



# EMPIRE BAY PUBLIC SCHOOL PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

*EBPS will develop a future-focused community of life-long, engaged learners where students feel valued and have a strong sense of belonging, supported by caring and dedicated staff.*

The following policy has been developed with reference to the DoE *School Attendance Policy (2015)*, Student Attendance in Government Schools: Procedures, Referral for Home School Liaison Support, Home School Liaison Program Guidelines, Guidelines for Exemption from School, Phone Intervention Program Guidelines, Attendance Register Codes, Common Leave Pass, Absentee Notices and Special Circumstance Register.

*For the purposes of the Act, a child is of compulsory school-age if the child is of or above the age of 6 years and below the minimum school leaving age. The minimum school leaving age is:*

- (a) the age at which the child completes Year 10 of secondary education (subject to participation required by subsection (3), or (b) the age of 17 years.*

Please note: All students who are enrolled at school, regardless of their age, are expected to attend that school whenever instruction is provided.

## **Policy Context**

*This policy sets out the requirements for the attendance of students in NSW government schools as required by the Education Act 1990. Government legislation requires children:*

(a) to be enrolled at, and to attend, a government school or a registered non-government school, or

(b) to be registered for home schooling with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.

The Act also requires all students who are enrolled at school to attend whenever instruction is provided. It is an offence for parents to fail to meet these obligations unless they can show they have a defence (for example illness or accident).

The Department undertakes legal action in the case of parents who do not fulfill these obligations despite all reasonable measures being undertaken by school and learning and engagement staff to support them.

Regular attendance at school is essential to assist students to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

- Encouraging regular attendance is a core school responsibility.
- The school attendance register should reflect the highest professional standards.
- This policy should be read in the context of *The Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A summary and consolidation of policy (1997)* and the Memorandum *Enhanced Enrolment Procedures* (Intranet only).

## **Aims:**

- ✓ To maintain accurate attendance records of all enrolled students.
- ✓ To develop attendance checking procedures which enable the school to identify and assist students with unsatisfactory attendance.
- ✓ To provide prompt, positive intervention measures, so that students do not fall behind in work.
- ✓ To develop sound communication links between school and parents concerning student attendance.

## Procedures

- ✓ Class teachers mark their roll daily using *Attendance Register Codes* (see appendix) in Sentral which is transferred to EBS4 Central weekly. A paper copy is not needed.
  - If the regular classroom teacher is absent, the visiting teacher will mark the paper roll and the School Administration Manager (SAM) will update on Sentral.
  - Visiting teachers are not expected to code absences.
- ✓ Notes are collected from children absent on previous days. Class teachers initial and date the note and record/code reason for absence on Sentral. Notes are collected by the office at the end of every year and archived as required.
- ✓ The class teacher monitors children who are absent. If the school hasn't been notified of reasons for this absence:
  - When a student returns to school without a note explaining their absence, the teacher will contact their parents/ carers via phone/ class Dojo or email.
  - After three days absence, or school discretion within three days, the class teacher will make contact with the parents or carers to seek the reason for absence. A written record of the reason given by the parent will be recorded. It will then be coded and kept by the class teacher with other absentee notes. An additional written note is **not** required in this case. Teacher is required to update the absence on Sentral.
  - If contact with parent/carer is unsuccessful, a generated note will be sent home for parents to sign and return within 7 days from the absent date.
- ✓ If teachers or administrative staff receive verbal explanations from parents, they should record and document this on Sentral. The staff member receiving the call will then update reason on Sentral.
- ✓ If teachers receive an electronic explanation from parents, they should print a copy of the explanation, sign and date with reason for absence, record on Sentral and keep it with other absent notes. If an email is sent to the school account, the SAM will enter the reason for absence on Sentral and provide a copy to the classroom teacher.
- ✓ Every week the attendance monitor generates an automatic letter to parents/carers who have not provided notes explaining reason for absence and sends it home to the parents. Teachers do NOT alter the 'Unjustified Absence' after 7 days. Administration will need to update the reason for absence in the 'Comment' field in Sentral so the absence is marked 'Explained, Unjustified'.
- ✓ The attendance monitor, an aspiring Executive member of staff, prints out a report every week to identify children whose attendance is less than 85%. This information is discussed with the classroom teacher to implement strategies to support regular attendance (see attachment). The classroom teacher is to make contact with parents/carers alerting them to the number of absences even if a reason has been provided. The attendance monitor will create letters indicating absences below 85% at the end of term, in consultation with the Principal, at their discretion.
- ✓ In accordance with the Department of Education's Attendance Policy, the Principal can request parents/carers to provide a medical certificate if they have concerns with the explanation provided, or where there is a history of poor attendance.
- ✓ Students who are late arrivals must go to the office to receive a late slip which must be given to the teacher. This is recorded on Sentral by the office staff. Partial absences are treated in the same way as full day absences, with an automated note sent home, should a reason for absence not be given.
- ✓ Parents picking up their children prior to the end of the school day are required to notify the office and/or classroom teacher. Teachers will not allow a child to leave the school without receiving confirmation to do so.
- ✓ Students who are late or who leave early are recorded by the office staff with a partial absence with the times and with the reason for absence as per the attendance codes.
- ✓ At the end of each term, the classroom teacher will record student absences on the Pupil Record Card, noting any reasons for extended leave including holidays.

