

 <b>BERWICK COLLEGE POLICY</b>	TITLE	<b>ATTENDANCE</b>		
	VERSION/YEAR	5/2023		
	PUBLISHED LOCATIONS	COMPASS, Referenced: SLL Handbook, HG Teacher Handbook, Senior School Handbook, Staff Handbook		
	ISSUE DATE	DECEMBER 2023		
	REVIEW DATE	JUNE 2026		
	REVIEWED BY	ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL	APPROVED BY	PRINCIPAL
PURPOSE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide policy and procedure direction to all staff, students, parents and volunteers of Berwick College.</li> <li>To ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction</li> <li>To ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school</li> <li>To explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Berwick College has in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support, monitor and maintain student attendance</li> <li>record, monitor and follow up student absences.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>			
BACKGROUND:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berwick College seeks to establish and maintain a high level of professional standards in relation to all activities within the College. This policy is in accord with the College's 'Mission Statement', 'Values' and 'Service Standards'.</li> <li>This policy applies to all students at Berwick College. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education (DE) School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of Berwick College, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.</li> </ul>			
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Education and Training Reform Act 2006 and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017</a></li> <li><a href="#">DE School Attendance Guidelines</a></li> <li>Berwick College Home group Teacher Handbook (Student Attendance Focus)</li> <li>Berwick College Student Learning Leader Handbook (Communication to parents, Student Absence Learning Plan, Return to School Plan, DE Attendance Referral)</li> <li><a href="#">Berwick College Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy</a></li> <li>Berwick College Victorian Certificate of Education policy</li> </ul>			

#### DEFINITION:

Parent – 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.

#### RATIONALE - LEGAL REQUIREMENT:

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted). Our College expects 100% attendance to maximise student learning opportunities and performance. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly.

Education is a sequential process. Daily attendance is important for students to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for students by providing them with education and support networks. School helps young people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

#### IMPLEMENTATION:

Berwick College's approach reflects an understanding of individual student needs and an awareness of whole-school cohorts. Parents have an important role to play in supporting their child to attend school every day.

Parents are committed to work with College staff in scheduling family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours and to communicate promptly with relevant staff by providing valid explanations for any absence unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for their child
- their child has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Berwick College, or
- their child is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Berwick College for particular activities.

Students are expected to attend Berwick College during normal school hours, every day of each term when the school is open for instruction, arrive on time and be prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach their Home group Teacher or Attendance Officer to seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance. Students who are late should report promptly to the Attendance Officer in their Learning Team office, Senior School or the administration office to sign in on Compass.

Berwick College 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.

#### **SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING ATTENDANCE:**

Berwick College's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance. Berwick College also promotes student attendance by placing reminders of the importance of attendance in the newsletter and displays posters in the classroom. The Strategic Plan outlines goals and targets to maintain and improve current levels of overall student attendance and to reduce the proportion of students with significant absence.

Attendance targets for the average days absent per student in each home group are set for each learning team. A Student Attendance goal is prepared by students with their Home group Teacher at the start of the year whereby students set an individual target based on their previous year's attendance which is signed by the Home group Teacher, parent and student.

#### **REWARDS AND CELEBRATIONS:**

Berwick College recognises and celebrates students with 100% attendance through Learning Team assemblies and the newsletter. The Reward and Recognition Program acknowledges students who have shown an overall commitment to their learning, including students with above 85% attendance in the award criteria. Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year academic reports. Aggregated student attendance data is imported from Compass to the CASES database and is reported to the Department of Education & Training and the wider community each year as part of the Annual Report.

#### **RECORDING ATTENDANCE:**

All staff must complete and save attendance in Compass within the first 20min of class time for each of their classes, including Home group. Clear directions on recording class attendance are provided to staff in the Staff Handbook. If students attend a school approved activity, such as sport, excursions, camps, etc the teacher in charge of the activity will record students as being present. This is necessary to:

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

#### **RECORDING ABSENCES:**

All students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent. For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion through Compass, email, face-to-face conversation or via a telephone call to the Attendance Officer before 9:00am. Independent students not living with parents or guardians are also required to provide notes.

Adequate holiday time is provided during term breaks, however, there may arise circumstances which require parents to apply for permission from the Principal for their children to take leave during the school term. The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal or delegated staff 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.

The Principal or delegated staff 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/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance.

