

ATTENDANCE POLICY



PURPOSE

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 Ballarat High School has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Ballarat High School.

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 Ballarat High School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

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 Ballarat High School 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 Ballarat High School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Ballarat High School for particular activities.

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

Ballarat High School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and 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 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 school 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.

Ballarat High School 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 Ballarat High School 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 school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Ballarat High School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and VCE/VCAL handbooks support student attendance.

Recording attendance

Ballarat High School must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Ballarat High School's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

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

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

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Ballarat High School of absences by:

- calling the school's General Office to report the absence on 5338 9000 or via email to Ballarat.hs@education.vic.gov.au. Parents can also notify absences through the Compass parent portal.

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, Ballarat High School will notify parents by SMS. Ballarat High School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

Ballarat High School 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 Ballarat High School 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 school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer 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.

Attendance Tracking: Years 7 – 9

- Team Leaders and Learning Mentors will track student attendance.
- Parents with concerns about their child's attendance and associated issues should make contact with their Team Leader to discuss the issue and develop strategies to support the child.
- In years 7 – 9 medical certificates are not required for medical/illness absences but information should be provided about the nature of the condition if it is likely to impact on the child's education.
- Team Leaders will follow up absences that receive no verification from parents.

Attendance Tracking: Years 10 – 12

- Learning Leaders, Classroom Teachers and Learning Mentors will track student attendance.
- Parents with concerns about their child's attendance and associated issues should make contact with their Learning Leader to discuss the issue and develop strategies to support the child.
- Learning Leaders will follow up absences that receive no verification from parents.
- Absences for years 10 – 12 are designated to be either "approved" or "unapproved" for the purposes of successful completion of senior studies.

"Approved" absences are those which are verified by a medical certificate covering the time absent. Also, if there is a legitimate reason why the student cannot attend school e.g. Family emergency, a parent can apply to the VCE Coordinator for an approved absence, which is regarded in the same manner as a medical certificate. This application may be in the form of a phone call, email or meeting. Medical certificates need to be provided to the General Office within 3 days of the absence. All absences due to participation in events related to the school are also approved absences.

“Unapproved“ absences are those that are unverified by parents or which are covered by a parent or guardian note, but without a medical certificate

They include:

- Holidays taken during school time (unless approved by the Principal)
- An absence for a non-medical appointment
- Lateness to class. A student who is late will be recorded as 'late' and this lateness will be counted as an unapproved absence for the time missed

Students can only have 8 unapproved absences from a class before an 'N' will be recorded for that unit. The student will be notified by the Learning Leader and the parent notified by the Assistant Principal of the Senior School or the VCE coordinator. The parent may appeal the 'N' to the Principal by writing a letter outlining the reasons for the appeal. It is up to the Principal whether to hear the appeal.

Further information about the VCE absence processes is distributed to parents/students at the beginning of each year.

Family holidays during school time.

No student completing a Unit 3-4 subject should take holidays during school time. Holidays during school time will be considered unapproved absences for those students.

If a student is completing year 7 – 11 studies it is still advised not to be absent due to holidays as it will have a negative impact on learning. However, if the school is notified well in advance, (at least one month) the school will set up a Student Absence Learning Plan for the student to complete whilst away and the Principal will approve the absence. If the school is not given sufficient time to assess the validity of the absence and a detailed absence learning plan cannot be prepared it will be an unapproved/unreasonable absence.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

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

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant Wellbeing or Regional staff.

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

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Ballarat High School 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 South Western Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be

returning to the school, 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:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2022
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2026