## **Monitoring**

- Sentral will be used to monitor individual students.
- School attendance data monitored and compared to networks and state through SCOUT.
- If a classroom teacher is concerned about lack of attendance or consistent lateness, they should seek advice from the attendance monitor/LST, so that rectification measures can be taken. Formal record of 85% and below emailed to Attendance coordinator weeks 4 and 7 of each term.

## **Responsibilities and Delegations**

### **Parents and Carers:**

- It is the duty of the parent of a child of compulsory school-age to cause the child: (a) to be enrolled at, and to attend, a government school or a registered non-government school, or (b) to be registered for home schooling with NESAs and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.
- Parents and carers are required to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents are required to explain the absences of their children from school promptly but within 7 days (5 school days) of a single day absence or within 7 days (5 school days) from the first day of a multiple day absence. After this time, a child will be marked as an unjustified absence.
- Parents and carers are required to respond to formal attendance letters provided by the school / principal.
- Parents are required to take measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

### **Teachers:**

- Provide a caring teaching and learning environment.
- Recognise improved student attendance.
- Maintain accurate records of student attendance.
- Implement programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.
- Code all notes / verbal advice and send to office for filing.
- Provide students with an absence slip, or message family, if they return to school without reason for absence.
- Follow appropriate procedures to monitor attendance / reason for absences if no explanation is provided or if attendance rates do not improve.
- Record the number of absences in each student's record card on the last day of each term.

### **Office Staff:**

- Provide support to teaching staff in relation to student attendance
- Input late arrivals and early departures on Sentral.
- Provide classroom teachers and visiting teachers with paper rolls, as back up if technology fails, or if regular classroom teacher is absent.
- Provide classroom teachers with verbal advice and absence slips as required.
- Provide principal with regular updates in relation to patterns of noticed poor attendance
- Generate reports for the Principal to sign
- Print a daily summary of absent students for school evacuation

### **The Principal:**

- Must provide clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.
- Or their delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly when they have failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence within seven days of the occurrence of a single day's absence or the first day of return of multiple days absence.
- When there is ongoing concern, can request the parent's consent for a doctor to provide information to the school about their child's health condition. It is essential the school has all relevant information to ensure the learning and health care needs of the student are addressed. If the request is denied or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'. The principal must consider whether the habitual

absence or parental attitude places the child or young person at suspected risk of harm.

- Is responsible for ensuring that attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.
- Must ensure that the director is informed of attendance problems and issues. This includes providing the director or nominee with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue.
- Must ensure that school staff is provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school.
- have the authority to grant:
  - ✓ sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness
  - ✓ an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student
  - ✓ part-day exemptions from school for periods totalling up to 100 days in a twelve month period (See Statements 1.3.2 and 1.3.3 of Guidelines for Exemption from School 2009 as further authority is needed to grant this leave).
- Will ensure, when frequent absences are explained as illness, that:
  - ✓ Consultation occurs with parents regarding child's health care needs.
  - ✓ Medical certificates are sought.
  - ✓ Consultation occurs with medical professionals regarding student's health care needs and measures put in place to support regular attendance.
- Will ensure the learning and support needs of students with chronic attendance problems are addressed in consultation with parents and if problems continue the student will be referred to the Home School Liason Program for further support.
- May decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision will be provided.
- Ensure the parents and community are informed about the school attendance policy at the beginning of each year.

