

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Policy contributors: H Downes, L Freeth, V Tricker, M O'Brien-Dent, G Botten and J Vujinovic

## Rationale

Every day a student attends school has a positive impact on their future prospects and their development as an individual. A focus on increasing student attendance through support and intervention with the student and their families creates a culture of success within the school community.

Research from around the world has demonstrated a clear link between improved literacy and numeracy outcomes and attendance at school. Family engagement with the student and the school around attendance and achievement has also been shown to be critical; when families understand the relevance of attendance they work more closely and effectively with the school.

## Objectives

To define the process, Modbury High School will ensure that student attendance is maintained and supported. It will define the roles of home group teachers, Year Level Leaders (YLL), Counsellors, Senior Leaders and SSOs.

This policy is written to support the Department for Education's key actions on attendance:

- Promote the importance of education from the earliest years of life and throughout the schooling years;
- Actively engage children, young people and their families in education and development opportunities; and
- Address barriers to attendance, learning and wellbeing to support children and young people be physically present and engaged in their learning.

Students with attendance issues are split into three categories of risk, low, medium and high depending on the nature of the absence and other risk factors. A student with habitual non-attendance is one who has 5 or more absences, for any reason, *in a term*. A chronic non-attender is one who is absent for 10 days or more *per term for any reason*. For each risk category the Department for Education has recommended actions:

**Low risk** – habitual and chronic non-attenders, for all explained absences.

- Parents made aware of concerns.
- Early identification of any supports required.
- Welcoming schools environment.

**Medium risk** – habitual and chronic non-attenders, unexplained absences.

- Data is monitored and patterns identified.
- Barriers to attendance determined and addressed.
- Parent involvement.
- Educational needs identified.
- Referral to support services considered.

**High risk** – chronic non-attenders, explained or unexplained, with additional risk factors.

- Case management/team-around-the-child approach.
- Individualised and intensive support provided.
- Coordinated interagency collaboration.
- Statutory options assessed.

As well as a policy on attendance the school should aim to inspire, engage and empower the students to take control of their wellbeing through the provision of quality teaching and learning, a positive school culture and strong relationships with open communication with the students and their families.

## Procedure

### 1. First day of absence:

- i. If the absence is **explained** via a phone call from parent; record phone call on Daymap and record reason on Daymap in home group roll. A note should be sighted on return to verify call, record sighting on Daymap and place a copy in the student's file.
- ii. If the absence is **unexplained**; record on Daymap, an SMS will automatically be sent by 10:30 am.

If there is any doubt as to the validity of a phone call or note call home to verify, record on Daymap. If there is no response by phone email parents/carers or refer to YLL.

### 2. Second day of absence:

- i. If the absence is **explained** via a phone call from parent; record phone call on Daymap and record reason on Daymap in home group roll. A note should be sighted on return to verify call, record sighting on Daymap and place a copy in the student's file.
- ii. If the absence is **unexplained**; record on Daymap, an SMS will automatically be sent by 10:30am. A phone call home should be made and recorded on Daymap if there is no response to the SMS.

If there is any doubt as to the validity of a phone call or note call home to verify, record on Daymap. If there is no response by phone email parents/carers or refer to YLL.

### 3. Third day of absence:

- i. If the absence is **explained** via a phone call from parent; record phone call on Daymap and record reason on Daymap in home group roll. A call home should be made if it is three consecutive days as a medical certificate will be required, record call on Daymap, if no reply email the request.
- ii. If the absence is **unexplained**; record on Daymap, an SMS will automatically be sent by 10:30am. A phone call home should be made and recorded on Daymap if there is no response to the SMS.

### 4. Five days absent in the term as an irregular pattern:

- i. Phone home and speak to parent/caregiver about the absences and request a letter A be sent and record on Daymap. Record call on Daymap, if no reply email the parent/caregiver.
- ii. The letter A will be recorded on Daymap by the SSO that processes it.

