

Attendance Policy



HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Bridgewood Primary School on 03 8766 9400 or bridgewood.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Bridgewood Primary School has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Bridgewood Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Bridgewood Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the [Family Law Act 1975](#) (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Bridgewood Primary School during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Bridgewood Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrollment in Bridgewood Primary School for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Bridgewood Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Bridgewood Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Bridgewood Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Bridgewood Primary School's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- presenting early morning whole school Google Meets, late pass collection after 9:10am
- engaging students in additional specialist programs, lunch time clubs (Chess Club, Art Club, Breakfast Club etc), reciprocal visits to the kindergarten
- promoting additional learning opportunities - incursions (Protective Behaviours, Reptile Incursion, Sport Clinics)
- offering additional instrumental classes, band practice, lunchtime performances
- counselors, occupational therapists, school psychologists
- promoting special lunch days from onsite cafe - pizza, sushi, sausage sizzles, pies

Recording attendance

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Bridgewood Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Bridgewood Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by Learning Community Mentor Teachers at the start of the school day (9:00am) and after lunch (2:10pm) using Compass. Where students arrive late to school in the morning, they will need to go directly to their Learning Community and register their attendance with the mentor. Any late arrivals after 9:10am will need to sign in and register their attendance with reception.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Bridgewood Primary School of absences by:

- updating student absence information via Compass, ensuring a reason has been provided.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Bridgewood Primary School will notify parents by SMS at 09:30am that day. Bridgewood Primary School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

Bridgewood Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the [Education Training Reform Act 2006](#) (Vic) and the [School Attendance Guidelines](#).

If Bridgewood Primary School considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexcused absence**'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays (principal approval of one (1) per family) where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Bridgewood Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from Learning Community Mentors, Subschool Leaders and Principal class staff.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Bridgewood Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines, refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the South East Victoria Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
 - o the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
 - o measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - o the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - o no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders via Compass
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Appendix A (Procedure)

Bridgewood's Attendance Procedure

Day(s) of Absence	Responsibility	Role / Duties
1 - 2 days unexplained	Reception Staff Mentor Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At 9:30am an automatic Compass text is sent to primary contacts for unexplained absences. • If mentors are aware of a reason for absence, or have information regarding an early departure, they need to inform reception staff.
3 - 4 days unexplained	Mentor Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors make a phone call home and follow up with an email detailing the department's expectations with absence. • Mentors document a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication and/or communication attempt. Chronicle can include the emailed letter if the phone call was unsuccessful. <p>This step needs to be completed for each child regardless of siblings. This could mean parents receive multiple calls and posts from mentors.</p>
5 - 9 days unexplained	Mentor Teacher SIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors make an additional phone call to follow up on absences. If no response is received, mentors then communicate attendance concerns with SIT. • Use this document for explained absence Explained Absences • SIT makes a phone call home and follows up with an email detailing the department's expectations with absence. • SIT documents a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication and/or communication attempt. Chronicle can include the emailed letter if the phone call was unsuccessful. • Letter sent home to parents for unexplained absences Unexplained Absence letter

↓ IF ATTENDANCE HAS NOT IMPROVED AND/OR IS STILL UNEXPLAINED AFTER THE ABOVE HAS BEEN COMPLETED ↓

Principal Class

- Send [completed referral form](#) to DE School [Unexplained Absence letter](#) Attendance Officer / [Appointment Required](#)
 - Document a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication attempts.

10+	Principal Class	<p>Take the next steps dependent on engagement and previous history of families. If there are concerns in regards to the wellbeing and safety of the child/ren the principal will not wait for the 10 days to make a report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify Student Support Services • IRIS alert • Child First referral • Document a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication attempts.
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WEEK 5 & 10 ATTENDANCE REPORTS

Reception Staff

- **Attendance Officer** - provides an attendance report to Learning Community Leaders outlining students who have had 5+ days of absence within the first and/or second half of term.

[Attendance Report Guide](#)

Mentors

- Make contact with families addressing the amount of days of absence (including both explained and unexplained)
 - Mentors send **YELLOW** and/or **RED** percentage letters

THIS IS A CASE BY CASE STEP AND SHOULD ONLY BE ACTED ON FOR STUDENTS WHERE CONCERN IS EVIDENT AND A CONVERSATION WITH A SIT REPRESENTATIVE HAS OCCURRED.

Bridgewood's late arrival Procedure

Day(s) of Absence	Responsibility	Role / Duties
Arriving late to school	Student Mentor Teacher Reception Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If arriving after 9am, but before 9:10am, students are to go directly to the Learning Community and register their attendance with their mentor teacher. • Mentor to update student's attendance on Compass, including the reason for late arrival. • If arriving after 9:10am, students are to go directly to reception and register their attendance with the reception staff. Students collect a 'late pass' and present it to their mentor teacher when entering the Learning Community. • Office staff to update student's attendance on Compass, including the reason for late arrival.
2 Consecutive days late arrival in a week	Mentor Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor to complete Compass chronicle for the late arrival inclusive of the reason a student was a late arrival/early leaver.
3+ days late arrival	Mentor Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors make a phone call home and follow up with an email for consistent late arrival/early leaver arrival/early leaver arrivals letter. • Mentors document a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication and/or communication attempt. Chronicle can include the emailed letter if the phone call was unsuccessful.

		This step needs to be completed for each child regardless of siblings. This could mean parents receive multiple calls and posts from mentors.
5 - 9 days late arrival	SIT member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors make an additional phone call to follow up on late arrival. If no response is received, mentors then communicate attendance concerns with SIT. • SIT makes a phone call home and follows up with an email detailing the department's expectations with absence. • SIT documents a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication and/or communication attempt. Chronicle can include the emailed letter if the phone call was unsuccessful. • SIT member to arrange a meeting with the family if no improvement occurs after their contact.

Principal Class arrange a meeting with the family

10+	Principal Class	<p>Take the next steps dependent on engagement and previous history of families. If there are concerns in regards to the wellbeing and safety of the child/ren the principal will not wait for the 10 days to make a report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notify Student Support Services • IRIS alert • Document a visible Compass chronicle entry outlining communication attempts.
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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Attendance](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	November, 2023
Consultation	Consultation via school council, website and circulation to families
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Before November 2027
Every 4 years	