

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed by School Council in May 2020
Approved by the Principal in May 2020



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 the key practices and procedures Thornbury High School 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 Thornbury High School.

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 Thornbury High School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

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.

POLICY

Guidelines

In accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance or attendance. A principal or regional director (depending on the circumstances) may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance or attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.

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

Expectations

Attendance depends on active cooperation between the school, parent/carers and the student. Whilst the primary responsibility for meeting the legal requirement for student attendance rests with the parent/carer, the school has the responsibility to record and monitor attendance and take appropriate action to rectify problems of non-attendance.

Thornbury High School sets high expectations of students around attendance and asks that students:

- Attend and be punctual for all timetabled classes.
- Provide a medical certificate/written note to their tutorial teacher on return to school unless parent approval has been recorded on Compass.
- Sign in at the office and provide an explanation if late for school.
- Discuss with each teacher procedures for catching up on any work missed through lateness or absence.

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 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.

Thornbury High School parents 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 will communicate with the relevant staff at Thornbury High School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents 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

Please see the schools *Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy* for the range of strategies employed by the schools to ensure student attendance is maintained.

Recording attendance

Thornbury High School must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Thornbury High School's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher during each period using Compass. 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 must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Thornbury High School of absences by contacting the relevant Attendance Officer, or logging the absence on Compass:

- 7-10 Attendance Officer 03 9458 6125
- 11+12 Attendance Officer 03 3458 6135

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, Thornbury High School will take the following steps to contact parents:

- Notify parents by SMS on the morning of absence and request immediate contact from the family
- Telephone the family if the absence remains unexplained where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.
- If contact cannot be made with the parent (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,

If Thornbury High School considers that the parent has provided a reasonable reason for their child's absence the absence will be marked as 'not present explained'. If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'not present unexplained'.

Thornbury High School 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.

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/carer 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, Thornbury High School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance. Thornbury High School has developed a staged response to student absence is documented below:

[Thornbury High School staged response to school refusal](#)

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 the following:

- Referral to Thornbury High Wellbeing team and arrangement of assistance.
- 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

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Thornbury High School 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 in the North-Western Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, 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 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[School Attendance Guidelines](#)

School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in May 2020 and is scheduled for review in May 2023/24.