



# Attendance Policy



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact a Coordinator or the General Office

## 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 St Albans Secondary College 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 St Albans 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 St Albans Secondary College, 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.

**St Albans Secondary College requires that all students maintain an attendance level of 90%** over the year in order to successfully pass each subject. Students who do not meet this requirement are at risk of not being promoted to the next year level.

- At Years 7 and 8 the 90% is determined by total number of days at school.
- At Years 9 to 12 it is determined by 90% attendance in each subject or unit of work

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

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

St Albans Secondary College 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 required to attend school every day, arriving on time prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a Coordinator and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

St Albans 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 are expected to communicate with their child's Coordinator regarding any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents are expected to 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.

## Punctuality and Lateness

All students are expected to arrive on time for school and for all classes. Habitual lateness has a negative effect on student learning. Parents are expected to communicate directly with their child's Sub School via phone call at the start of the day to discuss the reason for their child's lateness. They may also choose to write their child a note. Acceptance/approval of the lateness is at the Sub Schools' Discretion.

The following consequences will apply to students who do not meet the expectations in relation to punctuality:

- Students who are late to school without an approved explanation will be allocated a lunchtime detention (usually) on the day of the lateness. Reasons for the lateness are to be discussed with a student's Coordinator/Sub School prior to lunchtime on the day.
- Students who are late to classes throughout the day will be spoken to by their classroom teachers who will issue a consequence according to the Student Management Policy.
- Students who are repeatedly and habitually late will be spoken to by their Coordinator and may be required to attend a Student Support Group Meeting with their parents to consider supports and strategies to improve their attendance.

## Supporting and promoting attendance

St Albans Secondary College's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Displaying posters and reminders about attendance expectations
- Discussing the importance of attendance with students and families through newsletters, Compass posts, assemblies, and parent nights.
- Providing rewards and recognition for students who are meeting College expectations
- Providing percentage rate updates to parents via Semester reports and emails each term.

Further strategies to promote attendance are outlined in Appendix 1 – Summary of Attendance Expectations.

## Implications of not meeting attendance requirements

- If, due to excessive absences, a student does not comply with the College attendance expectation of 90%, an interview will be held with the parents of the student to discuss the strategies to improve future attendance and/or pathway options available to the student for the following year.
- Students who do not achieve a 90% attendance rate will be deemed not to have satisfactorily completed the year level or subject/unit of work.
  - At Years 7 & 8 this may result in the student not being automatically promoted to the next year level in accordance with our Promotions Policy.
  - At Years 9 to 11, this policy will impact upon the student's ability to pass units and ultimately on their ability to be automatically promoted to the next year level in accordance with our Promotions Policy.
  - At Year 12, this policy will impact upon the ability of students to pass units and ultimately on their ability to gain their VCE/VET/VCE-VM certificate.

## Recording attendance

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

- meet legislative requirements
- ensure the College's meets its 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 St Albans Secondary College of absences by **contacting their child's Sub School** if it is an unplanned absence and informing their child's Coordinator if it is a planned absence.

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, St Albans Secondary College will notify parents by SMS. The College will notify families via an SMS message if a student has been recorded for one or more periods absent without an explanation. Notifications will be sent at 11.30 am and 4.00 pm each day.

St Albans 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 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.

St Albans 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 St Albans 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 below absences (These will not be counted towards the 90% mandatory attendance requirement):

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate and illness - Medical certificates must be submitted to the College within 3 school days of the student returning to school. The College reserves the right to verify the authenticity of medical certificates
- 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 and Student Support Group 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
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance (see note below)

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.

**Note:**

**Extended family holidays.** Parents are required to consult with and notify in writing the Sub-School Team ahead of time of family holidays. At this consultation any possible promotion implications will be discussed with the family of the student and an absence learning plan will be developed. Whilst absent from the College, students will be expected to complete work as set by their teachers. Parents/Guardians of students in Years 10, 11 and 12 should be particularly aware of the possible effect on a student's ability to meet the course requirements. At Year 10, holidays of longer than four weeks and at Years 11 and 12, holidays longer than two weeks of class time per semester would be of concern.

