



## Attendance & Exemptions Policy

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### 1 PREFACE

Shearwater, the Mullumbimby Steiner School, is hereby referred to as 'the School'.

The School's policies which are made from time to time are made pursuant to the requirements set out in section 47 of the *Education Act 1990* and of the NESA for registration of the school.

### 2 OBJECTIVES

By implementing this policy, the School aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Continuity of education is maximised for each student
- The School's expectations and requirements for attendance are clearly articulated and communicated to the school community
- The School's complies with its legal obligations regarding attendance and duty of care.

### 3 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, students, parents/carers, visitors, contractors, volunteers, stakeholders and members of the general community.

### 4 PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

#### 4.1 Regulatory Commitments

In NSW it is a legal requirement that all children between the ages of 6 and 17 years receive schooling. After completion of Year 10 a young person has alternative options to school if they have not reached the age of 17 years. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure that their children comply with these legal requirements. The School is required to support parents/carers by monitoring student attendance and helping to address attendance issues when they emerge.

The School is also under a duty of care to prevent harm to students from foreseeable risks. As part of fulfilling this duty of care, the School must establish and implement rules and procedures pertaining to student attendance, arrivals and departures.

Under Section 3.6 and 3.8 of the *NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non- Government Schools (NSW) Manual*, the Head of School must ensure that the following are developed and implemented:

- An attendance register, in a form approved by the Minister, of daily attendances of all students at the school, which includes information for each student as required by Section 3.8 of the Manual. The register must also use the common attendance codes approved by the Minister
- Policies and procedures for the monitoring, follow up, reporting and recording of attendance
- Policies and procedures for improving unsatisfactory attendance.

## **4.2 Attendance**

The School regards regular attendance as vital to the continuity of a student's education. As such, it is expected that students attend school regularly and punctually, and that parents/carers assist students to do so.

All students are expected to maintain an attendance rate of above 85%.

Students are required to attend and be punctual to all their timetabled lessons and activities.

K-10 students are expected to be present on the school campus from 8:50 am to 3:00 pm school days.

Year 11 and 12 students are expected to be present on the school campus 10 minutes before the beginning of their first class for the day. They may only leave the campus after the conclusion of their last class for the day.

## **4.3 Flexible Timetables**

Students on flexible timetables must sign in at the office if their first class of the day starts after 9:05 am. When signing in, students must record their reason for late arrival as 'flexible timetable'. Where a student's first class is at 9:05 am, they must be present for roll call during home-room time.

Students on flexible timetables must sign out at the office when leaving the school campus. They may only leave the campus after the conclusion of their last class for the day. When signing out, students must record their reason for early departure as 'flexible timetable'.

## **4.4 Late Arrivals**

Year 1 to 10 students arriving at school after 8:50 am must be signed in at the school office as a late arrival. All K to 10 students arriving to school late must be signed in by a parent or caregiver. This is a precaution to enable the School to fulfill a legal duty of care.

Students arriving late will be recorded as a partial absence, with the reason for being absent noted as 'unjustified'.

Year 11 and 12 students arriving after the commencement of their first lesson for the day must sign in as a late arrival at the school office. Students arriving after the commencement of their first lesson will be recorded as a partial absence, with the reason for being absent noted as 'unjustified'.

## **4.5 Planned Absences**

Planned student absences (late arrivals, early departures, or absence for a period of the school day) are permitted in certain circumstances. The Head of School deems the following as acceptable reasons for a planned absence:

- Doctors appointment or specialist appointment
- Funerals
- Religious festivals or ceremonial occasions
- Domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member.

In exceptional circumstances, the Head of School may deem other reasons for absence to be acceptable, and may approve leave where an application by the student's parents/carers has been made.

Planned absences will be recorded as either partial or full day absences, with the reason for absence being noted as 'accepted by the Head of School'.

