





# Attendance Policy

	Ratified by Council	Reviewed by Principal
Date	9 June 2023	9 June 2023
Name	Justin Coombs	Jenny Dougan
Signature		

*West Coast Steiner School is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation, taking a preventative and participatory stance on child protection issues and promoting a child safe environment based on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.*

PROVENANCE		
<b>Responsibility:</b> School Principal	<b>Review Cycle:</b> 3 years	<b>Date for Next Review:</b> June 2026
<b>Related Policies and Procedures</b>	Enrolment Policy Duty of Care Policy Code of Conduct for Parents Code of Conduct for Students Records Management Policy Privacy Policy Behaviour Development Policy Excursions, Camps and Incursions Policy Child Protection Policy Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plan Pastoral Care Policy	
<b>Relevant Legislation and Authority</b>	School Education Act 1999 School Education Regulations 2000 Working with Children Act 1988 Privacy Act 2020	
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A: Students Whose Whereabouts are Unknown (SWU)	

VERSION MANAGEMENT		
Date	Changes Made	Author
May 2018	Attendance Record Procedure ratified by Council	A Gernaat
March 2023	Attendance Record Procedure reviewed and renamed Attendance Policy. Incorporated revisions from AISWA Attendance v2 June 2021 and Students Whose Whereabouts are Unknown Guidelines and Procedures June 2021	L Lane
June 2023	Ratified by Council	L Lane

# Policy

## Background

The Education Act requires that students attend school on site, or for school educational programs conducted elsewhere, such as attendance at excursions or school camps, on each day designated a school day in the school's calendar for the given year. The school at which a child is enrolled, and the child's parents or guardians, share a responsibility for the child's attendance at school. Parents or guardians have a legal obligation to send their child to school for each day that the child's school is open for instruction and to provide an acceptable explanation for the child's non-attendance on one or more days. A school's responsibility in relation to a child's attendance ranges from recording and monitoring attendance to managing absenteeism concerns from an educational and duty of care perspective, as well as to ensure compliance with Non-Government School Registration Standards, Public Health requirements, State and Commonwealth funding and associated legislated requirements.

West Coast Steiner School (WCSS) expects all enrolled, compulsory school-aged children to attend school daily except in case of illness or special circumstances with the prior approval of the School Principal. Additionally, students will be asked to participate in school activities out of usual school time, such as festivals and other whole school events. On the few occasions when this is required, students and parents will be given adequate notice and will only be asked out of educational necessity. These occasions are considered compulsory and students will be expected to attend as if a normal school day.

Routine and rhythm are part of the school day at WCSS and teachers attempt to bring continuity to lessons from day to day and from week to week. Regular attendance and participation at school is important for all children enrolled at WCSS, including those who are not of compulsory school age, to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind or experience difficulties socially or academically.

## Policy

West Coast Steiner School understands that a strong, consistent level of school attendance is essential for learning and, as such, the School sets high expectations in relation to student attendance and works to develop strong partnerships with parents in which the importance of attendance and punctuality is a shared goal. The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to make clear to students, staff and parents:

- the legal requirement for children of compulsory school age enrolled at West Coast Steiner School to attend school every day the School is open for instruction;
- the key practices and procedures West Coast Steiner School has in place to support and maintain student attendance and record, monitor and follow up student absences and to report on attendance data to authorities as required;
- where attendance issues are identified for a student, appropriate measures to restore regular attendance will be implemented to ensure the student is able to access and fully benefit from educational programs provided by the School.

## Application

This policy applies to and is binding upon all students, parents and employees of West Coast Steiner School. For the purpose of this policy 'parent' includes step-parents, foster parents, legal guardians, carers and grandparents.

## Definition

*Compulsory school age* is from the beginning of the school year in which the child is aged 5 years and 6 months, until the end of the school year in which the young person turns 17 and 6 months or 18 whichever happens first.

# Student Attendance Requirements

## School Hours

School hours are published in the School Handbook and on the School's website.

## Students on School Grounds Before School

The school gate is opened at 8.00am Monday to Friday with supervision of students by a Duty Teacher commencing at 8.15am. Students who arrive at school prior to 8.15am must remain with and be under the active supervision of their parent.

## Students on School Grounds After the Close of School

The School provides supervision of students on school grounds for 15 minutes after the close of school while students are being collected by parents. Once a parent collects their child, they assume responsibility for their children's safety and for their active and direct supervision of them while on school grounds.

## Students Who Are Late To School or Leave School Early

Students who arrive after 8.30am must sign in, or be signed in by a parent, via the Student Late Register in Reception. A reason for being late should be provided and a Late Notice collected to be given to their class teacher. Students who need to leave before their dismissal time must be signed out by a parent or authorised person by means of the Student Sign Out Register held in School Reception and Kindergarten.

