

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**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 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 / carers the key practices and procedures Casterton Secondary College has in place to
  + support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  + record, monitor and follow up student absences

**Scope**

This policy applies to all students at Casterton Secondary College.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education’s [School Attendance Guidelines](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance). It does not replace or change the obligations of Casterton Secondary College, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

**Definition**

*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.

**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 set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Casterton Secondary 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 Example School, or
* the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Casterton Secondary College for particular activities

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

Casterton Secondary College believes all students should attend school all day, 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 / carers to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

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

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

Parents / carers will communicate with the relevant staff at Casterton Secondary College about any issues affecting their child’s attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents / carers will 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.

**Supporting and promoting attendance**

Casterton Secondary College*’s Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by: Newsletter articles (eg It’s Not Ok to Be Away), Home Group attendance ladder, Roll marking on XUNO at HG meetings and every lesson, office staff contact parents daily when students are recorded as absent, meetings with parents / carers and students to discuss attendance concerns, return to school plans.

Our VCE / VM policy has additional rules for VCE / VM students.

**Recording attendance**

Casterton Secondary College must record attendance in Home Group meetings and in every class. This is necessary to:

* meet legislative requirements
* discharge Casterton Secondary College’s duty of care for all students
* meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by Home Group teachers at Home group meetings each morning and by subject teachers each lesson using XUNO and is then exported into CASES by the office staff.

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 / carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents / carers should notify Casterton Secondary College of absences by:

Contacting the front office by Phone, XUNO message or email.

Sending a note to the front office with the student on his / her return to school

Note of explanation in Student Planner

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent / carer, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Casterton Secondary College will notify parents by phone or XUNO message. Casterton Secondary College will attempt to contact parents / carers as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

Casterton Secondary 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 / carer meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Casterton Secondary College considers that the parent / carer has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child’s absence the absence will be marked as ‘**excused absence**’.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as ‘**unexcused absence**’.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent / carer 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 / carer 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 / carer 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 / carers will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

**Sign-in and sign-out Process**

As most families will be aware the school has introduced an electronic sign-in and sign-out system for students, staff and visitors.

We cannot allow students to leave school without the consent of a parent/carer.

The Department of Education (DE) Policy regarding leaving school early states: Where a student is considered to be sufficiently mature (i.e. secondary students) to leave the school grounds independently they are able to do so with a valid reason and the knowledge and consent of their parents.

Casterton Secondary College is mandated to support and implement DE Policy.

The parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation (written or by contacting the school) on each occasion their child is absent from the school.  The school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

**CSC Late Arrival/Early Leaver Process:**

* All students late to school will present a signed note (or the school has been notified), from their parent/carer, to the front office **on arrival** **before** **they sign in and before period 1.**
* All students who need to leave school early will present a signed note, from their parent/carer, to the front office **on arrival** **before period 1.**

**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, Casterton Secondary 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 relevant Sub-school Leader

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,

**Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Casterton Secondary 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 School Attendance Officer for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent / carer, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the principal may make a referral to a 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 / 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

**More information and resources**

* [School Attendance Guidelines](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance)
* The Department’s Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy)

## **Policy REVIEW and Approval**

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| Policy last reviewed | Term 2, 2023 |
| Consultation | Endorsed by School Council 19/06/23 |
| Approved by | Principal |
| Next scheduled review date | 2026 |