#### 4.5.1 Early Departures

In the case of planned absences, a student will only be permitted to leave the school campus early when:

- The student has, during homeroom time, presented an explanation note for the planned absence, written and signed by the student's carers, to the student's Class Guardian; or the Class Guardian has printed off an emailed explanation note from the student's parents/carers; or the Class Guardian has written an explanation note after receiving a verbal explanation from the student's parents/carers
- The student's Class Guardian has approved and signed the explanation note
- The student has presented the signed explanation note to the classroom teacher
- The student has handed in the signed explanation note at the office
- (K-10 students) The student has been signed out at and collected from the office by her/his/their parents, carers or proxy if stated in the permission note
- (Years 11-12 students) The student has signed themselves out at the office.

Under no circumstances can one student at the School sign out another student. Upon return to school, all students must sign back in at the office.

#### 4.5.2 Exemptions from School Attendance

The Head of School may exercise the Minister's delegation under Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990 (NSW)* in relation to granting and cancelling a certificate of exemption from attending school in certain prescribed circumstances.

If a student requires to be absent from school for a part-day or a full day on a regular basis, the student's parents/carers must apply for and be issued with an *Exemption from Attendance Certificate*.

An exemption from attendance can only be granted by the Head of School and will not be granted retrospectively.

The Head of School may grant a full-day exemption for the following reasons:

- Exceptional circumstances (including the health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate)
- The child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under the *Public Health Act 2010 (NSW)*
- Employment in the entertainment industry
- Participation in elite arts or elite sporting events.

The Head of School may grant a part day exemption for the following reasons:

- Students participating in elite arts or elite sporting programs (where regular attendance of training is required)
- The requirements of a student's health care plan
- The requirements of school based programs (e.g. behaviour management transition plans, return to schooling after injury, reintroduction plan after suspension).

An exemption will not be granted for travel during school term.

The Head of School may grant up to 100 days of full-day and/or part-day exemptions in a twelve-month period for any one student.

Where an exemption from attendance has been granted, the student's attendance will be recorded as either a part or full day absence, with the reason for absence being noted as 'exempted from attending school'.

Where the parents/carers of a student of compulsory school age seek an exemption from attendance at school, the Head of School will process the parent's application in accordance with the guidelines from NSW Department of Education (*Exemption from School – Procedures*).

Parents/carers may appeal the Head of School's decision regarding an attendance exemption. Appeal procedures will comply with the principles of procedural fairness.

#### **4.5.3 Travel During Term**

Travel is considered to be domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reasons.

The School encourages carers and families to take holidays during the school vacation periods. Travel during term is strongly discouraged as it may impact negatively upon a student's continuity of education.

Travel during school term will only be approved by the Head of School if determined it is in the best interest of the student. If travel during term is deemed appropriate by the Head of School, the student's carers will need to apply for, and be issued with, a *Certificate of Extended Leave*.

Applications for a *Certificate of Extended Leave* must be made to the Head of School a minimum of four weeks before the start date of the proposed period of leave. Applications submitted after this time will not be considered for approval.

The Head of School may place certain conditions on the granting of a *Certificate of Extended Leave*, such as the student adheres to an individual learning program while travelling, or the student enrolls in distance education if travelling for longer than one term. These conditions must be honoured by the student and their parents/carers.

A *Certificate of Extended Leave* will not be issued where the Head of School is aware that the student has been the subject of a Child Protection report made to Family and Community Services, or contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit, and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.

Where a *Certificate of Extended Leave* has been granted, the reason for a student's absence will be recorded as 'accepted by the Head of School'. All other absences relating to travel will be recorded as 'unjustified'.

Where the conditions of the *Certificate of Extended Leave* have not been met, the student's attendance will be recorded as an unjustified absence.

## **4.6 Unplanned Absences**

Where a student is absent due to illness or unforeseen exceptional circumstances, an explanation, written and signed by the student's carers, must be submitted to the Class Teacher/Class Guardian within seven (7) days of the student's absence. Where no written explanation is provided, or the reasons provided for absence are not accepted by the Head of School, the absence will be recorded as 'unjustified'.