#### **Full Day Exemption from School** (Refer to Exemption from School – Procedures)

Principals may grant:

- ✓ an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student (Attendance Register Code 'M') which includes exceptional domestic circumstances, health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate and the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under section 42D of the *Public Health Act 1991*.
- ✓ an exemption from school attendance for students wishing to participate in employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite sports events for short periods of time i.e. for one or two days, and at short notice (Attendance Register Code 'M').

Certificates of Exemption must:

- Include the specific conditions that apply to the exemption.
- State that the exemption may be cancelled if these conditions cease to apply.
- Specify a period for which the exemption had been granted.

The original Certificate of Exemption will be provided to the parents.

A copy of the Certificate of Exemption will be attached to the student's record.

The Principal should retain a copy of the signed Certificate of Exemption in the Principal's official records (see Exemption from School – Procedures).

#### **Part Time Exemption**

Students of compulsory school age may participate in school based individual student programs that incorporate behaviour management plans to reengage students with education. In such cases, the parent's agreement to their child's participation in the program, by signature, constitutes an application of part day attendance at school. It is not necessary to complete a separate application for exemption from attendance at school form.

Students of compulsory school age participating in such programs may be granted part day exemptions for periods

of time not exceeding the equivalent number of full school days provided within the delegate's power.

Participation in such alternative education programs must be **approved** by the Director, **prior to the exemption being granted** by the delegate. The attendance register must indicate part day exemptions with the code **M**.

### **Special Circumstances Registers**

Special circumstance registers are to be maintained on days when there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers, approved school development days and days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood.

Special circumstance registers should:

- specify the dates and times of the variation,
- indicate the reason for the variation,
- list students attending on that day,
- be signed by the teacher maintaining the register, and
- be permanently attached to attendance registers (rolls).

### **Procedures for Dealing with Unacceptable Attendance**

#### **School Measures**

Empire Bay Public School implements a wide range of strategies to support the regular attendance of students, including extensive contact with parents to resolve issues of non-attendance. These strategies include interviews, letters, phone calls and family support.

When a student has an unacceptable attendance pattern developing (more than 4 absences in a term) and the student is not already being monitored, the teacher should commence flagging of this student on Sentral as an 'Attendance Concern', followed by a formal referral to the attendance monitor/LST if attendance does not improve. The attendance monitor/LST will discuss and implement strategies to improve attendance. In the case of a student who has been identified with unacceptable attendance (an attendance pattern of less than 85%), it is necessary to document the measures taken to monitor and improve attendance. The school is required to provide documentary evidence of its interventions before making a HSLO referral.

The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early contact with parents is one means of achieving this. The support document *Guidelines for the Phone Intervention Program* describes a program facilitating early telephone contact.

Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies:

- Student and parent interviews.
- Reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program.
- Referral to the Principal, LST, school counsellor or outside agencies.
- Support from school based personnel.

Other suggested strategies

- Absentee Notice/Compulsory School Attendance Note to be sent.
- Identify patterns of absences - times, days, KLAS, classes.
- Interview the student.
- Interview and/or phone the parent or caregiver.
- Request medical certificates if appropriate.
- Consult or refer to: School Counsellor, Learning and Support Teacher (LAST).
- Refer student to Learning Support team to devise school attendance improvement plan.
- Conduct an Attendance Meeting with parent /caregiver and develop an AIP (Attendance Improvement Plan).
- Contact/consult or refer to: Department of Community Services, Area Health Service, Police and/or Juvenile Justice.

- Develop an individualised program to monitor and reward attendance i.e. student reports to a teacher at a designated time, attendance card to be signed by parents and teachers, spot checks and rewards for being at school.
- Design an Individual Education Plan or Personalised Learning Plan.
- Establish an incentive program e.g. presentation of attendance certificates.
- Give the student school responsibilities.
- Maintain accurate rolls of daily attendance, absences and partial attendance. Ensure school staff is aware of accurate roll marking procedures. This training will occur regularly.
- Seek information from parents and caregivers following 2 consecutive days of unexplained absences.
- Ensure that school attendance records are secure and are made available to HSLO's for regular checks.
- Implement strategies to improve individual and whole school attendance as issues are identified.
- Establish and maintain a welfare structure which monitors attendance and develops strategies and interventions, ensuring that HSLO's are aware of meeting times.
- Develop a School Attendance Policy.
- Refer students to the HSLO program after school-based interventions have been implemented and attendance has not been restored.
- Work collaboratively with HSLO's to implement strategies to improve attendance.
- Send a letter to parents detailing the attendance issues concerning their child.

