



Attendance

Rationale:

Student engagement is influenced by a wide range of factors. Kambrya College recognizes that a vibrant and positive school culture with a shared enthusiasm for learning is key to successful student outcomes. Intentional design and creative and thoughtful planning are essential to achieving this.

Aim:

Kambrya College ensures that student engagement is underpinned by policies reflecting the following acts: The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic), The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic), The Disability Standards for Education 2005, Discrimination Act 1992 and The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic). This policy should be read in conjunction with *Ministerial Order 870- Child Safe Standards*, and the college's *Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*. To ensure ease of access to relevant policy for community members, Kambrya College articulates the following components of student engagement and inclusion as separate policies under the overarching framework of student engagement and inclusion.

Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy Framework:

- Community Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- **Attendance Policy**
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy
- Disabilities and Impairments Policy
- Discipline Procedures
- Student Safety: Responding to Critical Incidents Policy
- Uniform
- Class Formation

The policies that sit within the Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy framework reflect the school community's aspirations and the unique local context of Kambrya College. This is critical to developing a positive school culture and supporting a school council's strategic aims.

Attendance:

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted.

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

School participation is important as it 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 which set them up for further learning and participation in their community. Kambrya College will ensure that it liaises with parents as required to maximize the opportunities for each student through full adherence to the attendance requirements.

Implementation:

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:

There is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or

The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

- *A student is considered to be in attendance at school when involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp), or where the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.*
- *Home schooling in Victoria is a legally recognised alternative to attending a registered school. Parents who wish to home school their child must satisfy the requirements of the Victorian Regulation and Qualifications Authority.*
- Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult. Research reveals absenteeism lessens student opportunities.
- Parents / carers have responsibility to acknowledge student absence on COMPASS.
- To meet duty-of-care duty obligations, the College will contact parents/guardians **as soon as practicable** on the day of a student's absence. The designated Home Group teacher will telephone parents of absent students if communication from parents is not forthcoming over a prolonged period despite COMPASS communication.
- Supportive measures (including access to the Wellbeing Co-ordinator), re-engagement programs (internal / external) and other supportive services will be optioned.
- Students affected by homelessness or Out-Of-Home care will have specific supportive provisions, where their absenteeism will be monitored on a case-by-case basis. The College will seek agency / DET support, as required.
- Independent students not living with parents or guardians are also required to provide absenteeism notes.
- The Department of Education and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Department of Education and the wider community each year as part of the Annual Report.

In order to meet the required number of classroom instruction hours specified by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), students in the VCE program at Kambrya are required to attend at least 90% of Year 11 classes and 95% of Year 12 classes (other than English and Maths which remain at 90%) . This is to ensure that subject teachers are able to authenticate work submitted for each outcome. Failure to meet the attendance requirement may result in a student receiving a non-satisfactory result for the relevant outcomes.

- It is acknowledged that for some children and young people mainstream school environments may not always be the most appropriate settings. For the purpose of this document, participation in an approved re-engagement program is considered attendance at school.

Parent Responsibilities:

Parents are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school, and the principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The principal must be able to determine from the records if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Parents should inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- Determine if the child's absence needs to be excused by the Principal, in line with School Policy / Guidelines.
- Determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported.
- Record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day.

Where possible, parents should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences

School Responsibilities:

The Principal or nominee must:

- Keep records of all contact (or attempts) with the student's family, for a minimum period of one year.
- Maintain documentation of all attempted and implemented intervention strategies aimed at restoring a student's attendance.
- Ensure attendance records (electronic and hardcopy) are managed in accordance with standards set by the Public Record Office Victoria and guidelines issued by the Department (government schools), or relevant Commonwealth privacy legislation (non-government schools).

Kambrya College records student attendance every class and records, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

- Meet legislative requirements.
- Discharge schools' duty of care for all students.
- Assist calculation of the school's funding.
- Enable the school governing body (school council) to report on student attendance annually.
- Meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

Kambrya College ensures that the system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above. Government schools must use only CASES21, eCASES21 or third party (Compass) software which is compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance

Accurate and comprehensive student attendance records, including the reasons for any absences, also allow schools to monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and measure achievement against attendance targets. It also provides evidence for any further enforcement proceedings including issue of an Attendance or Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school. Kambrya College will liaise with Attendance Officers as required to ensure that parents meet their obligations.