### 5. Five days absent, unexplained, as a block:

- i. Phone home and speak to parent/caregiver about the absences and request a letter A be sent and record on Daymap. Record call on Daymap, if no reply email the parent/caregiver.
- ii. The letter A will be recorded on Daymap by the SSO that processes it.
- iii. Notify the YLL and Counsellor

### 6. Ten days absent in a term:

- i. Phone home and speak to parent/caregiver about the absences and request a letter B be sent and record on Daymap. Record call on Daymap, if no reply email the parent/caregiver.
- ii. The letter B will be recorded on Daymap by the SSO that processes it.

- iii. Notify the YLL and Counsellor, a meeting with the parent will be made to discuss support strategies for encouraging attendance or to determine a differentiated curriculum or other support if a long-term absence. Formulate an agreed attendance plan and record on Daymap.
- iv. Notify the Admin person for the Year Level.

#### **7. Over ten days absent:**

- i. Phone home and speak to parent/caregiver about the continued absences record call on Daymap, if no reply email the parent/caregiver.
- ii. Notify YLL and Counsellor – they will make a pre-referral if required to the attendance officer.
- iii. Differentiated curriculum and/or other support will be negotiated and offered to the parent/caregiver/student in a meeting.
- iv. Attendance will be monitored weekly.
- v. Home group teacher must still follow up on daily absence reasons.

## Appendix 1 - Absence from class expectations and responsibilities

### **Students**

- Are expected to sign in and out through Student Services if they arrive late or have to leave early. SSO updates Daymap attendance for the day. A note should be sighted to explain a student's reason for signing out early.
- If a note explaining a late arrival is not produced, a phone call home should be made and a note produced the following day and shown to home group teacher.

### **Home Group Teachers**

- Monitor all absences, see flow chart in appendix 2.
- Check all unexplained absences and adjust Daymap as appropriate.
- Check, complete and return the weekly EDSAS verification sheets (blue folders).

### **Subject Teachers**

- Mark roll accurately for each lesson, including lateness.
- Ensure rolls are marked in the lesson so that student attendance can be monitored and students located if required.
- Report any suspicious unexplained absences to YLL ASAP.

### **VISTA Sport Coaches**

- Coaches should provide all students with the relevant pass during am home group.
- Students report to Student Services to sign out at 2.20pm for away matches. Daymap updated to show 'T' for school sport.
- Coaches to check all students have a sign out slip before leaving for teams playing away.
- For home matches students should go to lesson 6, show their sports pass to be marked 'T' by teacher and leave at 2.45pm.

### **Whole Day Excursions**

- Provide a list of students attending the excursion to Student Services and an SSO will enter the correct code for the day.
- Alternatively, for small groups, the students can sign out through student services and the SSO will mark the correct code.

