



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

“EVERY DAY COUNTS”

(UPDATED TERM 4, 2016)

At Runcorn State High School, student attendance and safety is a high priority. We know that students who attend regularly are more likely to be successful and safe at school. Students are required to attend school on every day that it is open, except in exceptional cases. The school must account for every absence of every student and record the reason. It is the parent's / guardian's responsibility to ensure that their students (of any age) attend school every day unless there are acceptable reasons for absence. The legal requirements of attendance are set out in Chapters 9 and 10 of Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act 2006.

The school uses ID Attend, which is a computerised attendance system. The students are roll marked every period during the day. Runcorn State High School will promote full school attendance and encourage, through positive recognition on a regular basis, those students with excellent attendance or have shown significant improvement.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES

Students are required to attend school on every day that it is open except in certain cases. The school must account for every absence of every student and record the reason.

SCHOOL HOURS

School hours are from 8.45am to 2.50pm. Students are encouraged to be at school by at least 8.30am to allow them to prepare for the school day. It is important to note that students should not be on school premises before 8.00am and after 4.00pm unless attending an organised school or community function.

PARENT / GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING STUDENT ABSENCES

It is the responsibility of every parent/guardian of a student who is of compulsory school age must ensure that the student is enrolled and attends school on every school day for the educational programs in which the student is enrolled unless there are acceptable reasons for absence. A parent/guardian of a young person in the compulsory phase must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. The legal requirements of attendance are set out in Chapters 9 and 10 of Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act 2006.

Short term absences - 1 or 2 days

Parents/Guardians are required to provide a valid reason for absence to the school. This can be in the form of a signed written note detailing the reason for absence on the day of return to school, an email to the Roll Clerk or phone the school absentee line on the day of absence (ph 3323 1603).

Long term absences - 3 or more days

Parents/Guardians are asked to contact the Roll Clerk before the absence if possible, or at the earliest convenience to explain the absence (phone or email). In addition, if the reason is medical/illness, parents/guardians are expected to provide a Doctor's Certificate (for 3 days or more).

Very long term absences

Occasionally requests are made by parents/guardians for students to be absent for very long periods, e.g. to accompany parent/guardian on an overseas trip. Parents/Guardians are asked to discuss with the OWL / Deputy Principal, the implications of long-term absences from the school, before firm plans are made. Approval needs to be sought from the Principal. When students are unavoidably absent for a long period of time, where possible the school will provide details of work for students to go on with, if requested to do so.

ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR STUDENT ABSENCES**Acceptable reasons for student absences are:**

- Sickness
- Danger of being affected by an infectious or contagious disease.
- Temporary or permanent infirmity.
- Unavoidable and sufficient cause, e.g. bereavement within the family or of a close friend; or family trauma.
- Attending a school organised activity, e.g. excursion, camp, work experience,
- Sporting / cultural / religious event.

Examples of unacceptable reasons for absence are:

- Truancy.
- Birthdays
- Shopping expeditions with or without caregiver.
- Haircuts.
- Helping at home or at parent / guardians place of work.
- Part-time or casual work (including travel to and from such work).
- Appointments which could be made out of school hours (including driving lessons / tests.
- Excessive time for appointments which are avoidable.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR FOLLOWING UP UNACCEPTABLE STUDENT ABSENCES

Where an absence is proposed, or has occurred, and the reason is not acceptable, these fall into two categories:

Common Practice

For example, accompanying parent/guardian on holidays, participation in recognised, non-school organised sporting and cultural activities, etc. In every case contact will be made with home by the school. The contact does not approve or disapprove of the absence. It places the responsibility for student's lack of progress on their parents/guardians.

Unacceptable Practice

In every case, the incident will be referred to the Officer for Welfare and Learning (OWL) or Deputy Principal, who will administer the school and/or DET attendance procedures. This includes detentions, parental contact and/or meetings, referral to school support staff, notifying parents of their legal obligations, time cards and referral to other agencies (eg Department of Student Safety, Department of Communities, Queensland Police Student Protection Investigation Unit, and other relevant non-government organisations.).

STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY

Any students required to leave the school early must have a signed note from their parent/caregiver, or phone call/email to school.

A pass to leave school early may be obtained from the Roll Clerk or the Student Counter in Administration. The time period and explanation for the absence will be recorded.

The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority require students to study subjects for a prescribed amount of time i.e. mandatory hours of study. Students who leave school early on a regular basis may not meet the mandatory hours requirement to qualify for the award of a Senior Statement or Queensland Certificate of Education.

Leaving the school early on a regular basis is a disruption to the learning process for the student concerned, the class as a whole and ability of teachers to deliver content.

Sport is a part of normal school activity that students must attend.

A permanent pass for leaving the school on a regular basis will not be approved. The Principal may under exceptional circumstances and with due discretion allow a student to leave school on a regular basis. Coaching for sport, music lessons, lunch etc. are not suitable reasons for the granting of a permanent pass to leave school early.

STUDENTS WHO ARE LATE TO SCHOOL

Students are expected to be on time to school. Students, who are late to school or to the first scheduled lesson, are required to report directly to the Roll Clerk on arrival. The time and reason for their lateness will be recorded, and then they will be given a late slip to be admitted to class.

