STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy applies to all students who enrol at Mount Morgan State High School. The aim of this policy is to inform students, parents and staff of the provisions and procedures that govern student attendance for the duration of their enrolment. It details government and school policies and procedures that will inform all matters relating to student attendance at school.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006
Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006
Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act 2000
Child Protection Act 1999
SMS-PR-012: Student Protection
SMS-PR-027: Enrolment in a State Primary, Secondary and Special Schools
SMS-PR-021: Managing Behaviour in a Supportive School Environment
CRP-PR-009: Inclusive Education

RESPONSIBILITIES

School
It is the responsibility of the school to:

- inform parents and students of their compulsory schooling and/or compulsory participation obligations and of the processes to be followed in relation to students attendance
- implement processes to monitor students’ attendance at school and to follow up unexplained absence/s
- negotiate flexible arrangements where this best meets the needs of the student
- record all student absences as either explained or unexplained
- inform parents of any unexplained absence, asking the reason if no notification was received
- modify the recording if an explanation for an absence is received
- notify the parent if the reason given for the absence is recorded as unsatisfactory
- involve parents in conversations to discuss unexplained absences (that is absences where no reason has been provided or the reason provided was unsatisfactory)
- implement risk management processes for planned student absences from their educational program
- contact the Department of Child Safety or Queensland Police (where appropriate) to report an explained absence, or an absence for which an unsatisfactory explanation has been provided
- implement procedures documented in Enforcement of Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation procedure should a student be absent from school for more than 10 days without a satisfactory reason having been provided.

Student
It is the responsibility of the student to:

- attend school for the whole school day every school day
- provide the school with a written explanation, ID Attend message or QParents notification of any absence from school the day they return to school after any absence. Submit the note to the school office or to the form teacher
• remain on the school grounds for the entire school day
• Parent/Guardian to sign out student before leaving the school grounds for any reason
• meet with teachers upon return to school to complete necessary classwork
• follow all procedures as outlined.

Parent/Carers
It is the responsibility of parents to:

• ensure that their child attends school on every school day. A parent of a young person in the compulsory participation phase is obliged to ensure that the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option
• provide the school with a written explanation, an ID Attend text message or QParents notification of the reason for any absence from school.
• inform the school of any planned extended absence in advance where possible.
• sign in/out students where part-day absence required.

ACCEPTABLE ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL
Absences from school should be kept to a minimum wherever possible. It is generally accepted that the following explanations are reasonable in small numbers:

• medical or dental treatments or procedures
• funerals
• family reasons (e.g., special events; illness)
• specialised training
• sporting events other than those associated with the school or the education system
• cultural reasons.

UNACCEPTABLE ABSENCE
Should an excessive number of absences interfere with the educational progress of a student, parents and students will be asked to discuss this with a member of the school staff. Regardless of the reason, poor attendance has a significant impact on student learning. There are a number of options available to students and parents with genuine attendance issues. By contacting the school to discuss such issues flexible arrangements can often be made.

Students with an unacceptable number of absences may not be given credit for the semester’s work if, in the opinion of the school, they have not attended enough classes to warrant a result. This can have a significant impact on Senior students whose Queensland Certificate of Education is dependant on the number of semester units they are deemed to have completed.

SHORT ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL (including Leaving Schools Grounds)
No student is permitted to leave the school grounds without prior approval from the Principal. Students are permitted to go home for first lunch under the following conditions: Parents are to collect students from the office by signing them out. Students should arrive back at school on time to begin the next lesson to avoid disruption of student learning. Risk management associated with students leaving the school grounds is the responsibility of the school, parents and students. Working together and communicating with each other will benefit us all.
APPENDIX A

SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR TRACKING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Form Teacher Responsibilities
Form Teachers are to:
- mark official school rolls at form meeting/parade at the commencement of the school day
- ID Attend
- collect absentee notes from students who have been absent and return them to the office in the form roll folder
- report any concerns about a student’s attendance to a HOD or the Deputy/Principal as soon as you are aware of an issue. This can be done via email or in person
- contact home if this appropriate to the circumstance.

Classroom Teacher Responsibilities
Classroom teachers are to:
- maintain an attendance roll for every class you teach in ID Attend
- check the absentee list daily against your class attendance in ID Attend
- email a HOD or the Deputy/Principal if the situation warrants school and/or parental intervention
- contact home if this appropriate to the circumstance.

