Parramatta High School Attendance Policy and Procedures (Revised April 2013)

1 Context

1.1 Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their learning. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Parents have a duty to comply with the compulsory education requirements of the Education Act 1990. Under their duty of care, staff monitor part or whole day absences.

1.2 This document reflects the DET School Attendance Policy (2005) and the School Attendance Procedures (2005) as they apply.

1.3 These procedures should be read in the context of The Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy (1997).

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children attend school regularly
- explaining the absences of their children promptly to the school
- taking effective measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

2.2 School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students’ sense of belonging to the school community
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance using approved procedures
- seeking verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences.
- retaining records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. Verbal explanations must be noted and kept with written and printed electronic explanations
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise
- providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.
- alerting the Principal or Student Welfare Co-ordinator if a student’s attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer
- reporting chronic non-attendance, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the Principal or Student Welfare Co-ordinator.

2.3.1 The principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled in line with the requirements set out in The Enrolment of Students in Government Schools: A Summary and Consolidation of Policy (1997)
- attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students
- all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible as required
- The School Education Director is informed of any attendance problems and issues including students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue.
- The school discipline policy addresses attendance issues, including truancy.
- The Student Welfare Co-ordinator has delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records.
- Parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements.
- All cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.

2.3.2 The principal or delegate will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly and within two days of an unexplained absence occurring. Contact may be made either by providing the parent with an Absentee Notice - Compulsory School Attendance or by telephone.

2.3.3 The Principal may grant:
- Sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness.
- Leave to students of compulsory school age totalling not more than 15 days per school year in addition to sick leave. In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may grant additional leave for brief periods of time. Additional leave for students not of compulsory school age may be granted at the discretion of the Principal.
- Exemption from school attendance for up to 50 days in a twelve month period.

2.3.4 The Principal may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as sickness are frequent or prolonged.

2.3.5 The Principal may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

2.4 Home school liaison officers and other regional attendance personnel conduct regular audits of the school attendance register and provide support to the school in maintaining these documents.

2.5 The School Education Director is responsible for:
- Granting exemption from school attendance for up to 100 days in a twelve month period.
- Approving part time attendance for students with behaviour difficulties. Refer to Application for Part Day Exemption.
- Making recommendations to the Director of Student Welfare, about the prosecution of cases of non-attendance or failure to enrol a child at school where warranted.
- Implementation of plans to improve the attendance of students who are identified by the school as chronic non-attenders.

2.6 The Regional Director is responsible for granting certificates of exemption from school for periods greater than 100 days in a twelve month period.
3 School Attendance Records Requirements

3.1 The school attendance records will include:

- a Register of Admission to be retained permanently
- notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents, retained for two years from the date of receipt
- an Attendance Register to be retained for three years. Where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 24 years
- the student’s record card listing the number of absences each year to be retained for seven years after the student has left. Where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, the record card should be retained until the student’s 25th birthday.

4 Attendance Registers (rolls)

4.1.1 Attendance registers must be maintained on all days that the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.

4.1.2 The exception method (marking absences only) will be used. Only the codes listed in the support document Student Attendance in Government Schools: Attendance Register Codes will be used.

4.1.3 School attendance will be recorded early in the school day.

4.1.4 Students involved in off-site activities organised by the school or Department of Education and Training must are not marked as absent.

4.2 The Department’s electronic attendance register (OASIS) will be used.

Teachers will:

- call the roll each morning using a class list and noting any student absences on the weekly absence register
- collect absentee notes - sign, date and clip the notes to the back of the weekly absence register, noting the child’s name as well as the reason for and date of absence in the space provided.
- sign and send the weekly absence register to the office by recess each Monday
- record the number of absences in each student’s record card on the last day of each term
- liaise with the Principal or Student Welfare Co-ordinator when concerns arise over student’s absences within their class

The Office staff will:

- provide each class with a folder containing:
  - class lists and weekly absence registers
  - guidelines for roll marking
  - applications for certificate of exemption for student leave (not sick leave) in excess of fifteen days in a twelve month period e.g. family holiday.
o record absences in OASIS each week and generate absentee letters after a 7 day period to be mailed home
o generate weekly absentee reports for the Principal to sign
o provide staff with absentee reports in the last week of each term for noting absences in record cards
o complete semester absent returns for the Department
o enter partial absences, signed off by class teachers and returned to the office with weekly absence return sheets

The Students Roll Monitor will:

- monitor the attendance of students on a regular basis
- contact parents if students are continually late or absent without satisfactory explanation on ten occasions or more in a term (students at risk)
- implement a ten-day attendance improvement program for students at risk
- liaise with the Principal and enlist the assistance of the Home School Liaison Officer if required

The Principal will:

- regularly inform the school community of the attendance policy and procedures
- sign and check the period absent report on a weekly basis
- liaise with the Student Welfare Co-ordinator, Home School Liaison Officer and School Education Director in relation to students at risk.