If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support will be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the regional Home School Liaison Program. The role of home school liaison officers and a proforma to be used when applying for Home School Liaison Program support are found in the support document *The Home School Liaison Program*. For students with an unacceptable level of attendance the Attendance Checklist for Schools (see appendix) is kept in a class file in the teacher's desk for easy access by the classroom teacher, stage leader and Principal.

### **HSLO Intervention and Investigation**

The attendance monitor timetables regular meetings with the HSLO to discuss matters of attendance and raising concerns for any flagged students. Where the school has taken all reasonable action to support the regular attendance of a student of **compulsory** school age but the student continues to attend erratically, the matter should be referred to the Home School Liaison Program for investigation. Investigation, including a review of school documentation, must be completed within five school days of referral.

If appropriate and within five school days of completing the investigation, home school liaison officers must develop an attendance improvement plan for the student. The plan will be developed in consultation with the school and will identify targets, strategies and timelines.

If the investigation indicates that home school liaison intervention is not warranted, the home school liaison officer must, within five school days, provide the school with advice on additional strategies to be implemented by the school.

Before an Application for Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) Support ensure all avenues of in-school support have been exhausted.

- ✓ The student has been referred to the either the school counsellor, LAST, or other in-school support as relevant.
- ✓ Delegate a staff member to contact parent/caregiver to gain their support and to identify any problems that may be able to be resolved at the school level.
- ✓ The required Department of Education documentation has been sent to parents or caregivers by the principal.

### **Legal Action**

It is important that legal action to resolve attendance issues is not delayed unnecessarily. Directors must, as soon as possible and within five school days, refer the matter for legal action if:

- the student's attendance remains poor; and
- the parents have not meaningfully engaged in the attendance improvement plan within 20 school days of the commencement of the plan.

Conciliation conferences are currently convened prior to referral for consideration of prosecution. However, these conferences have rarely been successful in resolving matters quickly. While attendance meetings may continue to be convened if appropriate, it is now recommended that formally convened conciliation conferences occur as a result of a decision by the court. Any attempt to convene a conciliation conference after a court appearance notice has been issued, should only be done in consultation with the lawyer dealing with the prosecution case, and subject to any orders or recommendations a court makes in any particular case.

Police officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the *Education Act 1990*.

- During school hours police officers may approach a student who is apparently of or above six years of age and less than seventeen years of age, and who is not at school. They may request the student's name and address and the name and address of his/her school. They may approach a student who is accompanied by an adult.
- Police officers may accompany the student either to the school or to the home to verify this information.
- Under this authorisation, police have no power of arrest, detention or physical restraint.
- Police and departmental personnel conduct regular Joint Anti-Truancy initiatives (JATS) targeting truancy.

Legal action resulting from the non-attendance of, or failure to enrol, a student of compulsory school age in school

- Legal action in such matters is a last resort and must only be considered when all other reasonable avenues have been explored without success.
- If interventions by school and learning and engagement attendance personnel fail to satisfactorily restore attendance of students of compulsory school age, Section 23 (5) of the Act requires that the parents attend a conciliation conference. Conciliation conferences are convened by senior Departmental officers, usually a director or nominee.
- The objective of conciliation conferences is to resolve non-attendance matters in an informal, non-threatening atmosphere.
- In a situation where parents are invited to a conciliation conference but fail to attend without reasonable cause or the conference fails to resolve an attendance issue, the matter should be referred to the Learning and Engagement Team for consideration of prosecution.
- Conciliation conferences are not required when a parent declines to enrol a child at school or register the child with the Board of Studies for home schooling.
- When school or departmental personnel believe that a parent has failed to enrol a child of compulsory school age at school or register them with the Board of Studies for home schooling, the matter should be referred to the Learning and Engagement Team personnel who should investigate the matter.
- The director should refer the matter promptly to the Learning and Engagement Team for consideration of prosecution if a parent declines to comply with the requirements of the Act regarding enrolment in school. The *Application for Home School Liaison Program Support* proforma should be used.
- Parents should be advised in writing that the attendance or enrolment issue has been referred to the Learning and Engagement Team for consideration of legal proceedings.

