



## PARA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

Your vision **Your future**

### Attendance Policy & Procedures

At Para Hills High School, student attendance is a high priority. Students who attend regularly are more likely to be successful at school. Para Hills High School uses DayMap to assist with early identification of non-attendance or irregular attendance. This system ensures early parent notification and response. The Para Hills High School Attendance Policy and Procedures aim to enhance the process of parents and teachers working together to support students for future success at school.

#### RATIONALE

Para Hills High School is accountable to the community, through the Minister for Education and Children's Services, for ensuring appropriate attendance in educational programs. This policy is based on the following principles:

- Society has a responsibility to prepare young people for successful participation in learning and the broader community. Families, society, peers and educators and other significant adults influence the life choices of young people.
- Attendance has benefits and consequences regarding life choices, and is a shared responsibility between the staff, parents/caregivers, and students. Attendance is critically linked to the quality of the curriculum, teaching and learning and the development of relationships, which then foster improved learning outcomes and increased wellbeing.
- Individuals are able to accept responsibility for their participation in educational programs according to their level of development.
- Participation in educational programs fosters the development of personal and social skills.

Early identification of, and intervention in, poor attendance is known to improve child and student learning outcomes. Children and students who have patterns of poor attendance are at risk, as they may not achieve their potential in educational and social development.

This means that these children and students may:

- be socially isolated
- place themselves at risk of personal harm during times of absence
- have reduced life choices
- be more likely to be involved in socially unacceptable and/or illegal activities.

Research has shown that once students have begun to absent themselves from school, and the initial cause of this remains undetected or unexplored, it is likely that the pattern of absence will continue and escalate through the student's subsequent school career. Late arrival at school is often related to and a precursor to non-attendance later on.

A child who is between six years and 16 years is required to attend school. In addition, since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 all students aged between 16-17 years must participate full-time in an approved learning program. This is irrespective of distance from the school or whether or not the student has a disability. These students are required to be enrolled at a registered or non-government school and must attend the school on every day instruction is provided at the school for the child, unless the Minister has granted an exemption from the school.

The primary responsibility for meeting this legal requirement rests with the parent/caregiver. The responsibility for enforcing school attendance is with the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD). The Department therefore has a legal responsibility to record and monitor attendance and take appropriate action to rectify problems of non-attendance.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Para Hills High School will provide an educational program that promotes attendance and engagement for all of its students.

Staff at Para Hills High School will actively intervene when attendance and engagement patterns indicate that learners are at risk of not realising their educational and social development potential.

### **Policy Outcomes**

Implementation of this policy will result in the following outcomes:

- Improvement in children's and students' attendance.
- Improvement in learning outcomes.
- Increased understanding of the importance of regular attendance by the community of educators, learners and families.

### **PROCEDURES AT PARA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL**

#### **Recording Student Attendance**

- Attendance is recorded in the Learner Management System (DayMap) every lesson. Attendance taken during the home group period is imported into EDSAS for DECS/Centrelink purposes. Specific codes are used to identify the different reasons why students may be absent.
- Attendance is taken by teachers using laptops. If a relief teacher does not have a laptop, a manual list is recorded and updated on the DayMap system as soon as possible.

#### **Reasons for Absence**

It is the parent / caregiver responsibility to communicate all reasons for absence directly to Student Reception either by:

- Telephone 8258 5466 and Press 1
- Email [dl.0574\\_info@schools.sa.edu.au](mailto:dl.0574_info@schools.sa.edu.au)
- Note in student diary taken to Student Reception

An SSO will record this information on DayMap.

#### **Monitoring Attendance Data**

- Year Level Managers, Care Group and subject teachers are all responsible for the monitoring of student attendance. If a student is absent and no reason has been given, the front office staff will ring home after 9:30 each morning requesting a reason. If contact cannot be made with a parent or guardian, or a voice message is left and not returned, it is essential that a diary note accompany the student upon their return advising the school of the reason for the absence.
- Where a pattern of non-attendance is identified then appropriate action will be taken which may include parent/caregiver contact, consequences for the student and/or referral to the DECD attendance officer.

## **Following Up Unexplained Absences**

When a student is absent for a day or a substantial portion of the day, and where a diary note or phone contact has not been provided, the Care Group teacher will follow up with the student or parent/carer to ascertain the reason for the absence and advise the SSO staff via the '*weekly printout of unexplained absences*' so that DayMap can be updated.

Where a student misses a lesson but is otherwise at school, the subject teacher is to follow up to ascertain the reason for the absence. If there is not a satisfactory reason the teacher should advise the Year Level Manager for follow-up and appropriate consequences.

## **Recording Attendance**

All staff are to record student attendance in DayMap as soon as is practical. Lesson 1 subject teachers are required to do this prior to 9:30 so that SSO staff may start to follow up absences with phone calls to parents and carers.

Should it not be possible to enter the information onto DayMap, a paper copy should be kept and entered as soon as is practical.

TRT staff can obtain laptops for recording DayMap attendance and absences from the Deputy Principals office.

Accurate records and codes are important both for EDSAS records and end of term reports which will advise parents of the number of lessons attended out of the number of lessons run.

## **Student Counsellor Involvement**

When a student is absent and parents/carers cannot be contacted, the SSOs will inform the Student Counsellor to follow up. The Student Counsellor will keep trying to make contact with the parents/carers, and in some cases seeks the assistance of the Student Support Worker who may be in contact with the parents/carers.

