

Attendance and Exemptions Policy and Procedures

Currambena is a comprehensive co-educational K-6 school providing an education underpinned by democratic values and operating within the curriculum guidelines of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Once enrolled, students and their families are expected to support the school's Core Values and Beliefs and comply with the school rules to maintain enrolment. All absences are to be reported to the school by parents or guardians.

Policy

The NSW Education Act (1990) sets out requirements for enrolment and attendance at school of children between the age of 6 and 17. The Act states that it is the responsibility of the parent or carer of a child of compulsory school-age to ensure that their child is enrolled in and attending school, or is registered for home-schooling with NESA. Once enrolled, students are expected to attend school whenever instruction is provided. It is an offence if a parent or carer does not meet the legal obligation in relation to the enrolment and attendance of their child at school or registration for home-schooling.

The School Coordinator maintains a register of the enrolments and daily attendances of all children at the school, which includes information for each student as required by Section 3.8 of the NESA *Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual*. The register of enrolments and the register of attendance will be maintained in electronic form.

Where the parents of a student of compulsory school age seeks an exemption from attendance at school or an exemption from enrolment, the School Coordinator will process the parent's application in accordance with the guidelines from NSW Department of Education. The School Coordinator may exercise the Minister's delegation under Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990* in relation to granting or cancelling a certificate of exemption from being enrolled and attending school in certain prescribed circumstances.

The School Coordinator will have in place and implement policies and procedures to monitor the daily attendance of students. Unexplained absences are followed up by the teacher with the student and their parent or guardian. Parents or guardians are notified where a student has a poor record of school attendance; the parent's/ guardian's response and any action taken are recorded on the student file. A student who arrives late will be marked as "late arrival" and the specific time will be recorded. Along with the reason for lateness, the code Pa will be added so that it can be seen as a partial absence.

Where a student is absent for 30 days in the past 100 days, and the teacher of the child has concerns about the well-being of the child, the teacher and the School Coordinator may consider accessing the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide to determine whether a report is required. However, this is context/age- dependent and the number of days should be taken as a guide only.

Procedures

The Coordinator

- Will keep a **register of enrolments** that includes the following information for each student currently and previously enrolled at the school:
 - name, date of birth and address
 - the name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's

destination

- for students older than six (6) years, previous school or pre-enrolment situation
- where the destination of a student below seventeen (17) years of age is unknown, the school will provide evidence that the NSW Department of Education has been notified (using the form *Student Enrolment Destination Unknown*, downloaded from RANGS and available in the AISNSW Resource Centre, customised with school letterhead and emailed to attendance@det.nsw.edu.au). The following details will be provided:
 - student's full name
 - date of birth
 - last known address
 - last date of attendance
 - parents' names and contact details
 - an indication of possible destination
 - what efforts the school has made to locate the child
 - other information that may assist officers to locate the student
 - any known work health and safety risks associated with contacting the parents or student.
- The register of enrolments will be retained for a minimum period of five (5) years before archiving.
- Will maintain a **register of daily attendance** and must include the following information for each student:
 - daily attendance
 - absences
 - explanation of student absences will be recorded in accordance with the attendance codes approved by the Minister for Education and records of documentation to substantiate the reason for the absence will be maintained by the school. The School Coordinator has the discretion to decline a reason provided for an absence if they are not satisfied with the reason provided or does not think the absence is in the best interest of the student. Absences due to family holidays and travels during school terms will not be approved as exemption from attendance. However, if the School Coordinator accepts the reason, then leave is granted and the 'L' code will be used.
 - the register of daily attendance will be retained for a minimum period of seven (7) years after the last entry was made
- Will have in place and implement policies and procedures to monitor the daily attendance of students. The School Coordinator will ensure that for students with attendance concerns, the learning and support needs of those students are addressed in consultation with parents, and intervention strategies are developed to ensure regular attendance at school
- Will ensure that any matter relating to school attendance where safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns arise for a student, consideration is given to the requirements of the Child Protection policies and all required reports are made to the Community Services Helpline or the Child Wellbeing unit as required by the Mandatory Reporter policy
- Will have in place and implement policies and procedures for exercising the Minister's delegation under section 25 of the *Education Act 1990*. This gives the School Coordinator power to grant and cancel a certificate of exemption from being enrolled in and attending school in certain prescribed circumstances. Circumstances where the School Coordinator may grant *Exemptions from Enrolment* and partial or full day *Exemptions from Attendance* are listed below.
- Will maintain records of the exercise of the above delegation including copies of all documentation relating to the exemption in the student's file until the student reaches the age of 25.