Students who are unable to attend an exam or complete an assessment task due to illness must present a doctor's certificate to the office upon their return to school.

### **4.6.1 Early Departures**

In the case of unplanned absences, a student will only be permitted to leave the school campus early for the reasons of illness or unforeseen exceptional circumstances.

The student is only permitted to leave the school campus once the following has occurred:

- The office has been notified by the student's parents/carers of the reason for the student's early departure
- The office has notified the student's Class Guardian and Class Teacher of the time and reason for the student's early departure
- (K-7 students) The student has been signed out at and collected from the office by her/his/their parents, carers or proxy if stated in the permission note
- (Years 8-10) The student has been signed out at the office and collected from the office by her/his/their parents, carers or proxy if stated in the permission note
- (Years 11-12 students) The student has signed themselves out at the office.

## **4.7 Absence During Assessment**

Refer to the School's Assessment Policy.

## **4.8 Consequences for Truancy, Lateness & Poor Attendance**

Students found to be truanting will be required to make up the time missed from lessons in Support Room, or by undertaking community service activities assigned by their Class Teacher/Class Guardian.

If a Class Teacher/Class Guardian has concerns with a student's punctuality, the student's parents/carers will be contacted by the student's Class Guardian and asked to implement strategies to improve their child's punctuality. Where the student's Class Guardian continues to observe a pattern of late arrival, the Head of School will contact the student's parents/carers to develop and agree upon an attendance improvement plan to improve the student's punctuality.

When a student's attendance rate drops below 85%, the student and the student's parents/carers will be required to attend an interview with the Head of School and relevant support staff to develop and agree upon an action plan to improve the student's attendance (Attendance Improvement Plan). Where a student's absence is due to continuing bad health, an individual learning plan will be developed in conjunction with/in place of an attendance improvement plan.

If the student's attendance remains unsatisfactory regardless of the implementation of an attendance improvement plan, the student and their parents/carers will be given the option of withdrawing the student's enrolment or attending compulsory attendance conferences with an official conference convenor. Continued poor attendance may result in the issue of compulsory schooling orders and further legal action being taken against the student's parents/carers.

#### **4.9 Impact of Absences on Course Completion Requirements**

The Head of School may decide that a student's attendance does not satisfy the course completion requirements for Stage 4, 5 or 6 courses. This may result in the student not meeting the eligibility requirements for the award of a Record of School Achievement (RoSA), High School Certificate (HSC) or Vocational Education & Training (VET) certificate.

Absence during an approved attendance exemption cannot contribute to a non-satisfactory completion decision by the Head of School. However, the Head of School must arrange for course outcomes to be addressed during planned absence or on holidays.

Year 10 school leavers will not be awarded a RoSA if they do not attend school up to and until the final day of Year 10.

Unauthorised early departure from school in Year 10 or non-completion of course completion requirements may jeopardise a student's entry into Stage 6 Preliminary HSC courses.

Unsatisfactory completion of prerequisite Stage 6 Preliminary HSC course requirements will prevent a student from entering into a HSC course.

#### **5 RELATED LEGISLATION, POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

- WS-PRO-Recording and Monitoring of Attendance Procedure
- *Education Act 1990* (NSW)
- *Exemption from School – Procedures, 2015*, Department of Education and Communities (Learning and Engagement Directorate)
- *NESA Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual*

#### **6 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Board is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed for effectiveness and updated on a regular basis.

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented through the development and implementation of action plans, procedures and other documentation. The Head of School is also responsible for ensuring that these documents are monitored for implementation, reviewed for effectiveness and updated on a regular basis.

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

<b>Version:</b>	<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>Description of changes made from previous version</b>
V2	2020-06-18	Changes to Section 4.4 Late Arrivals to clarify time and sign in procedure. Minor update to Section 4.8.
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Draft A		
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