



General

Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if they are to achieve their potential and increase their education and life options. Schools, in partnerships with parents and carers, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Whilst parents and carers are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents and carers of students from Kindergarten to Year 12 must ensure their child attends school every day. On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for absences may include:

- being sick or having an infectious disease, e.g. flu
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstances e.g. attending a funeral.

Parents and carers are to ensure students who are enrolled at Temora High School attend every day the school is open (for instructions) including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions, wellbeing days and similar events.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- provide an explanation for absences by means such as a telephone call, written note, responding to a school generated text message or email to the school within 7 days from the first day of any period of absence. An absence is unexplained if parents and carers have failed to provide an explanation to the school within 7 days.
- work in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school, including communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school.
- assist the school in improving its communication information by ensuring all contact and personal information is up to date.

Note: The Principal may decline to accept an explanation that is provided if it does not include sufficient details about the absence or if the Principal does not believe the absence is in the best interest of the student. In these circumstances the student's absence would be recorded as 'unjustified'.

Communication of Attendance Concerns

Temora High School believes if a student's attendance falls below 90% overall it is important to communicate the total absence level as a cause for concern, and as such, according to our procedures will advise parents and carers.

In many cases we are aware of medical or other reasons for low attendance rates. In these circumstances we will work with parents and carers to communicate our concerns and to support the student to feel safe and positive about attending school. Our school attendance procedures and practices are designed to maximise attendance and therefore learning.

When a student's attendance is causing concern, this will be raised at Learning and Support Team meetings and parents and carers may be contacted by a teacher, year advisor, the Head Teacher Administration or the Deputy Principal to discuss the student's attendance.

SMS Messaging

Temora High School is using SMS text messaging to notify parents and carers of student absences. Each day at approximately 10am, all parents and carers of students absent from school will be sent an SMS text message to notify them of the absence. Parents and carers are to respond to the message or contact the school to provide a satisfactory explanation for the absence. Only parents and carers mobile telephone numbers that are recorded in

the school's administration system can be used to respond to a text message. If the number is not recognised as a parent or carer for the student, the response will not be accepted. The school will not accept a text message sent from a student mobile.

Information Required When Explaining an Absence

Many student absences that have been explained by parents and carers, have occurred as a result of student illness, family reasons or holidays during school time. Please note that explanations such as 'Leave', 'Family Business' or 'Appointment' are not acceptable for an absence. A small amount of detail about the nature of the absence is to be supplied. To help with this please find following examples of justifiable absences.

Sample one: Hannah has a doctor's appt with Temora Medical Centre at 11am. Hannah will return back to school at 1pm in the afternoon with a Dr's Certificate.

Sample two: Adrian Jones was absent on 17 March 2020 as he injured his foot playing soccer. He will return to school on 19 March 2020. Medical Certificate attached.

Sample three: Harry was unable to attend the school wellbeing day as he had a medical appointment organised previously in Wagga. Please find attached his appointment notice.

Sample four: John Smith was away from school on 17 March 2020 because he attended a family funeral for his Grandmother.

Sample five: Helene is sick today with a temperature, cough and sore throat.

Absence due to Student Illness

The school may grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness, or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. The Principal can request parents and carers provide a medical certificate if the explanation is doubted or where there is a history of poor attendance.

When frequent absences are explained as being due to illness, the school will:

- contact parents and carers regarding the health care needs of the student.
- seek medical certificates for the absences.
- where there are ongoing concerns, seek approval from parents and carers to contact the student's doctor to ensure the school has all relevant information regarding the student's health care needs.
- develop strategies to ensure regular attendance at school.

The Department of Education sets 90% as its minimum goal for student attendance. If a student's attendance falls below 90% we will request medical certificates to approve future absences as justified sick leave. If medical certificates are not provided and the student's attendance is below 90%, the leave will be marked as 'unjustified'.

Medical certificates will be requested by the school if a student is absent for three or more days due to illness.

Absence Due to Family Reasons

Absence due to exceptional or urgent family circumstances, e.g. attending a funeral, are unavoidable and can be stressful for a student. During these times please keep the school informed about the expected length of absence and any wellbeing or support assistance required for the student. Overall student attendance is important. The school may ask for evidence of family reasons when total student attendance has fallen below 90%.

Absence Due to Appointments

All medical appointments should be organised for outside school hours. When appointments cannot be avoided during school hours, parents and carers must notify the school office prior to the appointment. The student will be marked as absent until a medical certificate or confirmation of appointment has been received by the school on the student's return. The absence will be changed to 'leave' when the confirmation is received.

When appointments are in the local area, students are expected to attend school before and after the appointment unless professionally advised otherwise.

Partial Day - Leave During Normal School Hours

All leave during school hours must be explained prior to the student leaving school and being issued a leave pass. The school will issue a printed leave pass to a student who has permission to leave school premises. Students, parents and

carers are reminded that authorised attendance officers, including police officers, can direct them to return to school if they do not have a valid leave pass.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, they will be checked by the first aid officer and contact will be made with parent and carers or listed emergency contacts to arrange for the student to be collected as soon as possible.