- Will ensure that school staff are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school

The class teacher

- will monitor the daily attendance/absence of the students, watching for patterns of lateness or absence
- if the teacher has not heard from the parents/guardians, the teacher will contact the parents/guardians of the student as soon as possible after the commencement of the first class session at 9am
- will follow up any unexplained absence from school with the student and parent/guardian
- If a reason for an absence has not been provided within 7 days of the date of the absence, or has not been accepted by the School Coordinator, the school will record the absence as unexplained or unjustified 'A'. Even where an absence is recorded as unexplained, the school will continue to follow up the reason for the absence with the parents/ carers.
- will notify parent(s) and/or guardian(s) regarding poor school attendance of their child by calling or emailing the parents/ guardians
- will document the parent's response
- will note the absence in the attendance role and in the student's file
- will discuss with the Coordinator poor attendance or unexplained absences
- will arrange a meeting with the student and the parents to negotiate strategies to address the problem.
- If the problem continues, the family will be called in for a second meeting along with the teacher and the Coordinator.
- If the problem continues, the AIS will be called to come and mediate a further meeting with the student and parents
- will document unsatisfactory attendance information in the student file and the interview report.
- at the end of the year will archive all student data including documentation for reason of absence

The Parent/Guardian

- will send a message to inform the teacher of the reason of the child's absence from school by 9am
- will present a doctor's certificate to the teacher for absences more than 3 days due to illness, injury or medical treatment (except when the child has tested positive to COVID, then the parents of the child will not be required to present a medical certificate and the child will need to stay at home for one week from the day the test has been carried out)
- will fill in one of the following forms for planned absences of more than 3 days other than those due to illness, injury or medical treatment: ***Application for Exemption from Attendance/Enrolment at School*** or ***Application for Extended Leave- Travel***. These forms can be obtained from the School Coordinator and must be completed in advance. Application for Extended Leave must include details of travel arrangement.
- will not be required to apply for an exemption in cases of the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under the Public Health Act 2010.

Exemptions from Attendance and Enrolment

The Minister has delegated the power to grant or cancel certain types of exemptions to the School Coordinator. There are two different types of exemptions:

- exemption from attendance
- exemption from enrolment

Procedural fairness will be accorded to an applicant. If the School Coordinator is considering refusing granting an exemption, the parent will be given an opportunity to respond to the delegate's concerns before a final decision is made. This opportunity will be offered to the parent in writing. If an applicant wishes to appeal against a decision made by the School Coordinator, the school's complaints and grievances policies and procedures will apply and/or the applicant may appeal to the Minister's Delegate.

A Certificate of Exemption will not be approved where the student has been the subject of contact with a child protection report to Family and Community Services and/or there are unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm. Prior to granting a Certificate of Exemption a risk assessment will be completed to identify and manage risks.

Exemption from attendance

- Parents submit the application for exemption from attendance and supporting documentation, where requested, to the School Coordinator, prior to the proposed period of exemption.
- The **School Coordinator has the authority to grant partial or full day exemptions from attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a twelve-month period** for the following circumstances:
 - exceptional circumstances (including the health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate)
 - employment in approved entertainment industry
 - participation in elite arts or elite sporting events
- Applications for exemption from attendance **totalling more than 100 days in a twelve-month period** will be considered by the School Coordinator on behalf of the Minister for Education.
- Where the application is supported, the School Coordinator will inform the parents and provide the original exemption certificate to the parent/s.
- Where the application is not supported, the School Coordinator will notify the parents in writing of the unsuccessful outcome
- Copies of relevant documentation will be retained in the school files.

Exemption from enrolment

- Parents submit the application for exemption from enrolment and supporting documentation, where requested, to the School Coordinator, prior to the proposed period of exemption.
- The School Coordinator is delegated to grant or cancel exemptions from enrolment where a **child turns six years on or after 1 October or later in a school year**
- The School Coordinator also has broader delegations to grant or cancel exemptions from enrolment for **up to six months for health, learning or social needs or disability of a child necessitating the continuation of an individual program supported by medical specialists**
- Where applicable, independent school principals continue to have the delegation to grant or cancel exemptions from enrolment for completion of Education under Special Circumstances- for apprenticeships and traineeships only

- In all cases, copies of applications, exemption certificates, notifications or letters resulting from applications for exemption from enrolment will be kept in the student's file
- Copies of relevant documentation, including the Minister's delegation and exemption certificate, will be retained in the school files/enrolment records.

Intervention Strategies and Attendance Improvement Planning

Currambena has in place procedures to monitor student attendance, identify attendance concerns and improve unsatisfactory attendance.

Strategies

The school proactively implements practices and strategies that promote consistent and regular attendance, including consistent messaging across the whole school community through newsletters, creating a welcoming, engaging and safe environment for students, fostering positive relationships and implementing wellbeing programs focused on social and emotional learning that help students feel valued.

Identification

Through proactively monitoring the attendance of all students, teachers can promptly identify indicators that may reveal potential attendance concerns, including patterns of absence (habitual lateness, regularly leaving the school early, absences that regularly occur on Mondays and after holidays), unexplained absences, clinginess upon arriving at school or repeated pleas to go home, and frequent complaints of illness while at school.

Intervention

Currambena implements targeted intervention strategies to promptly identify and support students at risk of developing attendance concerns. Student absence explanations are followed up with the parents and further explanations are requested for prolonged absences, such as a medical certificate for absences.

Improvement planning

Attendance improvement planning requires collaboration between the student, parents/carers and class teacher to identify the issues relating to a student's inability to attend school, and to plan strategies to address those issues and improve student's attendance. If there is evidence of an emerging mental health issue, the school will seek consent from the family to liaise with external mental health services and the information provided will guide the attendance strategies for the student. Once the attendance improvement plan has been developed and documented, a follow-up communication is sent to the family with a copy of the plan, actions to be undertaken and a nominated review date.