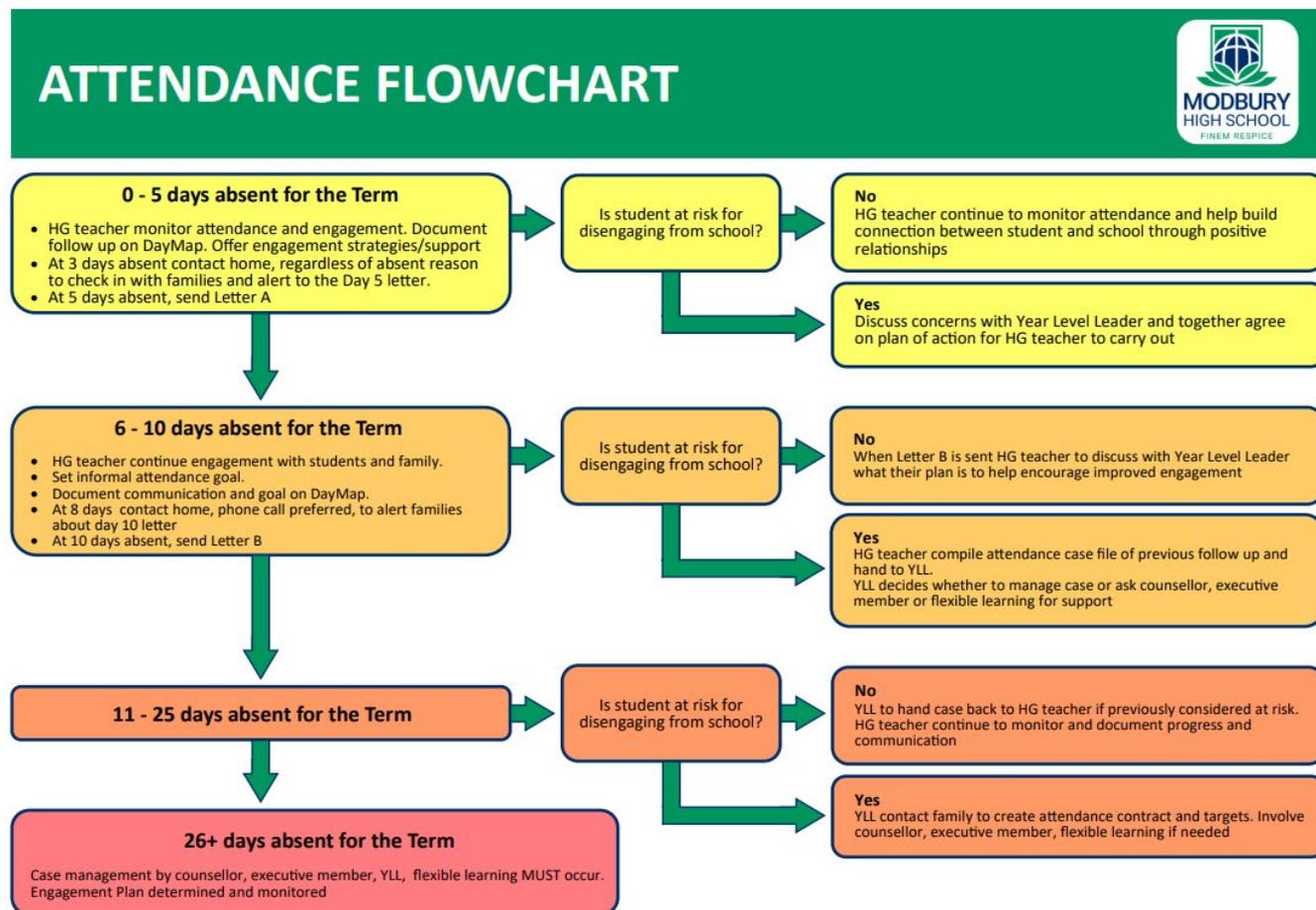
### **Music Lessons**

- Music staff issue students with a pink card with the time and date of the lesson, the student presents the card to the classroom teacher who records the student as "Mu" for that lesson.

### **Parents/Caregiver**

- Parents should phone the school before 8.45am each day the student is absent to explain the absence.
- Provide a written note in the student's diary on the first day back from an absence to validate the phone messages.
- Provide a doctor's certificate that covers all the days a student has been absent if the absence is in a block of three or more consecutive days.

## Appendix 2 - Attendance Flow Chart



### Appendix 3 - Suggested conversation prompts for Home Group Teachers contacting parents/caregivers about attendance

| Conversation point       | Possible script   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Introduction and role    | ‘Hello Mr/Mrs/Ms Jones, it’s John Doe here, Mary’s home group teacher’  |
|                          | “Good morning Mr/Mrs/Ms Jones, this is Mary’s home group teacher John Doe”  |
| State your concern       | “Mr/Mrs/Ms Smith, my records show that Mary has been absent for Xdays”  |
|                          | “I note that Mary has had a number of absences recently”  |
|                          | “Are you aware of Mary’s absences?”   |
| Reason and Clarification | “The reason I have been given is ....., is this correct?”   |
|                          | “Is there a particular reason for this high number of absences?”  |
|                          | “Are there any issues or problems the school should know about?”  |
| Our expectations         | “As you know attendance is important for Mary, as it is for all students, parents/guardians supporting students to attend is critical to their achievement” |
|                          | “Could I request that you notify the school on the morning when Mary is absent”   |
|                          | “Would you please provide a written note in Mary’s diary whenever she is absent/late”   |
|                          | “Could I ask that future appointments be made outside of school hours”  |
| Offer to help            | “Can I help in any way?”  |
|                          | “Is there anything the school can do to assist you with this situation”   |
| Thanks                   | “Thank you for your support”  |
|                          | “I look forward to continuing to work with you and Mary to ensure her attendance improves”  |
|                          | “Please keep me informed, so we can work together on this”  |

