

# Attendance Policy



# Introduction

Varsity College promotes excellence in learning and believes every day counts. Students who attend school regularly achieve better and have a better chance in life. Students develop better communication, teamwork and resilience skills when they are attending regularly. Varsity College expects students attend school for every lesson, every day.

This Attendance Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Student Code of Conduct.

## Rationale

In order to promote a shared understanding of the importance of attending school, Varsity College:

- is committed to promoting the key messages of the state-wide initiative Every Day Counts
- believes all children should be enrolled at school and attend school all day, every school day
- monitors, communicates and implements strategies to improve regular school attendance
- believes truancing can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- believes attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

## Compulsory Schooling

Attendance at school is a legal requirement. Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) each parent/carer of a child who is of Compulsory School Age must ensure that the child is enrolled at a school and attends on every school day for the educational programs in which the child is enrolled unless the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse. A student is of **compulsory school age** until the end of Year 10 or until they turn 16 years of age, whichever comes first. This is the **compulsory schooling phase** of education.

Each parent/carer of a young person in the compulsory participation phase must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent/carer has a reasonable excuse. A young person's compulsory participation phase starts when the person stops being of compulsory school age (i.e. turns 16 or completes Year 10, whichever comes first) and ends when the person:

- gains a Certificate of Achievement, Senior Statement, Certificate III or Certificate IV; or
- has participated in eligible options for 2 years after the person stopped being of compulsory school age; or
- turns 17 years.

An **eligible option** is a recognised education or training program or course, offered by a recognised provider, which will enable a young person to gain a Certificate of Achievement, Senior Statement, and/or a Certificate III or IV.

Further information is provided in Chapter 9: Compulsory Schooling; and Chapter 10: Compulsory Participation Phase of the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld).

Exemption from compulsory schooling or compulsory participation phases are available when a student cannot attend or it would be unreasonable in all the circumstances to require them to attend school or participate in an alternate eligible option for a period of more than 10 consecutive school days. Students may apply in writing to the Head of School or Deputy Head of School for exemptions.

## Responsibilities

Students, parents/carers and the College work in a partnership to support student attendance, reduce absenteeism and make every day count at school.

### Students

Students will:

- be punctual every day for roll marking, arriving to school by 8.15am (Secondary) and 8.30am (Primary)
- attend every lesson, every day, and be on time to every class;
- attend and work productively in all classes; and
- complete all assessment on time and in full.

### Parents/Carers

Parents/carers will:

- ensure their student attends school on all school days unless there is a reasonable excuse; and
- notify the College of their student's absence and the reasonable excuse for the absence if a student is not able to attend school

A **reasonable excuse** may include such circumstances as a genuine illness or personal family situation that cannot be avoided.

For illness, a doctor's certificate is required for an absence of three or more consecutive days absent. That is any three consecutive school days in one week, on a Friday and the following Monday and Tuesday, or Thursday, Friday and the following Monday.

Personal family situations are considered by the Principal on a case by case basis.

### The College

The College will:

- monitor student attendance;
- notify the parent/carer if a student has an unexplained absence as soon as practicable on the day of the student's absence and continue to follow-up with the parent/carer as appropriate;
- use effective teaching strategies to engage students in learning;
- help parents/carers with strategies to encourage their student to go to school; and
- provide support for families.

## Procedures

If a student is going to be absent for the day, parents/carers notify the College through the COMPASS application with the student's name, the date and the reason for the absence.

If a student's absence is known in advance, parents/carers are to notify the College of the absence as soon as possible through the COMPASS application.

From the beginning of each year student absences will be monitored and when they reach a total of 3 unexplained days, or a pattern of absences is observed, students will receive communication via telephone, email or letter advising them that the College wishes to discuss this issue with the student and parent/carer.

### Procedures for late arrivals and early departures from school

- **Late arrivals:** Students are to report to Student Services to obtain a late slip as soon as they arrive. The late arrival will only be authorised if there is a reason outlined by the parent/carer. Parents/carers use the COMPASS application to communicate the reason for the late arrival.
- **Early departures:** Secondary students are to report to Student Services before school (prior to 8.15am) to obtain an early departure slip. The early departure will only be authorised if there is a reasonable excuse outlined by the parent/carer. Primary students do not need to report to Student Services to collect an early departure slip.

For both Secondary and Primary students, Parents/carers use the COMPASS application to communicate the reason for the early departure. Students are to be collected from the Student Services Office, at the nominated time, by a parent, carer or emergency contact listed on One School. Identification may be requested before a student is collected.

### Procedures for truancy

The College will monitor and track student attendance within their curriculum lessons. If a student has been marked present earlier in the day but is absent from their lesson without authorisation, or if a student is found outside of their timetabled class, the Dean and classroom teacher will investigate the absence. If there is no reasonable excuse for the absence and the student is found to be truanting, the College's Student Code of Conduct will be applied.

### Recording student absences

Student absences are recorded through COMPASS and One School. Both full day, part day and late arrival absences are recorded. Full day, part day and late arrival absences may be added together to determine the number of days of unexplained absence in each term for a student.

Authorised absences are also recorded. These include activities such as students attending any activity pertaining to school, such as excursions, camps, sporting representation, off campus courses, and school-based traineeships/apprenticeships.

**Certain absences which will not be approved by the College.** These absences include, but are not limited to, finishing assignments or completing schoolwork at home, matters of the students' or parents'/carer's own choosing such as holidays, and leaving school for outside work commitments which are not school based work placements, traineeships or apprenticeships.

## **Cancellation of enrolment process for compulsory participation phase of education**

Students who are in the compulsory participation phase of education (that is, they have completed Year 10 or have turned 16 years old) may have their enrolment cancelled if their adherence to the attendance requirements listed above is unsatisfactory and/or they refuse to engage in the program of instruction provided by the College.

If concerns arise regarding a student's attendance and participation, the student and parents/carers will receive a letter requesting a meeting with the Dean, Deputy or Head of School to discuss a support plan to re-engage the student in school attendance and participation in the program of instruction.

## **Additional resources**

Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) - Every Day Counts Initiative

- <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiatives-and-strategies/initiatives/every-day-counts>

## **Departmental Procedures**

- Managing student absences and enforcing enrolment and attendance at state schools (Version 5.3, 26/03/2021)
- Roll marking in state schools procedure (Version 5.6, 05/10/2021)
- Exemptions from compulsory schooling and compulsory participation (Version 4.2, 25/08/2020)