HOD and Deputy/Principal Responsibilities
The HODs and the Deputy/Principal will:
- check absentee lists each morning and phone selected parents to verify absence
- arrange meetings with parents and students whose attendance fails to meet an acceptable standard

Non Teaching Staff Responsibilities
Non Teaching Staff will:
- record information from form rolls in ID Attend after form rolls are returned to the office when required
- ID Attend process – after rolls have been marked a text message is automatically sent to parent/carer of students who are marked absent
- if reason is deemed reasonable, it will be coded as appropriate
- if no response from parent/carer, it will be coded as unexplained
- student absent for 3 consecutive days, text will be sent home daily
- phone call to parent requesting doctor’s certificate
- if information received it is coded as appropriate
- if no response – letter sent regarding attendance
- if student absent for 15 days Failure to Attend will be sent to parent/carer
- warning notice issued
- no change – recommendation for prosecution.
APPENDIX B

Unexplained Student Absences

Meet with parent to investigate possible reasons for absences, eg: bullying or harassment

- Bullying or harassment occurring
  - Address bullying
  - Provide support to student to address issues

- No bullying or harassment occurring
  - Ascertain quality of student’s relationships with members of school community
    - Issues
    - No issues
      - Explore appropriateness of student’s educational program with student and parent
        - Not appropriate
        - Appropriate
          - If non-attendance persists, follow up with parents. Consider whether to commence proceedings to prosecute
          - Implement an alteration to the student’s program or a flexible arrangement

Notify parent of concern and ask for a reason for absence / invite to meeting

- Meeting is held
- No response
  - Reason is given
    - Reason is satisfactory
    - Reason is not satisfactory
      - Commence processes associated with Enforcement of Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation.

Consider whether student’s attendance and progress should continue to be monitored and/or whether parent should apply for an exemption for their child
How can I get my teenager to go to school?

Many teenagers seek independence and think they know best. No matter how hard parents try, some students may be reluctant or refuse to go to school. These are some ideas which may assist parents in dealing with teenagers and school refusal. Addressing this issue promptly and setting up good patterns in adolescence can lead to future success.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Missing one day of school each week adds up to 2 months missed over a year.
- Each day absent in high school has an impact on numeracy skills.
- Poor attendance may be associated with future unemployment, criminal activity, substance abuse, and poorer health and life expectancy.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school every day, make that the expectation. Regular attendance at school sets up good behaviours for regular attendance at work.
- Help your teenager maintain daily routines such as finishing homework and getting a good night’s sleep. On average, teenagers need 8-9 hours sleep to be healthy and alert. You may also need to monitor their use of the Internet, mobile phone and TV at night to ensure they are not staying up too late or being disturbed while sleeping.
- Try not to schedule hair, dental or medical appointments during school hours. Arrange family holidays during scheduled school holidays so that they are not missing out on classes and, therefore, will not have to struggle to make up for lost time.
- Don’t let your teenager stay home unless genuinely sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety.
- If your teenager wants to stay home to finish an assignment, rather than letting them stay home, expect them to go to school – make attendance the number one priority. Later, you can discuss with them how they can improve their study habits or adjust their schedule.
- If your school has an assessment calendar on their website, use this to help your teenager plan their study so that they avoid working late the night before an assignment is due.
- Be sure to set a good example – how you meet your commitments impacts on how they will meet theirs.
- Talk to your teenager. What are their feelings about school? What interests them at school? Are there any difficult situations? It helps if you open these discussions in a relaxed way so that your teenager knows you are demonstrating concern, not authority.
- Try to be aware of your teenager’s social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
- Encourage meaningful extracurricular activities that your teenager enjoys, such as sports and clubs, to develop positive relationships and have success outside of a classroom setting. These activities can help your child feel part of the group, important to the school, and more motivated.
• Set clear parameters around part-time work. Make sure that the hours your teenager is working do not impact on their ability to go to school the next day, or interfere with school assessment expectations or exam preparation.

• Familiarise yourself with the school’s attendance policy. This can help when trying to reason with teenagers.

• Monitor your teenager’s attendance and school performance. Periodically check with their teachers to find out how things are going. If you find it difficult to contact several different teachers by phone, try email. Alternatively, if your school has a year level coordinator, they may be a helpful point of contact in relation to specific issues.

Remember...
You can talk with school staff (such as the teacher, year level coordinator, deputy principal or principal) to find out what assistance they can provide to keep your teenager attending and engaged.

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://raisingchildren.net.au/


http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/learningandwellbeing/resources.html#


http://au.reachout.com/


Preparing your child for high school

The move from primary to high school can be a time of excitement and new experiences. It can also be challenging or worrying for some students. Helping your child prepare for high school and making them feel supported will reduce the risk of disengagement from school in the future.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- **Relationships** – your child will meet new people, make new friends, and need to re-establish their position within a peer group.
- **School work** – your child will need to adapt to new teaching and assessment styles, cope with a wide range of subjects, adjust to having different teachers and classrooms, become more responsible for their own learning, manage a heavier study and homework load, and learn a new and more complex timetable.
- **Getting around** – your child will have to adjust to a new school site, get to class on time with the correct books and materials, and possibly cope with new transport arrangements.
- **Adolescent developmental changes** – your child will be experiencing normal developmental changes during this time (e.g. physical changes, emotional swings, and an increased desire for independence). Peers will become a greater influence in their life.

