

INTRODUCTION

All staff members of Bairnsdale Secondary College are responsible for supporting the safety, participation, wellbeing and empowerment of children. Bairnsdale Secondary College embraces the entire school community and the following values:

- Respect for self
- Respect for others
- Respect for the environment
- Be the best you can be.

Additional staff values are:

- Students are the focus
- Working together
- Honour and celebrate diversity.

Our College values provide a strong foundation for this policy.

AIM

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Bairnsdale Secondary College has in place to:
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

Recording and monitoring attendance and absences is important for schools to meet the duty of care owed to students, as well as the requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Bairnsdale Secondary College. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training’s *School Attendance Guidelines*. It does not replace or change the obligations of Bairnsdale Secondary College, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITIONS

Parent: includes a parent, guardian, carer and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

School Profile

Bairnsdale Secondary College is sited on Gunai Kurnai land and has approximately 1200 students enrolled, drawing on local communities. Over 60% of these students travel to school by bus.

BSC's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is below the average school in Australia.

10% of the school population are Koorie.

The three learning Hubs at the College are named in the Gunai Kurnai language, symbolising students' journeys through the College:

- Year 7 - Wargomerrin (morning)
- Year 8/9 - Wurrin (day)
- Year 10/11/12 - Malgobila (night)

Each Hub is supported by an Assistant Principal, Leading Teachers, Coordinators, Education Support Staff, Integration Aides and the Student Wellbeing Team. The Malgobila Hub also integrates VCAL staff and a Careers Counsellor. This structure enables a holistic approach to the needs of individual students, encompassing our school values and emphasising the strong link between education and wellbeing.

BSC also has a satellite site providing an alternative VCAL study centre (Changing Lanes) for regional youth disengaged from mainstream education and potentially at risk.

IMPLEMENTATION

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 at school is important for all children and young people when students are healthy. School helps people develop important skills, knowledge and values, which sets them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Bairnsdale 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 Bairnsdale Secondary College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Bairnsdale Secondary College for particular activities.

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Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day. Bairnsdale Secondary College is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining. We will work with these students, their parents and other professionals, where appropriate, to improve attendance through a range of interventions and supports, including:

- Establishing a Student Support Group (SSG)
- Implementing a Reengagement Plan
- Arranging for assistance from relevant school staff, external agencies and/or departmental Student Support Services staff.

VCE Attendance

All VCE units involve at least 50 hours of scheduled classroom instruction. A student needs to attend sufficient class time to have their work authenticated as theirs.

If a student's class attendance is not sufficient enough to ensure authentication, the school will assign an N for one or more outcomes. Each student's individual circumstances will be considered and all students' attendance will be tracked in alignment with authentication of their work.

A school policy and set of procedures to cover absence from School-based Assessment Tasks (CATs) should be published and made available to staff, students and parents. When a student is absent from school for prolonged periods, or has been unable to complete all CATs because of illness or other special circumstances, the school may, upon application from the student, grant Special Provision for the CATs. In this case, the student should not be penalised for lack of attendance.

The student will receive an S for a unit if the teacher, working together with the Hub, student and their family, determines that the above requirements are met.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

Bairnsdale Secondary College may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines, refer non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the South East Victoria Region for further action.

This may occur in the following instances:

- 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.

Recording attendance

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

- Meet legislative requirements
- Discharge Bairnsdale Secondary College's duty of care for all students,
- Meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students.

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Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of each lesson using Compass (and if unable to do so by making other arrangements). If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

Recording absences

Bairnsdale Secondary College parents are asked to work in partnership with the school to ensure their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered. Parents are also asked to communicate openly with the school and provide explanations for any absence.

For student absences parents can use one of the following methods to inform the College:

- Phoning the Administration Office
- Adding the attendance record directly into Compass
- Providing a written notice to the appropriate Learning Hub (if absence is known in advance)
- Responding to the SMS absence message from the College.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, BSC will notify parents by SMS message. The 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, or the College receives no response, the College will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school on the day of the unexplained absence.

Bairnsdale Secondary College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The College recognises the following as an approved absence:

- 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 school
- Cultural observances
- Family holidays.

RELATED DOCUMENTS / KEY REFERENCES

- BSC Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- DET School Attendance Guidelines
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: Attendance
- Education Training Reform Act 2006

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