## **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, St Albans Secondary College 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 student wellbeing 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, the school will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

## **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If St Albans 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 South West Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to make 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
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- 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	November 2023
Consultation	Sub School Leadership Team, School Council, Student Wellbeing Committee
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	November 2027

## APPENDIX 1 - SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

### Students are expected to:

- attend school and all scheduled classes,
- arrive on time to school and to every class,
- provide a note from their parent when they have been absent from school (or late to school),
- after an absence, catch up on any work missed or complete any alternative set work,
- tell their classroom teachers of their involvement in College sanctioned activities that will result in their absence from class,
- students who are living independently must notify the Sub School Team of any absences and the reasons for those absences.

### Parents are required to:

- ensure that their child attends school at all times,
- ensure that their child is on time for school each day,
- notify the College by phone, or in writing, of the reason for any absence as soon as possible on the first day of any absence,
- where appropriate, provide the College with medical certificates explaining absences,
- notify the College in writing of the dates of any extended holiday that will cause their child to be absent from school,
- support their child's learning during continued or prolonged absences,
- work cooperatively with the school to improve their child's attendance where the reasons for absences have been deemed unsatisfactory by the school,
- ensure that contact details for the child are correct and up to date,
- where necessary, take an active part in this Policies interview processes.

### Teachers will:

- monitor accurately and record student attendance on COMPASS for every class, including extras,
- complete attendance rolls on time throughout each day (within the first 15 minutes of each lesson),
- update rolls if students attend classes after roll marking (e.g. after a school activity in the second half of a double session)
- provide appropriate work for students during prolonged absences as requested by Year Level Coordinators,
- if a student is missing a number of lessons, advise the Year Level Coordinator, to ensure that the matter is being addressed by the College's attendance processes,
- towards the end of a unit/subject, consult with the Year Level Coordinator to ascertain if a student who has above 10% absence has legitimate reasons for those absences,
- record the student's subject or unit result as unsatisfactory (N) if their attendance is below 90%.

### Year Level Coordinators and Sub School Leaders will:

- monitor overall student attendance and keep accurate attendance rolls. These rolls should include appropriate absence codes, and entry & exit dates,
- follow up all individual cases of student absence and lateness promptly and consistently, and implement appropriate monitoring and support strategies,
- contact the parent about student absences within 24 hours of the absence,
- if, for any reason, the parent cannot be contacted, follow up the absence with the student on their return,

- in cases of extended unexplained absences (more than 3 days), send a letter/email requesting an explanation to the parent,
- in consultation with the Student Wellbeing Team, establish a Student Support Group to ensure a coordinated response to individual students' attendance problems, and make appropriate referrals to community agencies for additional support as required,
- develop a Student Absence Learning Plan when a student will be absent from school for an extended period of time,
- notify the parent in writing and arrange an interview with the student's parent if the student's attendance pattern is becoming a concern,
- inform parents of the possible consequences on satisfactory completion of extended student absence due to family holidays or "parent choice",
- conduct interviews with students and their parents who do not meet the school's attendance and promotion requirements to discuss the students' pathway options,
- monitor and analyse Sub School attendance records on a regular basis at Sub School teams & Sub School Leaders' meetings and use Case Management Monitoring Tools to identify and provide support for students at risk of poor attendance,
- contact families regarding late attendance to school and classes as outlined in the punctuality section on page 2
- maintain accurate student and family contact details.

#### The school will:

- promote student attendance through clear statements of expectations to parents, students and staff,
- email parents an update of their child's percentage each term (twice in term 1 and 3) and include their attendance in their child's end of semester report,
- promote awareness through assemblies, posters, staff meetings and newsletters, that absence results in lost learning time and opportunities,
- ensure whole-school modelling of punctuality to school and classes,
- ensure accurate and timely recording of attendance by staff in each class each day,
- maintain accurate attendance records on Compass & Cases21, and ensure the prompt processing of all student transfers,
- send SMS text messages daily if a student has been recorded for one or more periods absent without an explanation,
- organise emailed reports to be sent to parents on a weekly basis for any unexplained absences and lateness to school or classes,
- monitor and analyse school attendance records to ensure the early identification of, and provision of targeted support for, students at risk of poor attendance and disengagement from school,
- develop and maintain collaborative partnerships with parents and community agencies to promote positive attendance,
- ensure that the school's processes & policies for dealing with student attendance are coordinated and consistently implemented across the school.