

# Information for Parents

# STUDENT ABSENCES

# FROM SCHOOL

This leaflet contains information for parents/caregivers about the requirements and processes involved when a student is absent from Willyama High School.

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September 2019

# Compulsory School Attendance

## Information for parents

Education for your child is important and regular attendance at school is essential for your child to achieve their educational best and increase their career and life options. NSW public schools work in partnership with parents to encourage and support regular attendance of children and young people. When your child attends school every day, learning becomes easier and your child will build and maintain friendships with other children.

### What are my legal responsibilities?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age. The *Education Act 1990* requires that parents ensure their children of compulsory school age are enrolled at, and regularly attend school, or, are registered with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards for homeschooling.

Once enrolled, children are required to attend school each day it is open for students.

### The Importance of arriving on time

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students do not miss out on important learning activities scheduled early in the day
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Give students time to greet their friends before class
- Reduces classroom disruption

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained by parents.

### What if my child has to be away from school?

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral)

Following an absence from school you must ensure that within 7 days you provide your child's school with a verbal or written explanation for the absence. However, if the school has not received an explanation from you within 2 days, the school may contact you to discuss the absence.

Principals may decline to accept an explanation that you have provided if they do not believe the absence is in the best interest of your child. In these circumstances your child's absence would be recorded as unjustified. When this happens the principal will discuss their decision with you and the reasons why.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when frequent or long term absences are explained as being due to illness. Principals may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to collaboratively develop a health care plan to support your child. If the request is denied, the principal can record the absences as unjustified.

### Travel

Families are encouraged to travel during school holidays. If travel during school term is necessary, discuss this with your child's school principal. An *Application for Extended Leave* may need to be completed. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year.

In some circumstances students may be eligible to enrol in distance education for travel periods over 50 school days. This should be discussed with your child's school principal.





### **My child won't go to school. What should I do?**

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school's learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The principal may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

### **What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?**

It is important to understand that the Department of Education and Communities may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- Compulsory Schooling Conferences

You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan (known as Undertakings) to support your child's attendance at school.

- Application to the Children's Court – Compulsory Schooling Order

If your child's attendance at school remains unsatisfactory the Department

may apply to the Children's Court for a *Compulsory Schooling Order*. The Children's Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- Prosecution in the Local Court

School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child's full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

### **What age can my child leave school?**

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10 or its equivalent. After Year 10, and up until they reach 17 years of age, there are a range of flexible options for students to [complete their schooling](#).

### **Working in Partnership**

The Department of Education and Communities recognises that working collaboratively with students and their families is the best way to support the regular attendance of students at school.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.

**If a student misses as little as 8 days in a school term, by the end of primary school they'll have missed over a year of school.**

**Further information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:**

**Policy, information and brochures:**

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/attendance.php>

**The school leaving age:**

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/leaving-school/index.php>

**Do you need an interpreter?**

Interpreting services are available on request, including for the hearing impaired. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 131 450. You will not be charged for this service.

For further advice and questions contact your educational services team

T 131 536

Learning and Engagement

Student Engagement & Interagency Partnerships

T 9244 5129

[www.dec.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au)

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NSW Department of Education and Communities



## School Attendance Requirements

Regular attendance at school is important and essential to assist students to maximise their potential. Willyama High School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

Under the Education Act (1990), parents/caregivers are required to:

- ensure that children attend school every day that instruction is provided;
- provide an explanation for absences (including late arrivals) promptly and within seven school days of the absence occurring; and
- take measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

Willyama High School has a duty of care, and will contact parents/caregivers about unexplained absences as follows:

- sending an SMS or email message (to registered parents, usually on the day of the absence);
- giving students an Reminder: Explanation of Absence slip to take home (usually on the first day the student attends school following the absence);
- sending home an Absentee Notice in the mail (at least seven days after the absence); or
- telephoning home (at any time, as required).

Please contact the school on 8088 1055 if you are concerned about your child's attendance at Willyama High School. School staff will work with you to address any issues and improve unsatisfactory attendance.

## Electronic Absence Notifications

Parents/caregivers can elect to receive SMS or email messages from Willyama High School, if they haven't already done so, by providing their contact details to the front office on 8088 1055 or [willyama-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:willyama-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au). Registered parents will receive messages about unexplained absences and can also receive other electronic notifications from the school (eg. broadcasts about extreme weather conditions).

If you receive an electronic absence notification from Willyama High School, you can simply reply to the message and your child's attendance record will be updated accordingly. Unfortunately our SMS system can only process one reply per absence notification, so please do not use the number to send in an explanation for a later absence.

Parents have access to the parent portal that will allow the monitoring and explanation of student attendance.

## Parent Portal

## Examples of Absence Types

Absences where a student is 'at school' but not in class (such as school business, flexible attendance or shared enrolment) are non-legal absences from school and are not listed on student reports.