### **Referral to Family and Community Services**

If at any stage any officer of the department suspects a child is at risk of harm, the officer must make an immediate report to the Family and Community Services.

### **Parent Awareness of the Importance of Attendance**

Throughout the year, Empire Bay Public School Public School will provide several opportunities to raise parent and community awareness of the need for:

- ✓ excellent attendance and the impact of poor attendance on academic performance;
- ✓ the need to provide a written explanation or call the school in regards to all absences; and
- ✓ the need to apply for a Certificate of Exemption.



Opportunities to share information will include:

- A session on attendance at the Parent Information Evenings in Term 1;
- Discussion at P&C Meetings
- Information provided during Baystart information sessions for Kindergarten.
- Newsletter and website inclusions.

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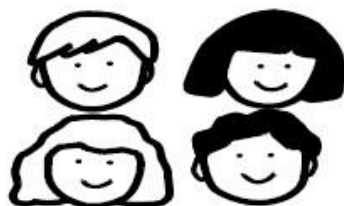
Simone Champion

Principal

## Appendix: Roll Marking Procedures – Electronic Attendance Registers

<b>Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence</b>	
<b>Note:</b> The following symbols should be coded on notes from parents/ verbal advice, etc.	
<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>A</b>	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no notice has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.
<b>S</b>	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a medical certificate is provided or</li> <li>- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted or the duration of the absence is more than four days.</li> </ul>
<b>L</b>	Principals may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the principal. Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the principal's discretion. This symbol is recorded where a student's absence is due to reasons accepted by the principal. This may be due to (as per Compulsory school attendance Justified Reasons <a href="#">Attendance and Absences</a> ): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- being sick or having an infectious disease</li> <li>- having an unavoidable medical appointment</li> <li>- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday</li> <li>- exceptional or urgent family circumstances e.g. attending a funeral.</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	The student was suspended from school.
<b>M</b>	The student was exempted from attending school.
<b>F</b>	Senior student participating in flexible timetable not present because they are not required to be at school.
<b>B</b>	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work experience</li> <li>- school sport (regional and state carnivals)</li> <li>- school excursions.</li> </ul>
<b>H</b>	The student is attending two or more education settings for a period of time (shared enrolment). This symbol is recorded where a student accesses a specialist educational setting on a sessional or full-time basis in line with the Department's Enrolment Policy ( <i>Enrolment of Students in NSW Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy 1997</i> ). The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- tutorial centre and programs</li> <li>- behaviour schools</li> <li>- juvenile justice</li> <li>- hospital schools.</li> </ul>

## HELP FOR STUDENTS



### Is the problem with school?

Try to work out exactly what the problem is, (e.g. teacher doesn't like me, I don't like the teacher) then talk about it with mum and dad, the teacher, school counsellor or the principal and they will help you.

### Not sure!

Keep a diary for a week, write down the good things and the bad things that happen at school each day, when you feel good and when you don't, then talk about your feelings with mum or dad.

### If work is too hard or too easy.

Tell a parent and your teacher. They can work out a program with you, get extra help if needed and practise with you until you are more confident, or give you more interesting things to do.

### Get organised.

If you are always behind with homework and never have the right books and equipment you will feel bad about yourself a lot of the time. Make yourself a homework chart. Do homework every night, [even if you haven't got any it's a good idea to read or research so that you get into the homework routine].

### Be on time for school.

Going into a class that has already started is embarrassing. You have to rush about, you don't know what is happening and no one has time for a friendly word.

### Arrange to go to school with a friend.

Maybe your carer could take you both sometimes and the friend's carer the other times. If you live near school you and your friend could walk together. You will have someone to talk to and a happy way to start your day.

### Don't give yourself a hard time.

It's so easy to say to yourself, "I'm no good at this and "I can't do that." Think about all the things you **can** do and then say, "I can't do that YET."

### If you are worried that something

will go wrong when you aren't there, tell mum or dad or an aunt or uncle or another adult how you are feeling. You might be worried about something that is never going to happen and nobody makes you feel better because you haven't told anybody. Even if things are going wrong at your place talking about it will mean that people understand and you can work out the best way to help you to feel better and what you can do when you are worried or scared.

### If someone is bullying you,

remember that you don't have to put up with bullying; you have the right to feel safe.



