# Underdale High School Attendance policy

This is a mandated policy under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this policy must follow the process outlined on the creating, updating and deleting operational policies page.

## 1. Overview

This is the department's attendance policy for all government schools. The policy describes the compulsory nature of education and underlines the responsibilities of all members of the school community to ensure children and young people are attending school. It also reflects research that indicates attendance at both preschool and school positively affects learning, wellbeing, employment and life outcomes for children and young people.

## 2. Scope

The purpose of this attendance policy is to:

- reflect the intent of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 and the associated Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 (the Regulations)
- guide the actions of all staff working with children and young people and their parents on matters relating to school attendance and participation
- inform the development of associated guidelines and procedures for promoting, monitoring and reporting on attendance
- promote and support attendance in schools, preschools and other education and care settings
- reinforce parent's obligations to ensure all children and young people are enrolled and attend school on every day that instruction is provided for the child at the school or approved learning program.

The policy applies to all government schools including:

- all departmental staff
- volunteers (as defined in the volunteer policy (PDF 196KB) and providers of services for children and young people where:
    - any provision of service has an impact on a child or young person's attendance
    - a provider has an obligation to adopt the policy in accordance with the terms of their service agreement or contract with the department
- parents of children and young people
- all children and young people of compulsory age
- all procedures, guidelines and strategies developed to support the attendance of children and young people.

There is no legal requirement for children under the age of 6 years or for young people over the age of 17 years to be engaged in schooling or an approved learning program.

The department acknowledges however that attendance at non-compulsory educational settings such as preschool and other education and care settings in a child's early years:

- plays a vital role in developing strong patterns of engagement and attendance with education
- helps develop routines and sets strong foundations for later learning
- builds children and young people's social capabilities
- prepares children and young people for successful participation in learning and the broader community.

It also allows for the provision of timely and strategic interventions before:

- children have fallen behind academically and socially
- families have disengaged
- family complexities interfere with children's participation in early learning.

Staff should therefore interact with children and young people and their families to optimise attendance in the same way as required for students who are of compulsory age.

This policy reinforces the position of the department to encourage, welcome and support all children and young people to access and participate in appropriate education and learning programs from early childhood through to primary, secondary and approved learning programs.

## 3. Out of scope

The policy does not apply where:

- a child or young person is exempt from attendance at school under the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (for example under an approved exemption for a home education program)
- a child or young person is subject to a legal condition imposed by the South Australia Police (SAPOL), a court, or an officer exercising a statutory authority that requires they be exempt from attendance.

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# 5. Detail

## 5.1. School attendance and the law

Attendance at school is compulsory. The Education and Children's Services Act 2019 states that all children must attend school from 6 until they turn 17. This could be in a school or an approved learning program.

Parents or legal guardians (carers) can be prosecuted if they do not make sure their child goes to school. This can mean being fined or getting a criminal conviction.

## 5.2. The department's attendance policy

The South Australian Department for Education's Attendance Policy guides the responsibilities of the whole school community to make sure that children and young people attend school. This includes school staff, parents, carers and students.

Schools work with their community to develop positive attendance habits. This starts from the earliest years. They do this when they provide a safe, inclusive and culturally respectful environment. They use effective and consistent local practices to monitor and manage absences.

## 5.3. Students at risk from missing school

Students can be away from school for many reasons. Schools use categories to identify children and young people at risk. We make sure that appropriate follow-up and support is provided.

- Habitual non-attendance: a student has 5 to 9 days absent in a term for any reason.
- Chronic non-attendance: a student has 10 or more days absent in a term for any reason.

## 5.4. How we implement the department's attendance policy

At Underdale High School our attendance practices align with the department's attendance policy.
We support student attendance when we:

- promote the importance of education from the earliest years of life and throughout school
- assess patterns of non-attendance and develop ways to address this
- actively engage and include all children, young people and their families
- support to address the barriers to attendance, learning and wellbeing
- monitor attendance to make sure progress is documented and supports are in place
- evaluate the need for further or ongoing support and referral for additional support.

We use data to create our attendance improvement plans. This is in partnership with our community. Our plan includes the actions we will take to make sure all students can attend school.