Attending Private Lessons Outside of School During School Hours

Private lessons during school hours should be avoided. If private lessons during school hours are unavoidable, parents and carers are to discuss the educational reason and arrangements with the Principal. If deemed to be in the best interest of the student's learning or wellbeing, the Principal may approve leave to attend the lessons. If parents and carers withdraw their child from school for private lessons without approval, an unjustified absence will be recorded and procedures for addressing attendance concerns will be followed.

Attendance at TAFE

Stage 6 students who attend TAFE or private providers during school hours are expected to attend school until they are required to travel to TAFE. E.g. If TAFE starts in Wagga at 1pm then students are expected to attend school until 11:30am to allow 1.5 hours of travel time. If a student is unable to attend school prior to TAFE lessons, parents or carers are to contact the school to discuss the arrangement for attending TAFE.

Planned Holidays During School Terms

Family holidays should not be planned during the school term. If unavoidable, any planned family holiday should be discussed with the Principal prior to any booking being made.

Parents and carers are required to consult with the Principal about the intention of the travel and in the case of family holidays, the Principal will encourage parents and carers to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.

Where the Principal considers that the travel is appropriate during the school term, the school will issue parent and carers with an Application for Extended Leave – Travel form for completion. The Principal will request travel documentation, such as travel itinerary or e-ticket, be attached to the application and the educational, social and participation reasons for the travel should be specified on the application. The application must be received more than one month prior to the first day of the student's leave. A certificate of Extended Leave – Travel will only be issued once all documents are received.

The Principal may decline to accept a parent or carer's Application for Extended Leave – Travel. In this case the parent or carer will be advised in writing. The principal may not accept a reason for travel during school term if it is not in the best interest of the student. On accepting a parent or carer's application a Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel must be issued. The original certificate will be provided to parents and carers.

A Certificate of Extended Leave – Travel may not be issued where the Principal is aware that the student has been subject of contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit or Community Services (Community and Justice Services) report and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.

Overall student attendance is important. The school will not approve Application for Extended Leave – Travel when total student attendance has fallen below 90%. Holiday leave will not be accepted by the Principal unless all previous absences have been justified with valid reasons. In this case, leave will be marked as unjustified leave for a student with less than 90% attendance who are absent on holidays.

School Sport

This is a compulsory school activity and students must attend. An injured student will be provided with alternate activities after a note is received. This includes helping with sport in a limited way or attending the library to complete learning. No student can sign out before or during sport and must report to the office before school or at recess to discuss any injury or illness that requires leave during sport with the Head Teacher Administration or Deputy Principal. A parent, carer or listed emergency contact must collect the student from the school if leave is approved for sport.

Absence Due to Student or Parent Concern

If a student is experiencing difficulties at school with learning or wellbeing, parents and careers are to contact the school and arrange a meeting with the Year Advisor, Deputy Principal or Principal. Student leave will be marked as unjustified and may be changed after the meeting has occurred. Students, parents and careers are expected to notify the school of issues and work together to resolve these in a timely and positive way.

Representative Sport – Individual or Small Group without THS Staff

Parents and carers are required to confirm attendance at regional and state level sports competition or trials on the day of the activity. If confirmation is not received the student's attendance will be marked as unjustified. Student representation at representative level sport may not be supported if a student's overall attendance is less than 90%.

Exclusion from School Activities Due to Attendance Concerns

A student that has attendance below 90% may not have the opportunity to participate in co-curricular and sporting opportunities including;

- Representative sport, Inter-school sport carnivals, gala days and inter school challenges between local schools.
- School performances, dance and drama camps, year level excursions and overnight excursions.

A student whose attendance is below 90% and the absences have been justified with valid explanations may participate with approval of the Head Teacher Administration, Deputy Principal or Principal.

Parent/carers will be notified if their child's attendance has fallen below 90% and the extra notification requirements and restriction that may be enforce at the end of each term.

Whole School Activities and Learning Experiences

Temora High School offers diverse school activities that are an integral part of student development. If a student is absent from a whole school activity the school may request that a medical certificate, appointment confirmation or evidence of family business is supplied. Following is an overview of activities that are compulsory and provide valuable experiences for the student body:

- Student Wellbeing days: these days involve a change in routine that involve year group activities. These days have seen specialists deliver knowledge and experiences to our students in relation to cyber safety, safety, positive relationships and social wellbeing.
- School swimming, athletics and cross-country carnivals. The school has a sports house system which encourages increased participation and an enjoyable day. These days are compulsory for students to attend. Students must attend the whole day and can only sign out if leave is approved prior to the event and/or the student is collected by parent or carer.
- Last two day of each term.

A student who is absent from two or more whole school activities or last two day of each term without explanation may not have the opportunity to participate in **co-curricular and sporting opportunities**.

Legal Requirements

Attendance is monitored by the Department of Education and the school is required to report attendance. This information can be shared with other government agencies. The data may be used for the purpose of determining eligibility for support of government benefits.

Ian Pattingale
Principal

References:

Student Attendance in Government Schools – Procedures
Department of Education - School Attendance Policy

Last updated – 8 Jun 2021