4.3 Special circumstance registers

4.3.1 Attendance registers will be maintained each day the school is open with the exception of:

- days on which there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers
- approved school development days
- days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. The Principal will consult with regional personnel prior to deciding that the school is inaccessible.

4.3.2 Special circumstance registers are maintained on days as outlined in 4.3.1 and will:

- specify the dates and times of the variation
- indicate the reason for the variation
- list students attending on that day
- be signed by the teacher maintaining the register
- be permanently attached to attendance registers.

4.3.3 The electronic attendance register will automatically display a “school development day message on school development days. A similar notation must be made on hard copies of electronic attendance registers regarding other reasons for maintaining a special circumstance register (eg industrial action or school closure due to fire or flood).
4.3.4 Absences on these days are not recorded on student record cards or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.4 Security of attendance registers

4.4.1 Registers are stored in the security room.

4.4.2 They must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood.

4.4.3 At the end of each school year the Principal will ensure that the attendance register and attached special circumstance registers are preserved as a complete record of students ‘absences for that year.

4.5 Students who are suspended from school in accordance with Department’s Suspension and Expulsion of School Student Procedures

4.5.1 The appropriate symbol for suspension (E) will be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension.

4.5.2 The absences of students who are suspended are counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.6 Students who are exempted from school

4.6.1 The appropriate symbol for exemption (M) is to be used when the absences are the result of students being exempted from attending school. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the exemption and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the exemption period.

4.6.2 The absences of students who have been exempted from school are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.

4.7 A student’s name will be removed from the attendance register if:

- the student has moved out of New South Wales
- the student enrolls in another school
- advice has been received from parents that the student is to be enrolled in a non-government or other registered school, or is registered with the Board of Studies for home schooling
- the student has been expelled from the school in accordance with the Department’s Suspension and Expulsion of School Students - Procedures
- the student’s whereabouts is unknown and the student has not attended school for a continuous period of 10 weeks in which the school was open. Contact regional student welfare personnel. If a student’s name has been removed from the roll because they are missing, absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included as absences for statistical purposes. The roll should be amended to reflect this.
5 Enrolment and Attendance

5.1 Students may attend a NSW government school if they are:

- enrolled at that school or
- attending in the short term

5.2 Short-term attendance of students

5.2.1 Students may be enrolled in one school only at any given time. However, for a variety of reasons, a student enrolled at a NSW government school may need to attend another NSW government school for a short period of time.

5.2.2 Short term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.

5.2.3 Prior to agreeing to the short term attendance of a student, the Principal will contact the school at which the student is enrolled and conduct a risk assessment if required.

6 Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

6.1 The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly.

6.2 Strategies to resolve attendance difficulties include:

- student and parent interviews
- reviewing the student’s educational program
- referral to the school counsellor or outside agencies
- support from school based personnel

6.3 If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support may be requested through the Home School Liaison (HSLO) Program. The HSLO’s role and a proforma to be used when applying for support are found in the support document The Home School Liaison Program.

6.4 Refer to the DET School Attendance Policy and Procedures for details about Police authorisation to act as attendance officers, conciliation conferences and prosecution if a parent declines to comply with the Education Act 1990 regarding enrolment.

7 Exemption from Attendance at School

7.1 Applications for student leave in excess of fifteen days in a twelve month period are considered as applications for exemption from school attendance. Refer to the Guidelines for Exemption from School (2009).

7.2 Exemptions should only be granted where conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable. Exemptions may be granted due to:
• domestic necessity, including but not limited to participation in family holidays during school term
• health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment are not appropriate

7.3 Delegated responsibilities for granting exemptions from school attendance
  
  o The Principal may grant up to 50 days in a twelve month period.
  o The School Education Director may grant up to 100 days in a twelve month period.
  o The Regional Director may grant exemptions for periods over 100 days.
  o The General Manager (Access and Equity) may grant exemptions for students to participate in the entertainment industry.

7.4 A copy of the Certificates of Exemption must be attached to the student’s record card.

8. Part Day Exemption from Attendance at School

8.1 Students participating in approved alternate education programs may be granted short term exemptions from attendance at school.

8.2 Prior to exemptions being granted, participation in the alternate educational programs must be approved by the School Education Director.

8.3 The parent’s signed agreement to their child’s participation in the program constitutes an application for part day attendance at school.

8.4 Where the part day exemption is utilised to support a behaviour management intervention, a behaviour management plan must be attached to the application for part day exemption.

9 Students Attending Lessons Outside School During School Hours

9.1 Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students ‘involvement in extra-curricula activities is usually limited to outside school hours.

9.2 Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, at the Principal’s discretion short leave may be granted. This provision must not be used on a regular basis.

9.3 If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons, an unjustified absence will be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.