
School-based Attendance Procedure

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the school community understands the important legal obligations of parents of children of compulsory education age and the requirement for them to be enrolled in a registered school and attend school on a full-time basis. The procedure also contains important information about processes in place to support, monitor and maintain student attendance.

Scope

This procedure applies to all students and parents/carers of Farrer Primary School and should be read in conjunction with the [ACT Education Directorate Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance Policy](#) and the [ACT Public School Attendance and Roll Marking Procedures](#) and the [Non-Compliance Procedures](#). This procedure does not replace or change the obligations of Farrer Primary School, parents/carers and Education Support Office under relevant legislation such as the [Education Act 2004](#).

Compulsory School Attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things at school every day and there are no safe number of days for missing school.

In the ACT compulsory education requires that all children from age six are legally required to be enrolled at and attending school until they turn 17 or achieve their year 12 Senior Secondary Certificate.

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

- there is an exemption from school enrolment or attendance for the student;
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Farrer Primary School; and/or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Farrer Primary School for particular classes/activities; or
- the parents can provide a reasonable excuse for their child not attending e.g. sick or holiday.

Late arrivals and early leavers procedure

Students are expected to be at school from 9:00am each morning in time for the daily roll call.

If a student arrives at school from 9:05am onwards, they need to sign in at the front office to receive a late note. Parents are expected to provide a reason for their child's late arrival. If a valid reason is not provided, their late arrival (absence) will be recorded as 'absent-unexplained'.

What circumstances/explanations are considered a reasonable excuse?

An unexplained absence may be amended to an explained absence if the reason is considered reasonable. There are a limited number of reasons which are considered reasonable excuses for an absence. The two most common reasons for student absences are 'sick' and 'leave'. 'Sick' is usually due to an illness and 'leave' may be required due to a serious illness of an immediate family member, family holiday or attendance at a funeral. The principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence and can request a medical certificate or statutory declaration in addition to an explanation where required.

Principals will generally accept the following reasons, as reasonable excuses:

- illness or medical issues, including recovery from major injury or medical condition;

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate;
- bereavement or attending a funeral of a relative or friend of the student;
- religious or cultural observation;
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance;
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings;
- participation in sanctioned debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school; and/or
- participation in interstate, national, or international academic or sporting event or equivalent.

What are unexplained absences?

An unexplained absence is an absence where the student's family / carer has failed to provide a *reasonable excuse*. Families / carers will be notified by the school if an absence is unexplained and given the opportunity to provide a reasonable excuse within 10 school days of the first absence. If families / carers fail to provide an explanation it will remain on the school's record as an unexplained absence and count towards the child's attendance record.

If families / carers provide an excuse that is not considered to be a reasonable excuse, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

What are unauthorised absences?

In some circumstances, even though a reason has been provided, the absence may be recorded as *unauthorised* because the reason does not count as a valid reason as per the [ACT Education Directorate's Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance policy](#) and the ACT Public School [Attendance and Roll Marking procedures](#).

In general, the following absences may be determined as unauthorised absences: repeated poor excuses such as running late, too tired, slept in and absences due to truancy.

Where explanations are provided that don't provide adequate information, the principal can use their discretion and may treat the explanation as 'explained/ unauthorised' e.g. 'My child was away from school on Friday 10 May' or 'My child has an appointment to attend'. These examples do not provide enough information to determine if the explanation is a 'reasonable excuse'.

Contact us for attendance support

Should you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance, please call the school office and ask to speak to your child's teacher, or a school leader. Farrer Primary School provides a range of support programs and strategies to address attendance concerns including support for students returning from an extended period of leave.

Responsibilities

Our school responsibilities include:

- promoting attendance and maintaining up to date school-based attendance procedures;
- maintaining an attendance register in SAS and marking attendance rolls each school day and keeping a record of the reason given for each absence;
- advising parents/carers of any unexplained absences on the same day, or as soon as practicable;
- encouraging open communication with students, parents and families about issues affecting a student's attendance and working in partnership with families to address any concerns about a student's education, engagement, health and wellbeing and discussing barriers to attendance early;
- taking action where there are more than three consecutive days, or more than seven unexplained non-consecutive days absent to seek a reasonable excuse from the parents/carers;
- determining if an explanation provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent/carer meeting their responsibilities under the Act;
- identifying any attendance concerns and working with the student and parent/carer to understand and address any attendance barriers and provide support strategies and programs;
- referring to Student Engagement for access to support if a student's attendance remains a concern; and

- effectively monitoring overseas student attendance and implementing a documented intervention strategy where an overseas student's attendance is at risk of failing to meet the minimum student visa requirement (attendance of a minimum 80% of the scheduled course contact hours during each study period).

Parent/carer responsibilities include:

- ensuring you and your child follow the school attendance procedures for late arrival and early departure i.e. signing in and out of front office;
- notifying the school as soon as practicable if your child will be late or will be leaving early. Letting the school know early in the morning if your child won't be attending so their absence can be recorded correctly.
- notifying the school in advance of any upcoming planned absences.
- replying to the school's SMS, email the front office at info@farrerps.act.edu.au; call on (02) 6142 0860 or send a written note with your child on their return to school or visit the school;
- ensuring absence explanations include:
 - your child's name;
 - the date of the absence(s)
 - the reason (s)
- making sure explanations are provided in advance or on the day or as soon as practical or within 10 days of the first day of absence;
- ensuring your contact details are up to date so that the school can send you the absence notifications;
- communicating openly with the school and working in partnership to address any concerns about your child's education, engagement, health and wellbeing and discussing barriers to attendance early;
- seeking a full-time or part-time Exemption Certificate if your child is unable to meet the attendance requirements of the Act due to individual circumstances;
- complying with any attendance notifications (letters), Information and Compliance Notice instructions.

Related Resources

- [ACT Education Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Attendance at ACT Public Schools Procedure](#)
- [Non-Compliance Procedure](#)
- [Enrolment in ACT Public Schools Preschool to Year 12 Procedure](#)

These school-based attendance procedures were endorsed by the School Board on 31 August 2022.