Parents/Guardians are asked to provide a signed written note or phone the Roll Clerk. If no note is written on the day of lateness, then a signed written note must be shown to the Roll Clerk on the next day.

Consequences for Lateness

On the occasion a student is late without a satisfactory written reason or phone call, a detention will be given. Persistently late students will be referred to the relevant Officer for Welfare and Learning (OWL), or have such other consequences applied as are deemed appropriate by the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Teachers give detention to students, who are late to lessons and have not an appropriate reason indicated by a late slip.

NOTE: Lateness on compassionate grounds, e.g. family trauma, will be followed up by OWL for the sake of the welfare of students. In these cases detention will not be given.

Examples of acceptable reasons for lateness are:

- Accident on way to school.
- Transport breakdown on way to school.
- Bus or train late.
- Other unavoidable and sufficient reasons.

Examples of unacceptable reasons for lateness are:

- Truancy.
- Sleeping in.
- Just late (no reason given).
- Hair cut.
- Shopping.
- Appointments that could have been made out of school hours (including driving lesson/test).
- Caught the wrong train or bus
- Other avoidable and insufficient reasons.

LATE ARRIVALS TO CLASS

If for any reason a student is late to class, the student must have a late note from the teacher/staff who delayed them. If a student has no valid reason the time lost is to be made up with the classroom teacher.

SICK BAY

Students who become ill at school (teachers are to use discretion) require a note from their teacher to be referred to the sick bay. The student must be provided with a note stating the date and time the student was dismissed from class.

Students are NOT to contact parents directly to request to be picked up. The school will assess the students need and where necessary the Administration staff will contact parents to arrange transport home if the student is unable to stay at school.

If a student becomes ill at school during lunch breaks, they are to report or be assisted to the sick bay, and/or the first aid room.

If a student is collected from school by a parent then the partial absence will be recorded as sick.

EXCURSIONS / VARIATIONS TO SCHOOL ROUTINE

Parental permission is required for excursions which take students outside the school.

VISITORS

Visitors to the school must first register at the office.

SPORT

Sport students are required to follow the rules pertaining to particular sports and the directions of the teacher

ROLE OF THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

The classroom teacher is the key link in identifying and managing fractional truancy. The teacher is responsible for marking a roll each lesson. Any student who is absent from class without a legitimate reason will be interviewed upon their return to class by the classroom teacher. If the classroom teacher has identified that truancy has taken place then the parents must be informed. If the truancy is on-going, then OWLs and Deputy Principals are also informed

One of the most effective weapons against truancy is the quick and frequent communication to parents when a student has failed to meet some course outcomes where truancy has been a contributing cause. Teachers need to be vigilant in communicating with parents.

POSITIVE STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE GOOD ATTENDANCE

The primary aim of the attendance policy is to enhance student welfare and to this effect the following range of positive strategies should be used in managing a student attendance problem.

- providing rewards for good or improved attendance;
- referrals to school counsellors should be encouraged;
- use of work experience programs as an incentive to continue attending;
- use of student and teacher mentors;
- effective implementation of harassment policies;
- programs which improve assertiveness skills of students

Types of absenteeism and possible responses

Terms	Examples	Possible Responses
Chronic absenteeism	<p>Persistent or habitual absence or lateness</p> <p>Students with high levels of absences, variously defined as 10% or more school days absent</p> <p>Parents may provide explanations for absences, but these explanations may be considered unreasonable.</p>	<p>Parents and family members play an important role in assisting the student to reintegrate back and remain engaged in school. Schools may wish to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • notify parents of their legal obligations and the importance of schooling and of continuity in learning from the early years • encourage parents to participate in parenting skills training (e.g. organisational skills) • encourage the development of supportive networks with other parents (e.g. establish a parents club) • encourage parents to seek support from and communicate regularly with teachers and the school.
School refusal	<p>A form of chronic absenteeism</p> <p>Parents often are aware of the absenteeism but are unable to address it</p> <p>Students who are almost completely unwilling or unable to attend school because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • their past school experiences • psycho-social reasons related to clinical levels of anxiety • a developed habit of absence 	<p>The school gathers information about the student and family to help understand the nature of and reasons for the absences.</p> <p>The school implements strategies to address issues like learning problems or bullying where appropriate.</p> <p>School support staff such as Guidance Officers, Youth Support Coordinators or nurses may be involved.</p> <p>Where appropriate the school refers students and parents to relevant professionals (e.g. counsellors and psychologists) for programs according to the individual student's needs.</p> <p>Solutions may require whole-of-government intervention and support, as for truancy (see below).</p>
Truancy	<p>Disengagement from school</p> <p>May be accompanied by alienation from the school culture</p> <p>Unexplained absences from school perhaps without the knowledge of the parent/s</p>	<p>Where the reasons for truancy pertain to aspects of the school (e.g. poor relationships with teachers), the school implements strategies to address these aspects.</p> <p>The school alone may not be able to address all of the needs of the student (e.g. domestic violence at home, student abuse, etc). Schools should work with the family and liaise with other agencies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Student Safety, • Department of Communities, • Queensland Police Student Protection Investigation Unit, and • other relevant non-government organisations.