

## **Purpose:**

Consistent school attendance from the early years is fundamental to ensuring children gain a strong foundation for later learning. Thorndon Park Primary School is committed to the goal of all students gaining maximum benefits from participating in the school's learning and teaching program. Students who do not regularly attend school miss out on planned learning experiences, sequences of instruction and class participation. The impact of this loss is compounded with each absence. Once established, patterns of non-attendance are very difficult to change.

While poor attendance is a strong indicator of lower levels of achievement in learning tasks, it also highlights as the potential for problematic social skills and difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships. Attendance at school contributes to a community that is well educated, healthier, employed, financially independent and more empowered.

The Education Act provides for compulsory attendance of every child aged from six to sixteen years of age in government schools. Thorndon Park Primary School actively supports the legal requirements for attendance of students and the Department for Education (DE) policy directions and guidelines. Once a child is enrolled at school, they are expected to attend regularly every day and arrive and leave on time. Punctuality is important as being organised at the beginning of the school day sets the students up for a successful day.

## **School Times**

8:30 – 8:50 am Yard Supervised – oval and forest out of bounds

8:40am Students can enter class

8:50 – 10:40am Lessons

10:40 – 11:00am Recess

11:00 – 12:40pm Lessons

12:40 – 12:50pm Supervised Lunch (eating)

12:50 – 1:30pm Lunch Play

1:30 – 3:10pm Lessons

3:10pm School ends

3:30pm Students to have left the school yard in readiness for OSHC service.

If students arrive on the school site prior to 8:30am, they are encouraged to sit on the external Admin seating or book into OSHC. If students are not collected by 3:30pm, parents are contacted. Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) is available Before and After School from 7:15am in the mornings and until 6:00pm in the evenings. Please contact OSHC on 0421618856 if you require this service.

## **Interventions:**

Our public education system aims to inspire, engage and empower students to achieve their best at school and in life. Quality teaching and learning, a positive school culture and strong relationships help to create optimal attendance at school.

By identifying patterns of non-attendance, we can intervene in a timely and strategic manner before children have fallen behind academically and socially and before families have disengaged from the school setting.

## **Leadership and staff at Thorndon Park Primary School:**

- promote the importance of education and actively engage students and their families in education and developmental opportunities
- implement a whole-school approach to attendance and engagement to identify and monitor the habitual and chronic non-attenders students early and prioritise the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students who require more targeted, intensive and coordinated interventions
- engage student voice to problem-solve attendance issues with negotiated incentives
- align the DE attendance strategy with the Wellbeing Framework for Learning and Life, which recognises the link between young people's wellbeing and their learning outcomes
- work in partnership with parents, students, teachers and Attendance Counsellors as necessary to identify barriers to engagement with school and to implement appropriate intervention and incentive strategies, for example, case management approaches help to develop solutions and provide support for students' social, emotional and academic development.

## **Challenges**

Many factors affect children's attendance at school such as:

A child's refusal to attend school due to -

- separation anxiety
- learning difficulties or anxiety
- peer relationship issues including bullying
- teacher relationships issues
- feeling bored or disengaged at school.

It is acceptable for a student to miss school when they:

- are too sick or are too injured to leave the house
- have an infectious illness such as gastroenteritis, chicken pox or measles
- need to attend medical or dental appointments that could not be made out of school hours (wherever possible, dental, medical and extra-curricular appointments should be made out of school hours)

- are experiencing special or emergency family problems that have a negative impact, for example, accident, birth, death, grief and loss
- have family holidays or culturally significant occasions
- have been granted an exemption from school
- have been sent home or suspended from school for disciplinary reasons
- provide a genuine reason to the school Principal.

Some children may leave the house but not attend school or slip away from the school (truancy).

It is crucial that children and young people feel accepted, valued, safe and respected at school.

### **Parent Responsibilities:**

#### **Informing the school about your child's absence**

Parents should be pro-active in notifying the school in regards to absence or lateness. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure the school has been notified of the reason for the child's absence, either personally, by phone or in writing. On the day a child is to be absent parents should contact the school by phone (preferably before school), giving reasons for the absence; otherwise they should send a note or message to the class teacher on the child's return to school. Students that are away for more than 3 consecutive days require a medical certificate.

Parents should notify the school office if family arrangements change (e.g. the child will be residing elsewhere or the child will be collected by a person other than a parent) and notify Admin staff of any changes in contact details, address, medical plans etc.

Requests for explanation of student lateness/absence are only sent when information has not been received from an adult with duty of care. We cannot accept verbal explanations from students.

### **Exemptions from school:**

- If parents are taking their children on holidays during school time, it is legislation that they must seek an exemption from school attendance for their children for that period of time.
- This is done by completing an Application for Exception form available for the front office. The Principal may approve an exemption for periods of up to one year.
- For longer periods of time an exemption has to be sought from the Education Director of the Department for Education.
- An exemption should be sought if a child is away because of an infectious disease.

### **Early Collection:**

It is the parents' responsibility to collect their child before 3:30pm each day. Collecting students prior to dismissal time (3:10pm) can also be disruptive and has similar consequences to lateness. If you are collecting your child early the parent needs to sign the child out at the front office and wait in the office for the student to be sent for.

## **Unacceptable reasons for absences include:**

These absences are generally unacceptable reasons for a child to stay home, other than in exceptional circumstances.

- shopping
- sleeping in and tiredness
- peer pressure
- a family day - birthday
- caring for a sick family member.

## **Lateness:**

A student is deemed late if their arrival time in class is after 8:50am. Our school day begins at 8:50am. Lateness may be embarrassing for the students, disruptive for the class and wastes valuable teaching and learning time for both teachers and students. Children who are late must collect a blue late slip from the school office before going to class. The parent must provide a reason for lateness either in person when signing them in, via a phone call or a note.

## **Staff Responsibilities:**

- Teachers are required to record all absences, late arrivals and early dismissals
- Attendances are entered on student information records
- Teachers will communicate with parents requesting a written reason for absence where none has been given by sending home a Student Absences/Lateness form, followed by contacting the parent/caregiver
- If unexplained absences continue, a letter will be sent to the parents from the Principal
- If the attendance problem continues, the Principal, in consultation with the teacher, will refer the matter to the Department for Education Attendance Counsellor.

## **Role of the Attendance Counsellor:**

Student Attendance Counsellors provide a supportive service to students, parents/ caregivers and school staff. Their aim is to assist with the full participation of all students in education by:

- working with students in a supportive role
- visiting students at home and consulting with parents /caregivers
- monitoring student attendance and reviewing progress as necessary.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance at school please have a chat with their class teacher. First contact their school to talk about it. You can discuss your concerns with your child's teacher, wellbeing leader, year level manager, deputy principal or the school Principal.

For more information phone the parents' hotline on 1300 364 100 or visit the Parenting and Child Health website.