## Student Absences from School

If a child will not be attending School, parents must contact the School before 9.00am on the day to advise of their child's absence. Notification may be provided by email, the WCSS website via the absent link or by telephoning the School on 9440 1771.

Each morning the Class Teacher records the date, class, names of absent students, if they have been notified and the reason for absence, if known, in the Class Attendance Register. The Register is then sent to Reception to be cross-checked against the absentee notifications provided to the School that day, the Student Late Register and the Student Sign Out Register.

If an absence is for a legitimate reason and the School has been notified, no further action will be taken unless the frequency and/or number of absences give the School cause for concern. Class Teachers and Reception staff may seek further advice from the School Principal in such circumstances.

Legitimate reasons for Student Absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious or contagious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstances e.g. attending a funeral
- published public transport delays or traffic accidents.

## Managing Unexplained Student Absences

An unexplained student absence is treated as a matter of urgency by the School and has the potential to be a significant issue if parents do not provide an explanation for the absence as quickly as possible.

An unexplained absence is followed up by Reception staff directly on the day of the absence. Parents of children marked as an unexplained absence on the Class Attendance Registers are sent an SMS requesting a reason for the absence. If no attempt is made by parents to contact the School regarding the child's absence, the Reception staff will attempt to contact the parent either by phone or by email to seek clarification. Any forthcoming explanation will be noted in the School Management Database and communicated to the Teacher.

When a student is absent from school without reasonable explanation (contact from the parents within 3 days), the Principal (or nominee) will take all reasonable steps to contact the student's parents to locate the student and restore attendance. Reasonable steps will include those outlined in *Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown Appendix A*.

A student is regarded as 'missing' when they cannot be located, their parent/s cannot be contacted and the school has not received a transfer note. Once all attempts to locate or contact a student have been conducted, the Principal will contact Student Tracking [Student.Tracking@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:Student.Tracking@education.wa.edu.au) for the latest SWU request form and complete all details as per the Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown Guidelines and Procedures, available at <https://www.education.wa.edu.au/dl/gr3r8gn>.

The Student Tracking Coordinator enters the SWU request into the Student Tracking Systems and notifies the school via email of the students' new enrolment or placement on the SWU List. Until email notification has been received the student will remain on the current enrolment register and record their non-attendance.

If at any point the School requires the WA Police to respond to a report of a missing student, the Principal must report this as a reportable incident and notify the Director General within 48 hours using the critical and emergency incident report form available from the Department of Education's website, and to the Chair of School Council.

## Prolonged Explained Student Absence

The Principal (or nominee) will request a medical certificate be provided to explain prolonged absences due to sickness or injury. In such circumstances, the Class Teacher will liaise with the parents and student in relation to any schoolwork that might be provided and completed by the student while recovering at home. A comment relating to extended absence may be included on the student's written report where it is deemed that it has had a serious impact on the student's achievement.

## School Initiated Non-Attendance

The Principal (or nominee) may require students' non-attendance, on the basis of advice from the Chief Health Officer or a registered medical practitioner, due to reasons of a medical condition considered to be infectious, contagious or otherwise harmful to the health of persons at School or participating in the School's educational programme. The WA Government Health Department's Communicable Diseases Guidelines will be the key reference for the Principal to request a child be collected from School until the requirements have been met for them to be deemed safe to return to School.

Students who are on suspension and are excluded from attending school (as per the School's *Behaviour Development Policy*) will be marked as absent during the period of suspension.

## **Student Holidays in Term Time**

Student absence as an extension to the school holiday period is not encouraged. Children should not begin holidays or take leave before the end of school term, nor return from holidays after the first day of the new term. If there are extenuating circumstances, leave must be applied for before the event in writing to the School Principal. The School will not provide school work for students while they are on a prolonged absence from the School and will actively discourage students missing school during term time through reminders in the School's newsletter and/or during an information evening for parents at the start of the school year.

## **Monitoring of Attendance**

The monitoring of attendance is an ongoing process, ensuring consistent, effective identification and required actioning. Reception staff prepare a summary of attendance which is reviewed by the School Principal each term. If a student displays a pattern of lateness or early departure, or persistent absence, parents will be informally contacted to determine if there are any issues happening within the household that might be contributing to attendance issues.

## **Management of Persistent and/or Habitual Absences**

Where a student's attendance has fallen below 80% for the term or attendance for whole days or parts of the school day are not regular and have been deemed to be impacting on the student's engagement in social and educational programs, the Principal will:

- investigate reasons given for absences
- contact the parents to highlight concerns
- work collaboratively with the student, parents and teacher to develop and implement strategies to restore satisfactory attendance.

