

# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT



**Purpose:** Policy and processes for managing student absences and enforcing parental obligations to ensure a child of compulsory school age attends on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled.

**Scope:** Current and future enrolled students and parents/carers.

**References:**

- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld)
- Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 (Qld)
- Further Education and Training Act 2014 (Qld)
- Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)
- Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
- National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 (Cwlth)
- Right to Information Act 2009 (Qld)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011 (Cwlth)

<b>Policy Name:</b>	Absence Management	Version 202106_01	
<b>Policy Type:</b>	School Operations		
<b>Supersedes:</b>	N/A		
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Principal	<b>Date of Authorisation:</b>	June 2021
<b>Review Date:</b>	Every 2 Years	<b>Next Review Date:</b>	June 2023
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Principal		

Note: Policy types marked with asterisks as follows are:

\* published on school website

\*\* only mandatory for schools incorporated through the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth)



# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

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### Overview

Each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age has the legal obligation to ensure their child is enrolled and attends a school, on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.

A child should be enrolled in and attend school from the beginning of the school year in the year that they turn compulsory school age (six years and six months). In Queensland, a child must attend school until they turn 16 or finish year 10, whichever comes first.

After this time, a child does not have to go to school however, the law states that they must be 'learning or earning' – that is, they must either stay in school or participate in a another form of education, training or work for at least 25 hours a week. This "learning or earning" phase continues until:

- two years have passed since you finish Year 10; or
- you turn 17; or
- you have gained a certificate of achievement, senior statement, Certificate III or Certificate IV.

Each parent of a young person in the compulsory participation phase has the legal obligation to ensure that the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. There are however, a range of circumstances where the legal obligations of parents do not apply.

From time to time a student may be absent from their educational program. Parents comply with their compulsory schooling or compulsory participation obligation by providing a reasonable excuse for these absences, unless the student is an adult or it is not appropriate to contact the student's parents, in which case an explanation should be sought directly from the student. Parents should provide a reason for a child's absence before or on the day of the absence, or as soon as practicable.

Early identification of students whose attendance is not regular is crucial to minimising student absences.

Horizons College will notify parents of an unexplained absence of their child as soon as practicable on the day of the student's absence (allowing time for parents to respond prior to the end of the school day), with continued follow up as practicable with parents. Horizons College may need to work closely with other agencies to support parents to meet their obligations in regard to the enrolment and attendance or participation of their child.

Horizons College will treat a student's enrolment as having ended, and record it as such, only in certain circumstances. For students who are older than the compulsory schooling age, attendance is one factor which may be considered when making decisions about cancelling a student's enrolment (refer to the Student Code of Conduct).

### Definitions

#### **As soon as practicable**

As soon as possible and practical taking into account all of the facts and circumstances in the individual case.

#### **Unexplained absence**

When no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school by the parent or the student if they are independent.

#### **Compulsory participation phase (Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) s.231)**

A young person's compulsory participation phase starts when the young person stops being of compulsory school age (i.e. turns 16 or completes Year 10 whichever comes first) and ends when the person:

- gains a Certificate of Achievement, Senior Statement, Certificate III or
- Certificate IV; or

# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

---

- has participated in eligible options for 2 years after the person stopped being of compulsory school age; or
- turns 17 years of age.

### **Compulsory school Age (Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) s.9)**

A child is of compulsory school age if the child is at least 6 years and 6 months, and less than 16 years. However, a child is no longer of compulsory school age if the child has completed Year 10.

### **Eligible option (Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) s.232)**

An eligible option is a recognised education or training program or course, offered by a recognised provider, which will enable a young person to gain a Certificate of Achievement, Senior Statement, and/or a Certificate III or IV.

Parent/carer (Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) s.10)

1. A parent of a child is any of the following persons—
  - a) the child's mother
  - b) the child's father
  - c) a person who exercises parental responsibility for the child.
2. However, a person standing in the place of a parent of a child on a temporary basis is not a parent of the child.
3. A parent of an Aboriginal child includes a person who, under Aboriginal tradition, is regarded as a parent of the child.
4. A parent of a Torres Strait Islander child includes a person who, under Island custom, is regarded as a parent of the child.
5. Despite subsections (1), (3) and (4), if—
  - a) a person is granted guardianship of a child under the Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld); or
  - b) a person otherwise exercises parental responsibility for a child under a decision or order of a federal court or a court of a State; then a reference in this Act to a parent of a child is a reference only to a person mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b).