Absences from school (such as unexplained, leave, sick, suspended or unjustified) *are* absences for legal purposes, and are listed on student reports.

In certain circumstances, parents/caregivers can apply to the Principal for an Exemption from attending school for their child.

The table on the following page gives examples of valid and invalid reasons for a student being absent from school, and shows the coding the school is required to use to record explained absences in our electronic attendance register, WebAttend.

<b>SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REGISTER CODES</b>	
<b>Attendance Register Codes</b> <b>Symbols to be used to record a variation in attendance</b> (not counted as an absence for statistical purposes)	
Symbol	Meaning
<b>M</b>	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
<b>F</b>	The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required to be at school. This could include participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HSC Pathways Program</li> <li>- Best Start Assessments</li> <li>- Trial or HSC examinations</li> <li>- VET courses</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work experience</li> <li>- School sport (regional and state carnivals)</li> <li>- School excursions</li> <li>- Student exchange</li> </ul>
<b>H<sup>1</sup></b>	The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tutorial centre and programs</li> <li>- Behaviour schools</li> <li>- Juvenile Justice</li> <li>- Hospital schools</li> <li>- Distance Education</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Note: In most cases this code will only be used by Department of Education schools, with the exception of students from non-government schools attending hospital schools.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **Late Arrival (after 9.00 am)**

- With note or phone call from parent/carer explaining reason for the absence
- Student signs in at Front Office with note or explanation from parent/carer who has rung
- Student proceeds to class and provides teacher with late slip on entering room

### **Early Leaver**

- With note or phone call from parent/carer explaining the reason for the absence
- Provide note to Front Office before 9.00 am on the day of the absence
- Provide early leaver slip to teacher to exit classroom – sign out at Front Office and retain early leaver slip until end of day
- Without note or phone call from parent/carer explaining the reason for the absence – student must see Senior Executive only. No Approval – No Leave.
- If approved, provide early leaver slip to teacher to exit classroom. Sign out at Front Office and retain early leaver slip until end of day.

### **Whole Day**

- With note or phone call from parent/carer explaining reason for the absence. This is provided to Roll Call teacher or Front Office before absence or provided to Roll Call teacher or Front Officer after absence date.

## Sample Absentee Notice



### Willyama High School

PO Box 708, BROKEN HILL NSW 2880

Telephone: (08) 8088 1055

Facsimile: (08) 8087 3849

Email: [willyama-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:willyama-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

Website: <http://www.willyama-h.schools.nsw.edu.au>

Principal: Mr Grant Shepherd

05 January 2019

Mr and Mrs .....  
..... Street  
BROKEN HILL NSW 2880

Dear Parent/Caregiver

ABSENTEE NOTICE: (*students name*)

The Education Act 1990 requires enrolled students to attend school each day that instruction is provided unless prevented from doing so by sickness or other good reason. It is also a requirement that absences from school are explained within seven (7) days of their occurrence.

(*Student name*) was absent from school on Mon 11/11, and no explanation has been received by the school office.

Please provide an explanation for the absence(s) on the slip below and return it as soon as possible. Alternatively, if you feel that you have received this notice in error, or would like to discuss (*students' name*) attendance, you may wish to contact the undersigned on 8088 1055.

The School can notify you via SMS or Email if (*students name*) is absent from school without explanation, and you can simply reply to the message to explain the absence(s). If you would like to receive these notifications, please fill out the slip below and return it to (*students' name*) roll call teacher.

If you have contacted the school about the absence(s) in the last five days (including replying to an SMS), please disregard this notice.

Yours faithfully

Mr M Cawley  
Deputy Principal Yr 8,10 & 12

Mr R Sweet  
Deputy Principal Yr 7, 9 & 11

My child (*students' name*) (of Roll H1, Year 8) was absent from School on Mon 11/11 because:

.....  
Please notify me of any of (*students' name*) future absences via: SMS / Email. My current contact details are:

Signature of Parent/Guardian: ..... Date: .....

## Examples of Notes to Explain Absences

Tom was away Friday

M. L.

Note is unacceptable as student's full name is missing, there are no dates and no valid reason for absence.

25/4/2011

Please excuse Tom Williams from school on Friday 23/4/2011. He was sick.

M. L.

Note is acceptable as it has full student name, dates and a valid reason for the absence.

Tom has been home this week as it was cold and raining

M. L.

Note is unacceptable as student's full name is missing, there is no date and the reason for the absence is not valid.

Dear Teacher,

28/4/2011

Tom Williams has been away from the 23/4 to the 26/4 2011 due to family matters.

Thankyou

M. L.

Note is valid but the reason for the absence may be questionable. Please speak to your Principal regarding approving leave for this absence.