



Riverstone Public School

ATTENDANCE POLICY - 2008

Policy Context

The *Education Act 1990* requires the parents of children of compulsory school age to enrol them at a government school, or registered non-government school or to register them with the Board of Studies for home schooling. The Act also requires parents to ensure the regular attendance of their children at school. 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). Parents convicted of this offence, may be fined up to \$1,100 for each offence.

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 regional staff to support them.

Maintenance of Attendance Rolls

Classroom teachers mark attendance each day on a school roll. Partial absences are recorded on class rolls. Students who are late or who leave early are issued with a Partial Absence slip which must be given to the teacher as an indication that the partial absence has been recorded centrally.

Monitoring

Regular roll checks will be made by a nominated staff member, the Principal and the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) to ensure that all students maintain an acceptable attendance pattern.

If a classroom teacher is concerned about lack of attendance or consistent lateness they should seek advice from their team leader or the Principal so that rectification measures can be taken or a referral made to the Learning Support Team (LST).

Procedures for Dealing With Unacceptable Attendance

School Measures

RPS 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 letters, phone calls, interviews and family support.

In the case of a student who has been identified with unacceptable attendance (an attendance pattern of less than 90%), 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. This documentation will take the form of the *Sydney Region Attendance Checklist for Schools*. See Appendix One.

For students with an unacceptable level of attendance this checklist is kept in the class roll for the easy access of the classroom teacher, stage leader and Principal.

When classroom teachers feel a student has an unacceptable attendance pattern and the student is not already being monitored, they should make a referral to the LST. The LST will discuss and implement strategies to improve attendance. This **MUST** include the use of monitoring with the

Sydney Region Attendance Checklist for Schools so that appropriate documentation is available if a referral needs to be made to the HSLO.

HSLO Intervention and Investigation

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.

Legal Action

It is important that legal action to resolve attendance issues is not delayed unnecessarily. School education 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.

Referral to Department of 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 Department of Community Services.

Parent Awareness of the Importance of Attendance

Throughout the year there are several opportunities to raise parent and community awareness of the need for excellent attendance and the impact of poor attendance on academic performance. These include:

- Inclusion of a session on attendance at the Parent Information Evening in Term 1;
- Fortnightly publication of attendance rates and patterns in the *Riverstone Round-up*;
- Publication of Attendance Census data when compiled in Terms 2 and 4;
- Letters to specific years, such as Kindergarten; and or
- Letters and attendance reports for parents of children with an attendance pattern of less than 90% at the end of Terms 1, 2 and 3.

Parents also need to be made aware of:

- the need to provide a written explanation of all absences; and
- the need to apply for a Certificate of Exemption for when students require leave for extended periods of time i.e. for overseas travel.

Recognising Excellent Attendance

Students with excellent attendance will be recognised and rewarded using the school merit system. Attendance awards will be given to students at the end of year celebration for 100% attendance throughout the year.

Recognising Improved Attendance

In some circumstances the HSLO will recognise an improved attendance pattern. This recognition will form part of an attendance behaviour modification program.