## Appendix 4 - Letter A text

<<date>> Home Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear <<parent/caregiver name>>

One of Modbury High School's continuing priorities is to address issues of attendance amongst students. Our records show that <<student name>> has been absent for <<number>> days this year. If this is due to unavoidable reasons, including illness or a family holiday which cannot be taken at any other time of year and you have already notified the school you do not need to take further action. If there are unexplained absences please contact the school to provide a reason, supported by written confirmation of the reason.

However, irrespective of the cause, research shows that students who are absent for more than 10 days per year are disadvantaged both educationally and socially. Your child is at risk of falling into this category and you should be aware that continued absence will have a detrimental effect on their education. Some of these effects may include:

- Gaps in knowledge and understanding, resulting in missing basic concepts.
- Lack of community and familiarity resulting in them feeling less secure within the school environment.
- Missing out on learning important basics such as class rules and behaviour norms.
- The loss of opportunities for socializing with others, which improves social/emotional and cognitive development.
- Inability to maintain friendships resulting in isolation, bullying or teasing.
- Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Belief that punctuality and attendance are unimportant.
- Increased likelihood of leaving school early.

We ask you consider the reasons for your child's absences and assist us to improve their attendance. Should you be having problems in getting your child to attend school, please call me and make a time to talk, as we can possibly help you or bring in support services that can assist with such problems.

Yours sincerely,

<<name>>

Home Group Teacher

## Appendix 5 - Letter B text

<<date>> Home Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear <<parent/caregiver name>>

It has come to our attention that <<student name>> has been absent for <<number>> days so far this year.

Research has shown that ongoing absence from school can have quite serious effects on a child's education. Some of the effects of poor attendance may include:

- Gaps in knowledge and understanding, resulting in missing basic concepts.
- Lack of community and familiarity resulting in them feeling less secure within the school environment.
- Missing out on learning important basics such as class rules and behaviour norms.
- The loss of opportunities for socializing with others, which improves social/emotional and cognitive development.
- Inability to maintain friendships resulting in isolation, bullying or teasing.
- Loss of self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Belief that punctuality and attendance are unimportant.
- Increased likelihood of leaving school early.

The South Australian Education laws clearly state that the absence of a student from school is the responsibility of their parents or guardian. Under the current Education Act: "whereas child fails to attend school as required, each parent or guardian of the child shall be guilty of an offence and liable to penalty not exceeding five hundred dollars". Any reason given for absences to the school maybe investigated, and a medical certificate must be produced if so required.

Please note that further absences may result in a referral to the North Eastern District Attendance Officer. Please contact either myself or one of our Student Counsellors to arrange a time for you to come in and develop an Attendance Improvement Plan for <<name>>.

Yours sincerely,

<<name>>

Year Level Leader

## Appendix 6 - Attendance Improvement Plan

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Conference Coordinator (Year Level Leader/Counsellor): \_\_\_\_\_

| Goals          | Indicators<br>How will you know you are achieving your goals? | Strategies<br>What do you need to make this happen? | Responsibilities      |
|----------------|---|---|-----------------------|
| Specific goals |   |   | Student/Parent/School |

Monitored by: \_\_\_\_\_

Review Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Positives for meeting goal:

Consequences for not meeting goal:

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Caregiver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Conference Coordinator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Policy review

The school council and staff will regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy (at least every three years) and revise the policy when required.