



Compulsory School Attendance Information for Parents

All children from six years of age and under the minimum school leaving age of 17 years are legally required to attend school.

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10. After Year 10 and until they turn 17 years of age students must be in a school or registered for home schooling, or full-time in

- further education and training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship);
- full-time, paid employment of an average 25 hours per week; or
- a combination of both of the above.

Did you know that if a student misses as little as eight days in a school term, by the end of primary school they will have missed over a year of education?

Must I send my child every day? YES.

Children are expected to attend all school activities, on time. Regular attendance

- helps your child develop the skills needed to access the world of work and other opportunities
- helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- ensures your child can make and keep friendships.

What if my child has to stay away from school?

If your child has to be absent from school, you **must** tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may

- send a note, fax or email to the school, or
- telephone the school, or
- visit the school.

A small number of absences may be accepted by the principal. For example, if your child has to

- go to a special religious ceremony
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (e.g. a funeral)
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.

What are school Principals responsible for?

Principals help to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of your child. Principals have to keep accurate records of student attendance and the reasons for any absences.

Principals are responsible for accepting or not accepting a parent's explanations for their child's absences. Principals can request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences even where they are explained by parents as being due to illness.

When absences are unexplained by parents, or the explanations are not accepted by the principal, schools work

together with parents to help address the issue. The main aim is to sort out what is preventing the child from getting to school and putting strategies in place to help.

Sometimes, the school will ask regional support staff and other agencies to assist.

What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?

It is important to understand that the Catholic Schools Office may take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unacceptable absences from school. Some of the following actions may be undertaken.

- Attendance meetings and compulsory attendance conferences

Parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a meeting with school personnel and other diocesan staff. The aim of the meeting is to help identify strategies to support the child and family. Other agencies may also be asked along to help.

If the school and other diocesan staff have tried to help improve a child's attendance, without success, parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a compulsory attendance conference. The conference will be run by a trained conference convenor. The aim of the conference is for the school, parents (and sometimes their child) and other identified agencies ("the parties") to further identify the issues which are impacting on a child's attendance.

The outcome of a compulsory attendance conference is for the parties to agree to certain actions to improve the child's attendance. These actions are written in the form of undertakings.

- Applications to the Children's Court – A Compulsory Schooling Order

Legal compliance can be sought through an application to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The aim is to assist a family and/or child to address the issues which are preventing satisfactory school attendance but has the added force of a Court's powers.

- Prosecution in the Local Court

If all attempts by schools and regional support staff fail to improve a student's attendance, action can be taken in the Local Court and the result can be fines up to a maximum of \$11,000.

For further information

- about school attendance see the website address
http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/languagesupport/documents/sch_attendance/parent_brochure.php
- about the school leaving age see the website address
<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/leavingschool/index.php>