In such cases, where permission is granted, the Attendance Officer will block the absence as ‘parent choice – approved’ on Compass and students must make every effort to use Compass or Google classrooms to complete work covered during their absence. Parent absence notes are retained at the College for one year and attendance rolls are retained at the College for six years.

If Berwick College determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as ‘parent choice – unauthorised’.

#### **Managing Non-Attendance and Supporting Student Engagement:**

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Berwick College Attendance Officer will notify parents by SMS/Compass push notification message by 10:30am and allow time for the parent to respond and update on Compass or call the Attendance Officer to resolve the absence.

If no explanation is provided by the parent the absence will remain recorded as ‘parent choice – unauthorised’ on the student’s file.

Classroom Teachers, Home group Teachers, Student Learning Leaders and Attendance Officer will be responsible for monitoring and investigating student absences and Student Learning Leaders will promote attendance within their learning team. As part of the College’s relational learning plan Home group Teachers will contact parents of students with poor attendance or persistent lateness to class if communication from parents is not provided.

Each week Student Learning Leaders, Wellbeing Team and Principal Class receive the CASES Students At Risk Report from the ICT Technician, a mapping tool providing attendance rate and unapproved absence data. The CASES Home group unexplained absence reports are printed from Compass and together with the CASES21 Student Absence Summary by Home group is provided to Student Learning Leaders and Home group teachers. Once a student has missed three consecutive periods of one class, it is recommended that the class teacher clarify the unexplained absence with the student and parent. If necessary, the class teacher will refer the matter to the Home group Teacher or Student Learning Leader who will further investigate the reasons for the absence.

Absences deemed to have been unauthorised will be dealt with under the College’s Student Management Processes and Guidelines, the ICARE Handbook, with possible consequences including lunch and after-school reflections to make up the time missed. Such absences will lead to discussion with parents and the student involved in order to devise and to implement strategies that will minimise future school absences and to reduce the impact to the student’s learning opportunities.

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, a formal attendance conference is organised and staff will work collaboratively with parents, 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 Wellbeing Team.

Unresolved attendance issues of post-compulsory students may result in the student exiting the College.

#### **VCE/VCE VM students:**

It is a requirement that students attend all timetabled classes so that teaching and learning opportunities are maximised. Attendance in class provides opportunities for student work to be authenticated by teachers. VCE students are required to attend a minimum of 90% of scheduled class time for each VCE unit. Students who do not attend at least 90% of scheduled classes may receive a ‘Not Satisfactory’ grade for the unit, due to the inability of the teacher to be able to authenticate sufficient learning activities. Work which cannot be authenticated will not be accepted for assessment.

The Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA) state that “where a student has completed work but there has been a substantive breach of class attendance, the student may be awarded an N”. Students who have 7 to 12 non-exempt absences per unit, per semester, may have the opportunity to redeem absences at Attendance Redemption classes held during the year. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Assistant Principal overseeing Senior School. For each session to be redeemed, 45 minutes must be spent in redemption classes. Students will be able to redeem unapproved absences only once for any one unit.

Students who have accumulated more than 12 non-exempt absences will automatically fail the unit. The Senior School Leader or Year 12 Coordinator will note the details in Compass and contact the parents.

Approved absences include:

- sports, excursions and camps
- up to four sessions with an explanatory note from parents or guardians
- any absence supported by a medical certificate
- any absence supported by the Senior School Leader or Year 12 Coordinator such as family/welfare circumstances.

### **Working with Vulnerable Students:**

There are complex and diverse factors that may impact student attendance and engagement, which may result in a range of student behaviours like school refusal and truancy. Berwick College understands 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. Information on external services such as The Orange Door, Kids Helpline and Parentline Victoria is provided to families as well as the opportunity to discuss strategies to improve attendance and engagement at school with a Student Learning Leader or Assistant Principal.

Non - attendance may also be reported by the Principal to Child Protection or Child FIRST as well as the Regional Office.

### **Referral to Specialist Support:**

Students with prolonged absence from school, patterns of absence or lack of parental support may be referred to Child Protection, Child FIRST or eligible for enrolment in re-engagement programs such as Navigator that offer a range of pathways and transition options for disengaged students.

If Berwick 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 a DE School Attendance Officer in the South Eastern Victoria Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the College, the Principal may make a referral to a DE School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent 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.

### **EVALUATION:**

- This policy will be reviewed every three years.