Rationale:
Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find ‘catching up’ difficult. In accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, schooling is compulsory for students aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.

Aims:
- To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that students required to attend school do so regularly and without unnecessary or frivolous absences.
- To provide strategies to encourage high levels of school attendance and improve student attendance.

The Importance of Full Time Attendance
- Daily school attendance is important for all students to succeed in education and to ensure they don’t fall behind both socially and developmentally.
- Students 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 students develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.
- School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for students by providing them with education and support networks.
- 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.
- Illness is reasonable grounds for an absence - shopping excursions or birthday parties are not.

Reporting and Recording Attendance

Parent responsibilities
- Parents / Caregivers are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child’s absence from school.
- The Principal must record the reason (if any) given by the parent. The Principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.
- Parents should inform the school of the reason for their child’s absence so that the school can: determine if the child’s absence needs to be excused by the Principal and /or determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child’s education and wellbeing is supported.
- Parents / Caregivers have a further responsibility to provide a written note or return a completed absence form (Appendix 1) to the school explaining why an absence has occurred.
- Parents/Caregivers who wish to take their child out of school for an extend length of time, must fill out the Confirmation of Extended Student Absence form (Appendix 2) and meet with the principal prior to their departure. A copy of this form will be provided to the home group teacher for placement in the student’s file and the dates will be entered into the place provided on the front of the student file.
School responsibilities
- The school must record student attendance twice per day and record and the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to meet legislative requirements, discharge schools’ duty of care for all students and assist calculation of the school’s funding.
- The school must report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year.
- The school is also required to report information about student enrolment and attendance for funding requirements.
- Ongoing unexplained absences or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised. Unresolved attendance issues may be reported by the principal to the Department of Human Services.
- Students with excellent attendance records will receive certificates of achievement.
- The Every Day Counts Posters encouraging school attendance will feature prominently in the weekly newsletter and will be used in the school to promote the importance of full time school attendance in the school community. (Appendix 3)
- Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year reports.
- An Attendance Committee will be formed each year that includes a Principal Class Officer, the Primary Welfare Officer, the Chaplain and at least two teachers whose main focus is to monitor absenteeism and punctuality and devise strategies to encourage attendance and punctuality.
- The Attendance Committee will meet on a regular basis – at least twice a term.

Principal responsibilities
- The Principal will determine if the excuse provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. The Principal should use their discretion in making this decision.
- The Principal or their nominee must monitor that student attendance occurs twice per day and the excuse given for an absence and whether this is reasonable in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- To ensure that an absence as unexplained if no excuse has been given has been changed once an excuse is provided or established.
- The Principal will ensure parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences are contacted, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- The Principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism are adequately explained (Appendix 4).

Following up Absences
- Most absences will be excused and require no further follow up. Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, the school will involve the parents / caregivers and the student as appropriate in developing strategies to improve attendance.
- Parents / Caregivers will be informed that if a student has repeated absences without a reasonable excuse or explanation, the parent / caregiver may be issued with a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer.

No Reasonable Excuse Provided
- For all absences where the Principal has determined that a parent /caregiver has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school will notify the parent / caregiver that the absences have been recorded as such.
- If the Principal decides that no reasonable excuse has been provided for an absence, the absence must be recorded as such and the parent must be informed that this means they may not have met their obligations under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, an accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer and / or failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice.
**Unexplained Absences**

- If a parent / caregiver do not contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the school must attempt to contact the parent (for example by telephone) of the student within three days of the absence. If an explanation is received, the accurate cause of the absence must be recorded.

- The school should take care to notify the parent who is responsible for ensuring the child’s attendance on that particular day. If, upon being notified of their child’s absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).

- If contact cannot be made with the parent / caregiver, the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student’s file held by the school.

- If, following contact, no explanation has been provided within 10 school days, the absence should be recorded as an unexplained absence and also be noted in the student’s file.

**Strategies to Improve Student Attendance**

- Through regular monitoring of attendance and absence patterns and reviewing the excuses given for absences, the school may identify that a student is at risk of poor attendance or becoming disengaged.

- The school will consider follow up and improvement strategies when a student has been absent more than five days in a term for any reason (indicating attendance falling below 90 per cent), even for parent approved health-related absences.

- The school will also follow up and implement improvement strategies where: the absence is having a significant impact on a student’s educational attainment, achievement and development, a student has been truantaing (absent without parental consent), a parent reports that a student refuses to attend school, there has been no explanation for the student’s absence and /or a parent repeatedly fails to provide a reasonable excuse for their child’s absence.

**Referral to a School Attendance Officer**

- When the school feels that they have exhausted strategies for addressing a student’s unsatisfactory attendance, further action to restore attendance is appropriate, such as referring to a School Attendance Officer who may issue a School Attendance Notice.

- To make a referral to a School Attendance Officer the Principal needs to establish that: the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences, measures to improve the student’s attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances, a parent responsible for the absences can be identified.

**School Attendance Notice**

- As detailed in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, to send a School Attendance Notice to a parent a School Attendance Officer must be satisfied that: the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences, measures to improve the student’s attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances.

**Infringement Notices**

The issuing of an Infringement Notice should be an action only of last resort. Infringement Notices issued in relation to school attendance must comply with the Infringements Act 2006. School Attendance Officers have discretion about which action to take.

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle.
STUDENT ABSENCE FORM

Student Name: .............................................. Year Leave:

Date of Absence:

Reason for Absence:

________________________________________
________________________________________
________________________________________

Parent/Caregivers signature: .......................... Date: .........................
CONFIRMATION OF EXTENDED STUDENT ABSENCE

Student’s Name ____________________________    Year Level: _____

Dates of intended absence

Student to finish school on ___/___/___    Return ___/___/___

Reason for absence
(Please give details of destination if the absence is due to an extended family holiday.)

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Name of Parent/Caregiver: ____________________________

Signature: ____________________________

Date: ____________________________

Signature of Principal: ____________________________ Date________________
EVERY DAY COUNTS

In primary school, some students miss on average 3 weeks of school per year. That’s half a year of school by the end of year 6.

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child’s education.

For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit: education.vic.gov.au

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Dear Parent / Caregivers,

It has been brought to my attention that your child ……………………………………. has been absent from school recently and has not yet provided a written note explaining the reason for the absence.

The date/s of the absence/s are:

It is an Education Department requirement that students provide a note from parents explaining all absences.

Therefore, you are required to provide a note covering the above absence/s from school as soon as possible.

Staff Signature…………………………………………………………...