

## ATTENDANCE POLICY



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the School by telephoning 03 9376 1622.

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day that the school is open for instruction.
- Ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school.
- Explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Mount Alexander College has in place to:
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance, and
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

- **Parent/Carer** – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Mount Alexander College.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Mount Alexander College, parents/carers and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

### 4. POLICY

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

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation 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 that prepare them for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Mount Alexander College during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student;
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Mount Alexander College; or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Mount Alexander College for specific activities.

Both schools and parents/carers have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Mount Alexander College believes all students should attend school during school hours every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are expected to be committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and being prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Mount Alexander College parents/carers are expected to be committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and to providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents /carers are expected to communicate with the relevant staff at Mount Alexander College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents /carers are expected to provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Attendance Requirements:**

- The minimum attendance rate required of students is 90% unless alternative arrangements have been made.
- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary. Parents/carers have a further responsibility to provide a written explanation or to contact the school explaining why an absence has occurred.
- Parents/carers of students who are to be absent are required to telephone the school before 9.30am that day to report the absence.
- Independent students not living with parents/carers are also required to contact or provide written explanation of any absence.

### **Students arriving late or leaving early:**

- All students arriving late to school are required to sign in and out at the Compass Kiosk at the Attendance Office and collect a late pass.
- Students are not permitted to leave class without a signed note or approval on COMPASS.
- All students leaving the school grounds must first report to the Attendance Officer and present a valid consent.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Mount Alexander College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Compass Posts sent to parent/carers regarding unexplained absence.
- Contact with parents/carers by the Attendance Officer.
- Discussions with students in House Mentoring.
- Monitoring of student absences by the Attendance Officer, Heads of House and Leading Teacher Student Wellbeing and Engagement.
- Student Support meetings with students and parents /carers to discuss support strategies to improve attendance.
- Referrals to outside wellbeing support agencies as required.

### **Recording attendance**

Mount Alexander College must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements,
- discharge Mount Alexander College's duty of care for all students, and
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students.

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of every class, excursion and school event via COMPASS roll marking.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

## **Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent/carers must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents/carers should notify Mount Alexander College of absences by:

- contacting the College Attendance Officer for both unplanned and planned absences or adding an attendance note via Compass.
- If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent/carers, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Mount Alexander College will notify parents/carers by a Compass SMS at 10.30am. Mount Alexander College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent/carers to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent/carers (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Mount Alexander College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Mount Alexander College considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as **'explained absence'**.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as **'unexplained absence'**.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- Medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or 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 and support the student's return to school.
- Cultural observance if the parent/carers notifies the school in advance.
- Family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance.

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

## **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Mount Alexander College will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group,
- implementing a Return to School Plan,
- implementing an Individual Education Plan,
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period,
- arranging for assistance from the student wellbeing team, and
- referral to outside wellbeing support agency.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

### **The Attendance Officer is responsible for:**

- Data entry and record keeping of absence notes and explanations on individual student Compass Chronicle.
- Monitoring and investigating student absences.
- Generating late passes.

- Contacting parents/carers/independent students directly should a student be absent with no explanation.
- Organising attendance data and forwarding cases of suspected truancy and unexplained absences to House Leaders for further action.
- Ensuring that all student absences are recorded each period by teachers, are aggregated on CASES21 database and communicated to the Department of Education.
- Informing parents, carers or independents via a text message at 10.30 am should their student fail to be present for that morning's classes. The Attendance Officer will download and record the student's absence and change attendance as they make contact or provide approval.

### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Mount Alexander College decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines, refer the non-attendance to the DET Navigator Program or a School Attendance Officer in the South Western Region for further action.

After multiple attempts to contact a parent/carer, if it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer in the South Western Region if:

- The student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent/carer has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful.
- The student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

## **5. COMMUNICATION**

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## **6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

Mount Alexander College policies and resources relevant to this policy include:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- available online <http://www.mountalexandercollege.vic.edu.au/about-mac/school-policies/>

Department of Education and Training resources:

- Attendance Policy  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy>

## **7. REVIEW CYCLE AND APPROVAL**

Policy last reviewed:	August 2022
Consultation:	Consultation with Attendance Officer, Leading Teacher Student Wellbeing and Engagement, students
Approved by:	Principal – Dani Angelico
Next scheduled review date:	August 2024 Note: the mandatory review cycle is 2 years.