Encourage your child to develop their independence (e.g. look after their own belongings, use a diary to plan their homework and activities, read a timetable).

Ensure your child has all of the things needed to support their learning (e.g. stationery and books, uniform).

Familiarise yourself with the new school’s policies and procedures so you can answer questions and support your child’s decision-making.

Find out what transitions services and supports are offered by your child’s new school which may include visiting the school prior to enrolment.

Talk to your child before the move happens. Discuss what they’re most looking forward to and what they’re worried about. Give your child lots of reassurance.

Emphasise the positives and highlight the new opportunities your child will have.

Involve your child in decision-making (e.g. transport to and from school, selection of school bag and additional school materials, and subject choices if applicable).

**During or after the time your child starts high school:**

- Find out who your child’s form teacher or year level coordinator is and make contact or ask questions.
- Ensure your child has a suitable place to study at home, away from distractions such as the television or mobile phone. If your child has access to the internet for study, ensure they are visiting appropriate websites.
- Assist your child in developing a homework/study plan and assist with supervision of homework in the junior secondary years.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL?

**Before your child starts:**

- Attend parent information/enrolment sessions and open days.
- Take your child to school open days.
- Involve your child in selecting the appropriate school.
• Attend parent nights and interviews. Keep in regular contact with class teachers and support staff (email is a great way to do this).
• Encourage your child to join an extra-curricular program offered by the school.
• Discuss your child’s achievement results and reports with them and help them to set future learning goals.
• Talk to other parents to check whether your child’s experiences and feelings are similar to those of others.
• Ensure your child gets plenty of sleep, eats well and gets regular exercise as this is important for a successful transition to high school.
• Ensure you maintain consistent routines with your child (e.g. getting ready for school).
• Celebrate milestones with your child (e.g. the first day, first week, end of term).

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SIGNS TO LOOK FOR WHEN MY CHILD IS NOT COPING?

Be aware there may not be obvious or visible signs that things are not going well for your child. Be conscious of any changes in your child’s behaviour, attitude, communication or reactions that are different to what you would normally expect. For example, they may:
• show a lack of involvement in the new school
• lose confidence or self-esteem
• refuse to talk about school or friends/peers
• have no desire to go to school, or refuse to go
• show a decline in academic performance
• become withdrawn or display excessive behaviours
• become easily emotional (crying or angry at the slightest instance).

MY CHILD IS HAVING DIFFICULTIES ADJUSTING IN HIGH SCHOOL. WHAT CAN I DO?

It is important that you don’t wait for things to improve on their own. Talk to your child to find out what the issues are. Be aware that they may be reluctant to open up to you. It is also a good idea to have a discussion with your child’s form teacher, year level coordinator or guidance officer so they can assist you in developing some strategies to address these issues.

USEFUL WEBSITES

http://raisingchildren.net.au/

http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/learningandwellbeing/resources.htm#


Regular school attendance
Information for parents and carers

Did you know? Research shows that in Queensland, higher student attendance at school is associated, on average, with higher student achievement.

Why is regular attendance at school important?
Regular school attendance will mean that your child has a better chance in life. Your child will achieve better when they go to school all day, every school day.
- they learn better
- they make friends
- they are happier
- they have a brighter future.

Why must I send my child to school?
Under Queensland law, you must make sure your child of school age is enrolled and attends school all day, every school day unless they have an acceptable reason. Illness, doing work experience or competing in a school sporting event are acceptable reasons for being absent from school.

Principals decide if the reason given for your child’s absence is acceptable.

Avoid keeping your child away from school for:
- birthdays, shopping, visiting family and friends, if they sleep in, looking after other children, minor check ups or care such as hair cuts.

Routine medical or other health appointments should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

What should I do if our family is going on a holiday in school time?
You are encouraged not to schedule holidays during school time. If your family holiday is during school time, let the school know in advance and talk about what arrangements can be made for your child. Depending on the circumstances the school may be able to provide tasks for your child to complete while they are absent or assist you to organise an exemption from schooling.

Do I need to let the school know if my child has been away from school?
Yes, you must let the school know the reason why your child has been absent from school within two school days of their return. If possible, advise the school beforehand.

Are you having problems getting your child to school for some of these reasons?
- won’t get out of bed in the morning
- won’t go to bed at night
- can’t find their uniform, books, school bag ...
- slow to eat breakfast
- haven’t done their homework
- watching TV
- have a test or presentation to do, have an assignment to hand in
- it’s their birthday.

If so, a set routine can help
- have a set time to go to bed
- have a set time to get out of bed
- have uniform and school bag ready the night before
- have a set time for starting and finishing breakfast
- set a time for daily homework activities
- speak about school positively
- be firm, send your child to school every school day including their birthday and the last day of term!

What should I do if my child won’t go to school?
You should contact the school as soon as possible for advice and support.