# **HELP FOR TEACHERS**

## *WHY CHILDREN DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL*

- They want to get attention from parents, friends or teachers
- They may be running away from problems at home or at school.
- They may have learning problems and feel really bad
- They may have friends who truant
- They think it's the cool thing to do.
- They've been dared to truant by their peers
- They're feeling angry about something
- They just want to play and have a day off
- They want to make trouble for the school or their parents.

**They want to stay home with parent.** Sometimes children want to stay with their parents because they miss them or think that they will miss them. Especially if they haven't been to school before it can be a bit scary at first without your special people there.

**Anxiety - Worries can make kids want to stay home.** Sometimes kids worry that their parents might not be there when they get home. Maybe mum and dad have been fighting, or one of their friends has had a parent who left the home. Perhaps there has been a death in the family, or one of the grown-ups is sick. These things can be really scary and make them afraid that it might happen to them. There are lots of reasons why some children don't want to leave mum or dad at home

**Isolation - No friends at school.** If children have just changed schools or classes and haven't made friends yet they can feel isolated and insecure. They may find it hard to make friends and don't like the feeling of being alone.

**Some kids don't like the teacher or think the teacher doesn't like them.** It may be that a child has been in trouble once and feels this is what it will always be like. If children are having other problems within their lives simple actions can have very negative effects. The perception that they are being 'picked on' is a real emotion for children as they develop emotionally.

**Fear - The school work is too hard, or too easy.** Children may have a fear that they will be perceived as 'dumb' if they tell anyone they don't understand. Without the ability to reason fully it can be seen easier to avoid having to confront a situation. They may get into trouble at school a lot, e.g. for not getting work finished, doing the wrong thing and not want to do that every day.

**Some children are being bullied or teased** having problems in the playground, e.g. no-one to play with, harassment by other children making school a very unhappy and scary place to be.

**They might have been off school for a long time** either because they were sick or on holiday and think it will be too hard to catch up

**They might be upset because they didn't get into a special group** that they really wanted to, e.g. choir, school play, sports team.

**Some kids just find it harder to do new things than others do.** We are all different. Some people jump into new situations and others want to think first, or even think more about the bad things that can happen than the good things, e.g. something happening to their family, going to other people's houses, trying something new etc.

**OR they just don't know why.** They just don't feel they 'belong' in the school and feel unhappy but when people ask "why?" they just don't know.



## **ATTENDANCE TIPS FOR PARENTS**

In NSW students must attend school regularly. This means all children between the ages of six and fifteen are legally required to attend school. Attendance is recorded daily and a 'roll call' is usually conducted before the first lesson of the day begins.

For the benefit of all children, parents or carers should ensure their child attends school regularly. Any absence from school should be explained within seven days of the absence. Similarly, schools are required to inform parents promptly of any unexplained absences or suspected truancy.

Below are some helpful hints for establishing regular attendance patterns.

### **❖ Routine**

Setting up a routine is fundamental so is ensuring there is family-discipline to keep it going. Give your child a set of tasks to complete every morning before school and every afternoon when they return. (E.g. be out of bed by 7am, have breakfast and pack school bag, get dressed, brush teeth and be out of door by 8 am.)

### **❖ Planning and organising**

Achieving a sense of calm in getting ready for school or any other outing can only occur through planning and organising the family. This might include:

- keeping a family schedule.
- knowing what's required for each day for each child.
- having a central place for processing information and notices.
- placing the information on the family schedule for all to see.
- going over the family schedule the night before.
- getting things ready the night before wherever possible – clothes, lunches, school bags packed – everything ready to go so you can save precious time when trying to actually get out the door.

### **❖ Involvement and responsibility**

Unless you get the children involved and taking some responsibility, you still won't get the children to school on time. Try these tips to get their involvement:

- make it fun.
- give them a couple of simple and clear tasks.
- time their activities and encourage them to beat the clock.
- make them responsible for the items they need each day, such as clothes and equipment.

### **❖ Support**

Get support where you can. This might include:

- linking into, school or community programs such as homework centre, after school activities.
- sharing tasks within the local community, family and friends, such as taking it in turns to walk to children to the bus, sharing pick up and drop off days.

### **❖ Rewards**

There's no doubt that parents can at times be left wondering whether all the effort is worth the potential stress of trying to get the family moving, but the accumulated effect of keeping on top of the family requirements can produce great outcomes such as these: Natural rewards will occur for the whole family

- Parents are less stressed
- Children react more positively, knowing what is expected of them
- Boundaries are outlined
- Good habits are developed

