

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY- KEY SECTIONS OF THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES**

### **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 Bendigo Special Developmental 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 Bendigo Special Developmental 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 Bendigo Special Developmental 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.

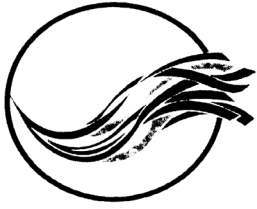
### **POLICY**

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 Bendigo Special Developmental 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 at Bendigo Special Developmental School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Bendigo Special Developmental School for particular activities.

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

Bendigo Special Developmental 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.

Bendigo Special Developmental 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 Bendigo Special Developmental 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**

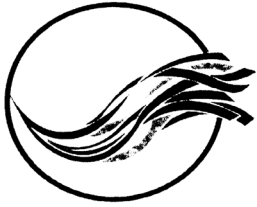
Bendigo Special Developmental School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by offering reliable department bus transport services, comprehensive attendance record keeping with follow up for students at-risk via the family support officer, an open school policy with active breakfast programs are also offered.

### **Recording attendance**

Bendigo Special Developmental School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Bendigo Special Developmental School's duty of care for all students



Attendance will be recorded by classroom teachers by 9:15am at the start of the school day and after lunch at 1:40pm using Sentral software that synchs with CASES21 daily.

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 Bendigo Special Developmental School of planned or unplanned absences, early arrivals and late departures by:

- contacting reception via phone on 54473267, or email at [Bendigo.sds@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:Bendigo.sds@education.vic.gov.au)
- or via the Flexischools app

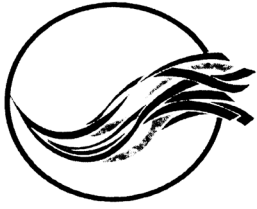
If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Bendigo Special Developmental School will notify parents by SMS message. Bendigo Special Developmental School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

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

Bendigo Special Developmental 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 Bendigo Special Developmental School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as using the following descriptions.

- PARENTAL CHOICE: holiday; birthday; unexcused absences; truancy
- EXIT/TRANSFERRED: where a student has left school or transitioned to another educational setting and the paperwork has not been processed
- HEALTH RELATED: medical/allied health appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate; surgery; illness
- SCHOOL DECISION: issues related to welfare such as attendance at a funeral, cultural observations
- EDUCATION: alternate education program such as Very Special Kids



- LATE ARRIVAL / EARLY DEPARTURE: times and reasons for late arrival or early departure will be recorded

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 any other reason given by a parent for a student's absence.

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 3 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**

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Bendigo Special Developmental 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 actions on 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 student wellbeing staff
- arranging for a medical return to school plan where a student has been absent due to a long-term medical condition or surgery

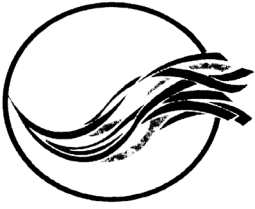
We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

#### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Bendigo Special Developmental 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 Bendigo Office 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.

## **MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

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

## **REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION**

This policy was last updated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December and is scheduled for review in December 2024.