Excusing and not excusing absences:

The Principal can consider the excuse given for an absence and use his/her discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves a Principal:

- Considering a request from a parent to approve an absence
- Exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse the absence
- Notifying the parent if the absences have not excused.

In exercising their discretion, the principal should take the following considerations into account:

- Whether the absence is explicitly covered in section 2.1.3 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- Whether the student should do some learning activities during the absence (see: [Student Absence Learning Plan](#))
- If this kind of absence is covered in the school's policy (e.g. shopping, birthday, visiting relatives)
- Whether or not the length of absence will affect the student's learning
- Whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so how recently and how many times
- Whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before
- Cultural factors or details of the student and family's circumstances
- The implications for not approving the absence
- Whether an exemption would be appropriate.

In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:

- Medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not 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
- Cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance

- Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:

- Approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy
- The student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- The conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed)
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences

Clause 2.1.3(fa) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 allows principals to formally excuse absences in special circumstances where no other reasonable excuse exists. However, it remains at the principal's discretion to decide whether the excuse provided by a parent is reasonable.

Truancy:

Truancy (defined in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* as absences due to the child's disobedience and not due to any fault of the parent) is a reasonable excuse for a parent. In deciding to accept this explanation a principal must consider:

- The age of the student
- The previous attendance of the student and
- The parent's capacity to influence and control the student's behaviour.

If, after considering these factors, the principal is not satisfied with the parent's explanation that it was solely the student's decision to be truant, then the absence should be regarded as an unexcused absence. Truancy is often a warning sign of disengagement and is best addressed early in partnership with the family and school.

No reasonable excuse provided:

For all absences where the principal has determined that a parent has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school must notify the parent in writing that the absences have been recorded as such. Principals should take care to ensure that, wherever possible, this letter or email is addressed to the parent who has been deemed responsible for the child's absence on the relevant day(s).

If the principal decides that no reasonable excuse has been provided for an absence, the absence must be recorded as such and the parent must be informed that this means:

Unexplained absences:

If a parent does not contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the school must attempt to contact the parent (for example by telephone) ***as soon as practicable*** on the day of a student's absence. If an explanation is received, the accurate cause of the absence must be recorded.

Schools must advise parents promptly of unexplained absences, including for post-compulsory aged students. Schools should take care to notify the parent who is responsible for ensuring the child's attendance on that particular day. If, upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).

If contact cannot be made with the parent, the school should attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.

If, following contact by letter or email, no explanation has been provided within 10 school days, the absence should be recorded as an unexplained absence and also be noted in the student's file.

If Whereabouts of student are unknown:

If, from multiple attempts to contact 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:

- No alternative education destination can be found for the student, and
- The student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days.

In the referral form, schools should provide information of all attempts to contact parents, students and emergency contact people and any information obtained. They must also ensure they keep written records of these attempts.

The School Attendance Officer will then:

- Enact procedures to locate the student, and
- Send a School Attendance Notice if the student cannot be located at another registered school or training provider.

Until notification from the School Attendance Officer is received, a school should continue to record the absences for that student as unexplained and advise the School Attendance Officer if they receive any information about the whereabouts of the student.

When a resolution is reached (e.g. student located, a response to a School Attendance Notice gives additional information, or no response is received to a School Attendance Notice), the School Attendance Officer will notify the school to do one or more of the following:

- Complete a transfer or exit process for the student and provide an exit destination record.
- Unresolved attendance issues of post-compulsory students may include discussion about alternate educational settings and / or ongoing enrolment.
- Unresolved attendance issues for students required to attend may be reported by the Principal to the Department of Human Services.
- Amend the attendance record for the time the student has not been attending, so the absences do not count towards the school's absences, from a date specified by the School Attendance Officer.
- Maintain the student's enrolment at the school and amend the attendance records for the time the student was not attending to reflect the actual reason for the absence.
- Implement a Return to School Plan for the student.

References:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendanceofficers.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/improvementstrategies.aspx#link51>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendancenotice.aspx>
[Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#)
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx>

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

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