



Attendance Policy

Purpose:

In accordance with the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](#), schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.

The purpose of Whittlesea Secondary Colleges' Attendance policy is to:

- Ensure all children of compulsory school age and are enrolled at our College, attend every day the College is open for instruction, during normal school hours.
- Ensure Whittlesea Secondary College students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending the College
- Explain to College staff and parents/carers the key practices and procedures Whittlesea Secondary College have in place to:
 1. support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 2. record, monitor and follow up student absences.

Scope:

This policy applies to all students at Whittlesea Secondary College. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education's [School Attendance Guidelines](#).

It does not replace or change the obligations of Whittlesea Secondary College parents/carers and College Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

Definitions:

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 Whittlesea Secondary College 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 Whittlesea Secondary College
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Whittlesea Secondary College for particular activities.

Shared Expectations and Responsibilities:

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

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

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

Whittlesea Secondary College 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 Whittlesea Secondary College 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 the College and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of College hours.



Supporting and Promoting Attendance

Whittlesea Secondary College's, [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#) supports student attendance at the College.

Recording Attendance

Whittlesea Secondary College **must** record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Whittlesea Secondary College's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE, VET and VCEVM students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of each lesson/period using Compass.

If students attend a College- 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 College.

Parents should notify Whittlesea Secondary College of absences by:

- Contacting reception if it is an unplanned absence, informing the classroom teacher if it is a planned absence
- Logging the reason for the absence via COMPASS, before 10:00 am.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the College has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Whittlesea Secondary College will notify parents by SMS. (Text message)

Whittlesea Secondary College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to contact any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the College, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Whittlesea Secondary College 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* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Whittlesea Secondary College 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 the College
- Cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays 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 and Wellbeing

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

- Implementing a Return to School Plan
- Implementing an Individual Education Plan
- Assessing if a modified timetable is required
- Implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- Arranging for assistance from relevant College staff and support services

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

Whittlesea Secondary College Attendance Process: Refer to Appendix 1.



Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Whittlesea Secondary College 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 North-Western Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the College, 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:
 - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
 - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

Communication:

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

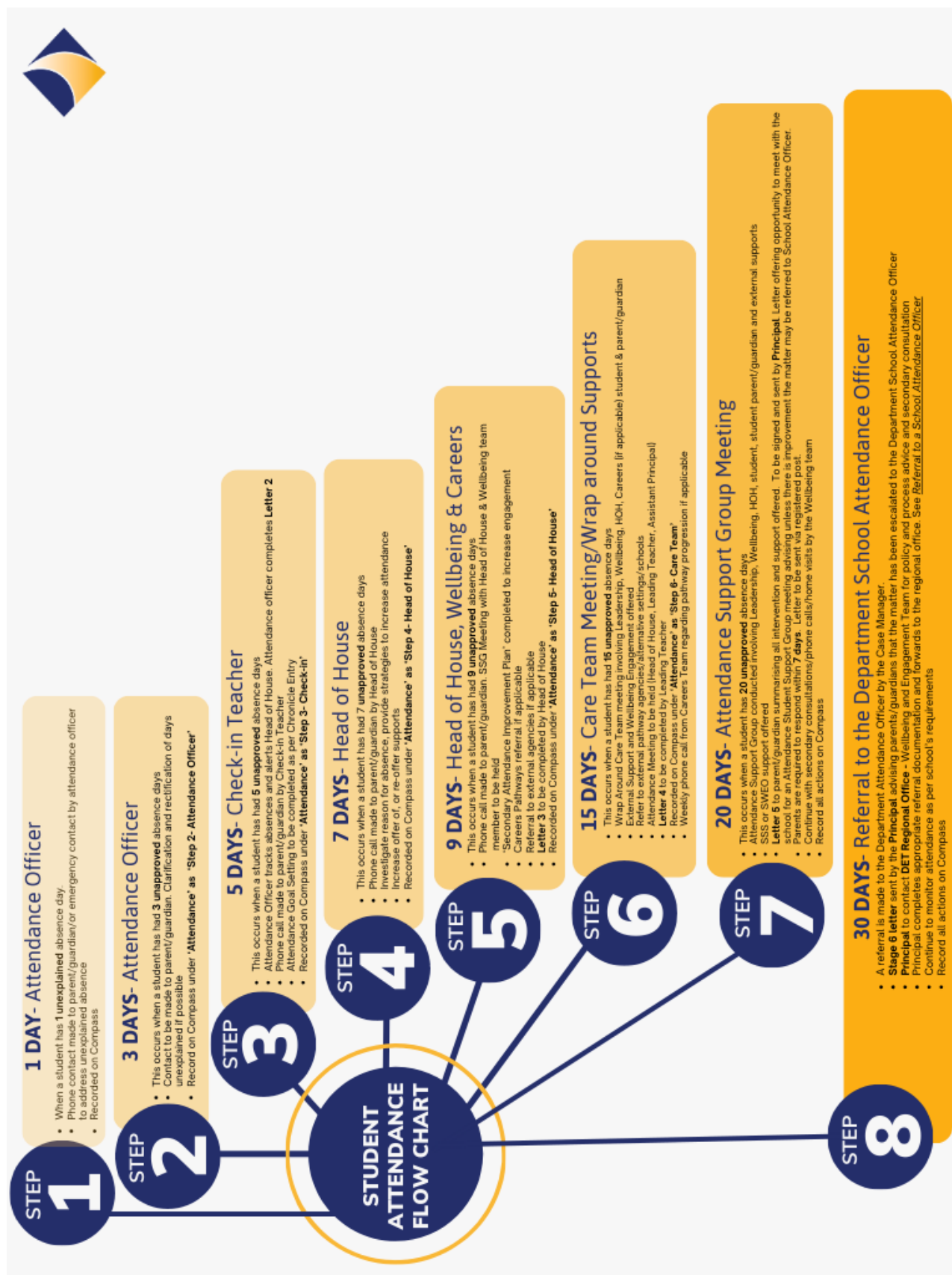
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website and/or via COMPASS
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Discussed at student forums
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Related Policies and Resources:

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library : <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy>
- The Department's Attendance Guidance: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance>
- School Exemption: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/exemption-school-attendance-and-enrolment/policy>
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- WSC Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy: [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)



Appendix 1:





Policy Review and Approval:

Policy last reviewed	May 2025
Consultation Group	Student Wellbeing Principal Executive
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2028