A meeting will be arranged to discuss the absences. This may involve the Care Group Teacher; Year Level Manager; VET Coordinator; FLO Manager; and/or support workers and services that may already be involved. Referrals may be made for further support (e.g. Psychologist, Youth worker, Open Access), and outcomes and correspondence are documented in EDSAS

## **Home Visits**

According to DECD policy, a student cannot remain unsighted for periods in excess of 4 weeks. After all other attempts have been made, and there has been no contact, the Student Counsellor will visit the home. These visits can occur up to three times, however if there has still been no contact, the Student Counsellor will refer the student to the DECD Attendance Officer.

## **The Attendance Officer**

The DECD Attendance Officer is contacted if the student's attendance does not improve. The SSO sends an electronic referral to DECD outlining what the school has put in place to support the student. The Student Counsellor meets with the Attendance Officer two times a term to discuss and act upon chronic absences.

The Attendance officer may also involve Families SA if home visits are unsuccessful.

## **Recording Student Lateness**

- Students who are late to school are required to report to the Front Office to sign in and collect a Check-In receipt. Parents should notify the school via a note in the diary or a phone call if they know a student will be late.
- Students who arrive late to class are required to show the Check-In receipt to their teacher. Students who do not have a Check-In receipt are to be sent to the Front Office to get one.

### **Leaving School During the Day**

- All students must report to Student Reception if they wish to leave school.
- Year 12/13 students who have study lessons at the start or end of the day are allowed to leave the premises, provided they have prior approval from their parent/caregiver.
- All students who miss scheduled lessons or Care Group must sign in or sign out otherwise they will have unexplained absences recorded.
- If a student feels they need to leave due to illness, they need to first report to the First Aid officer in the library who will assess the situation and contact a parent for approval if required.

### **Who can help with attendance problems?**

Care Group Teacher, School Counsellors, Year Level Managers, Assistant Principals and the Deputy Principal.

What kind of attendance assistance is available?

- Discussion of issues and concerns
- Referral to other support agencies
- Assessment of student learning needs
- Negotiation of student learning plans and investigation of alternative learning pathways

## Responsibilities overview

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|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Parents</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the school via a phone call or the student diary if a student is or will be absent.</li> <li>• If you have concerns or need support to improve student attendance, contact the Care Group teacher, Year Level Manager or Student Counsellor.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Students</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report to the front office to sign in if they are late, or are leaving early. Students are to obtain a Check-In slip.</li> <li>• Show teachers their Check-In slip upon arriving late to lesson.</li> <li>• Provide diary notes to Care Group teachers for unexplained absences or future absences if they are planned.</li> <li>• Year 12/13 students who have study lessons at the start or end of the day may leave early or arrive late if they have prior approval.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Teachers</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record student attendance in DayMap</li> <li>• Monitor student attendance and follow up with the student/parent/year level manager and/or student counsellor, where there are patterns of concern.</li> <li>• Care Group teachers will follow up and verify a diary note for all unexplained absences, and enter the reason on the '<i>weekly printout of unexplained absences</i>' and return this to the front office.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>SSOs</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enter information provided by parents onto DayMap.</li> <li>• At 9:30 SSO's will start to phone parents/carers to determine the reason for any absences and enter the reason in DayMap</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Counsellors</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor student attendance and follow up where there are patterns of concern.</li> <li>• Follow up on students where contact cannot be made with home. This may include phone calls, home visits, family meetings or a referral to the Attendance Officer.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Year Level Managers</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor student attendance and follow up where there are patterns of concern. This may include phone calls home, consequences for the students, or referral to either the Student Counsellor or Attendance Officer.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Admin</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support staff and Year level managers in improving student attendance.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Attendance officers</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meets with the Student Counsellor twice a term to follow up chronic absences.</li> </ul>  |

### **Why Regular Attendance is Important? A Message to Students**

- The more you attend, the more you will learn and the greater likelihood of you being successful
- Getting the maximum benefit from school will improve your options for your future life
- Attending school regularly will develop skills and attitudes such as: self-discipline, punctuality and improved time-management
- You will learn the necessary social skills to live and work successfully with others
- You will be safer at school than on the streets
- People will be more positive about you if you have a good attendance record
- Attending school provides opportunities for socialising with your friends and will help you to maintain relationships over a length of time

### **Does my Child have to Attend School Every day? A Message to Parents**

**YES**, unless you have provided the school with an acceptable reason preventing your child's attendance, such as:

- Your child is too sick to attend or has an infectious disease such as chicken pox, mumps, measles, head lice or impetigo (cold sore virus)
- Your child is incapacitated by injury preventing movement around the school
- Your child is accompanying you on a family holiday which cannot be arranged in school vacation time -an Exemption from School form will need to be completed (please contact Student Reception). Approval from the Principal can be given for a period of up to four weeks. Any longer must be approved by DECD.

If possible, dental and medical appointments should be made out of school hours.

### **Did you know?**

If a student is absent 5 days every term this means that he /she would have missed half a year of school by the time they have finished Year 12. Research shows that one day missed takes four days of effort to catch up. Under the law, Centrelink has access to School Attendance records and can reclaim monies paid if a student is receiving an allowance and has more than five unexplained absences per term.