Where the pattern of non-attendance does not improve to meet the School requirements the Principal and class teacher will:

- prepare documentation including; frequency of absences, reasons given for absences, outline of class programs (or parts of) missed and an overview of the concerns of the school
- meet with parents to identify issues related to non-attendance
- develop an attendance improvement plan with the parents
- monitor progress.

Detailed records of the School's contact with the parent should be recorded, as well as the strategies employed and/or agreements entered into as part of managing problematic absences with a view to managing a student back to regular attendance.

Where the School believes that it is more a case of truancy and it is not being supported by the parents in its endeavours to re-engage the student, the School will make contact via email with the Department of Education's attendance team for assistance and possible referral to an attendance advisory panel.

# School Attendance Records

The School Education Act 1999 and School Education Regulations 2000 require attendance records to be kept showing for each day 'whether a student attended, or participated in an educational program; or failed to so attend and participate'. West Coast Steiner School consistently and accurately records student attendance via both paper and electronic forms.

Class Attendance Registers are provided to teachers at the start of each school year so they can maintain accurate attendance records for every student enrolled, including attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions for each school day. The Class Attendance Register is then sent to Reception where the information is recorded electronically in the School Management Database, and noted absentees are followed up.

## Class Attendance Registers

Class Attendance Registers are marked off twice daily at 8.40am and 1.40pm by the teacher who is responsible for the class at that time. The teacher will:

- record in Class Attendance Register a student as:
  - present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction [no mark]
  - absent for a half day when the student has attended less than 2 hours of instruction [a]
  - attending if they are on a school-approved activity [no mark]
  - late if they are not present when attendance is recorded [L]
  - short term leave when the student has left and returned within a day (e.g. appointment) less than half day absence [s]
  - early departure when the student leaves from school before the official end of school day but less than half day absence [e]
  - departed when the student has officially been withdrawn from the school, from the day following the last day of enrolment to the end of term/year [-]
- record the receipt of a written explanation for a student's absence in the Register and keep copies of all notes
- note where a student is taken out of school by a parent/caregiver either during the day (eg. medical appointment) where they may or may not be returning, or before the end of the school day but are marked present on the Register
- keep a written record where a student is taken out of School to attend regular appointments approved by the Principal (e.g. Speech Therapy)
- collate student numbers for each week
- send the Register to Reception so that information can be recorded electronically on the School Management Database
- submit the Register and all absentee notes to Reception at the end of each school year for archiving as required by governing regulations.

## Maintaining Attendance Records

The School Education Act 1999 and School Education Regulations 2000 require a Principal to ensure that an enrolment register is kept showing the name, date of birth and date of enrolment of the student; as well as the date on which enrolment ceases.

For newly enrolled students at West Coast Steiner School and for student's transferring from West Coast Steiner School, the Enrolment Officer will send a 'Student Transfer Note' to student's previous school or to the student's new school, clearly stating the start date and finish date.

The Principal has the authority to remove a student's name from the school's attendance records when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the student is enrolled in another school, enrolled in home schooling, is no longer resident in the state or has been granted an exemption under S11.

The School must retain attendance records for each child in accordance with School Education Regulations 2000 and is guided by the Australian Society of Archivists Records Retention and Disposal for Non-Government Schools.

Attendance records, such as attendance registers and class rolls must be kept for a period of seven (7) years from the day on which the student's enrolment ceases. The School Education Regulations, Section 2. reg.21 and reg.22 prescribe a period of retention of attendance records and if the School closes during that prescribed period the records must be transferred to the Director General for possible permanent retention.

Absentee notes that are separate from the students' records are to be kept for a period of two (2) years from the date of receipt and destroyed appropriately.

For Absentee notes that are included on a students' file, the note must be kept for a period of twenty five (25) years from the date of birth.

## **Confidentiality and Privacy Requirements**

School staff are made aware of the legal expectations in relation to maintaining the confidentiality of every student's information, including attendance data. Maintaining privacy over student attendance and associated records is a legal obligation, under the Privacy Act 1981 (Cth) and the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), which includes observance of the Notifiable Data Breach Scheme (NDBS).

## **Policy Review and Dissemination**

This policy and related procedures will be made available to the public and staff on the School website and is available to staff in the Policies and Procedures folder in Reception. The School Community will receive reminders to refer to this policy (and updated versions) through the School Newsletter.

New staff will be informed of this policy as part of the School's Induction Program. The School will provide ongoing training to ensure that all staff members understand their responsibilities in relation to this policy.

The School may, at any time, make amendments to this policy to ensure continuous improvement. The policy will be reviewed at least once every three years by the School Principal and ratified by the School Council.



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Students Whose Whereabouts are Unknown (SWU)

Full document located in Admin - Documents\fileshare\Attendance\Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown

### STUDENTS WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN (SWU)