### **Participation**

(Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) s.234)

The young person is participating in an eligible option only if the person is enrolled with the provider in the relevant program or course, and is complying with the provider's attendance requirements for the program or course.

The provider's attendance requirements for a program or course are the requirements about physically attending, at particular times, the provider's premises or another place.

However, the provider's attendance requirements for a program of distance education are to complete and return the assigned work for the program; and the provider's attendance requirements for an external program are its requirements about communicating with or contacting the provider for the purpose of participating in the program or course.

### **Responsibilities**

Horizons College authorised officers (Principal and Deputy Principal) are responsible for:

- informing parents of their legal obligations about enrolment and attendance
- implementing strategies to manage student enrolment and absences
- monitor student absences
- notify parents/carers of an unexplained absence of their child as soon as practicable on the day of the student's absence (allowing time for parents to respond prior to the end of that school day)

# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

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- notifications are sent using the automated process (e.g. through an external electronic attendance management or text messaging system), ensuring transmission reports are checked to confirm notifications have been successfully sent to parents and there are no errors in transmission
- continue to follow up unexplained absences as practicable with parents/carers
- continue to work with other local resources to engage with the student and their family with the aim of returning the student to school; and
- manage processes for enforcing parental obligation in regard to attendance and compulsory participation.

### Implementation

The Horizons College Absence Management policy and process is made known to staff, parents/carers and students of the school by the following methods:

- the Parent/Carer and Student Handbook
- during the enrolment interview
- school newsletters and emails
- during student orientation (new students)
- at school assemblies (all students); and
- staff inductions, team meetings and professional development and training days

### Process

#### Morning Roll

Student Support Officers mark the master roll for all students as they enter the main gate each day.

The master roll is delivered to the administration office at 9 am and processed in TASS, the school's database.

On completion of processing, the data is checked and SMS absence notifications are issued to parents/carers (generally between 9.15 and 9.30 am).

Upon receipt of replies with reasons for absence, the information is updated in TASS.

#### Class Rolls

Teachers mark the class rolls at the commencement of each session and notify Student Services immediately by email of any missing students.

Student Services staff then determine the student's whereabouts and if the student cannot be located, the parent/carer is notified immediately.

An administration officer emails teachers within 15 minutes of commencement of each session to remind them to check their rolls.

#### Late Arrivals

All students arriving after 9 am report to the administration office on arrival. The student is provided with a late slip and TASS is updated with the late arrival. An SMS notification of late arrival is issued to the parent. This is two fold to inform the parent of the student's arrival (particularly if a prior SMS absence notification has been issued) and to seek a reason for the student's late arrival.

Absence information is updated in TASS progressively throughout the day upon receipt of parent/carer responses.

### Monitoring

When Horizons College identifies unexplained or unsatisfactory absences or patterns of absences, the Principal or Deputy Principal may undertake any of the following:



# HORIZONS COLLEGE – POLICY & PROCEDURE

## ABSENCE MANAGEMENT

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- assess reasons for absence and determine if they are reasonable or not
- request a meeting with the parent/carer (and student) to discuss the matter in further and to offer support to the family to improve attendance or implement alternative arrangements
- issue letter of warning regarding non-attendance.

### **Improved Attendance**

Following a parent/carer meeting and/or a letter of warning regarding non-attendance, if the student's attendance improves, there will be no further action and attendance will continue to be monitored as normal

### **Further Non-Attendance**

In the event that attendance does not improve and no reasonable explanation is provided, and if a letter of warning has not previously been issued, a letter will be emailed and mailed to the parent/carer informing the parent/carer of the risk to the student's enrolment if there are ongoing absences.

If attendance does not improve thereafter and there is no reasonable explanation provided, generally within 7 to 10 days of the initial warning letter, a letter of cancellation of enrolment will be issued by email and mail to the parent/carer.