:

- allocating a Health and Wellbeing Leader in each learning neighbourhood to be responsible for ensuring the health and wellbeing of each student is monitored and supported as needed.
- assisting all students in their final two years of schooling are assisted to develop a Career Action Plan, with targeted goals and support to plan for their future.
- connecting all indigenous students with a Koorie Engagement Support Officer.
- appointing a Learning Mentor for each student in Out of Home Care.
- applying a trauma-informed approach to working with students who have experienced trauma.

Individual

Endeavour Hills Specialist School implements a range of strategies that support and promote individual engagement. These can include:

- building strong relationships with students who are at risk or otherwise vulnerable due to complex individual circumstances.
- meeting with the student and/or their parent/carer to talk about how best to help the student engage with school.
- developing a Behaviour Support Plan.
- considering environmental changes that may assist the student.
- referring the student or parents/carers to:
 - the Health and Wellbeing Leader
 - Student Support Services
 - therapeutic intervention and services appropriate external supports such as council-based youth and family services, other allied health professionals, headspace, child and adolescent mental health services or ChildFirst
 - re-engagement programs such as Navigator.

Where necessary, the school will support the student's parents/carers to engage by:

- being responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and/or health and wellbeing.
- collaborating, with the support of the student and their parents/carers, with any external allied health professionals, services or agencies that are supporting the student.
- monitoring individual student attendance and developing an Attendance Improvement Plan in collaboration with the student and their parents/carers.
- conducting additional Student Support Group meetings as needed to ensure collaboration with parents/carers, external service providers, and other services as deemed appropriate.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Endeavour Hills Specialist School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Endeavour Hills Specialist School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by classroom teacher at the start of the school day and after lunch using COMPASS.

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

RECORDING ABSENCES

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

Parents should notify Endeavour Hills Specialist School of absences by:

- contacting the school via phone or the parent portal on COMPASS

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, Endeavour Hills Specialist School will notify parents by push notification message in COMPASS. Endeavour Hills Specialist 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.

Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist School considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as 'approved absence'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'unapproved 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, Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 Endeavour Hills Specialist 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 South Eastern Victoria Region 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.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): Attendance

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February, 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	February 2027