## 5.5. Underdale High School's attendance expectations

School starts at 8.45am each day and finishes at 3.10pm. Monday’s start time is 9:45am.
A parent or carer must provide an explanation if their child is late or must leave early, in the form of a note, a text message through Compass or phone call to the school. All students must provide parental approval ~~give notes~~ to student services when they sign in or out.



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### 5.6. Authorisation of Exemptions

In some circumstances, the principal has authority to approve an exemption from school. This can be for up to 1 month. It can also be for up to 12 months for a family holiday. Before asking for an exemption, families should talk to a site leader. Students must attend school until an exemption is approved.

Our school requires an exemption for absences more than 3 school days in a row. This does not include illness. Parents or carers must apply in writing. The principal will advise them in writing of their decision. A copy is kept in the student record folder. Forms are available from the front office.

Exemptions of more than 1 month (excluding holidays) must be approved by the department's central office.

*Note: Exemptions are counted as student absences from school.*

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

Everyone has a role to make sure students attend school all day, every day.

### 6.1. Students

- Attend school every day the school is open unless they are ill or have an approved exemption.
- Arrive at school and to all lessons, homegroup periods and activities on time.
- Participate positively in all learning activities.
- Sign in/out at student services if they (a parent will be contacted for approval):
    - arrive late after 8.45am (9.45 on Mondays) or leave before 3.10pm
    - leave school due to illness.

Note: a student's age and circumstances affect the level of responsibility. Year 11's and 12's can apply for Independent Home Study.

### 6.2. Parents and carers

- Make sure their child attends school every day the school is open, unless they are ill or have an approved exemption.
- Be responsible for their child's travel to and from school.
- Make sure their child arrives at school on time, before 8.45am (9.45 on Monday).
- Provide their child's school with up-to-date contact details.
- Provide a reason to the school if their child is absent, late or leaving early, the same day if possible.
- Provide a medical certificate or written explanation if their child is ill for 3 or more days in a row.
- Make appointments outside of school hours if possible. For example, dentists or National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers.
- Monitor their child's attendance and classwork.
- Help their child to meet deadlines and catch up if needed.

### 6.3. Subject Teachers

- Accurately record each absence, late arrival, and presence in classroom.
- When a student shows a pattern of being absent for their lesson, speak to their family and also record as a chronicle and share with Project U teacher, Learning Area Leader, and Year Level Leader.
- Follow Underdale's Behaviour Process for students that are late to lesson.
- Contact parents or carers if a student shows a pattern of lateness to a lesson.
- Document contact with parents and carers about lateness, including attempts to contact.



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## 6.4. Project U Teachers

- Encourage all parents and carers to be aware of attendance expectations, policies and procedures.
- Regularly monitor the attendance of Project U students using the weekly attendance report.
- Contact parents or carers if there is no explanation for an absence, a pattern of lesson absences or **Habitual non-attendance.**
- Document contact with parents and carers about absences, including attempts to contact.
- Support in the request of a medical certificate from parents or carers if needed.
- Inform Wellbeing Team if there are wellbeing concerns.
- Make notifications after 10 consecutive unexplained absences (via the Child Abuse Report Line – CARL) guided by Responding to Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care (RAN) and the Mandatory Reporting guidelines:
    - eCarl – for students not in care or 17 years and under.
    - Ring CARL – for students who are in care.

## 6.5. Year Level Leaders and Wellbeing Leaders

- Create Attendance Improvement Plan for students with **Chronic non-attendance.**
- Organise intervention meetings with parent/caregivers for those with **Chronic non-attendance.**
- Consult with the local Student Support Services.
    - Social Work Line: 1300 620 673
    - For example, Social Work Truancy evidence can include:
        - Notes recorded on Compass regarding contact with caregivers
        - Attendance Improvement Plan
        - Mandatory Reports
        - Requests for re-attendance meetings

## 6.6. Culture & Wellbeing Team (Year Level Leaders, Assistant Principals and Wellbeing Leader)

- Support students if a wellbeing situation is affecting a student's attendance
- Support students return to school after a period of extended absence
- Conducts home visits when a child has not been sighted for 4 weeks

## 6.7. Student Services

- Follows up daily unexplained absences.
- Prints attendance maps for each homegroup, weekly.
- Prints attendance maps for each Year Level Leader, weekly.
- Sends formal letters of absence with students' timetable of unexplained absences to parents/caregivers and records on Compass.
- Following up with Project U teachers if unsuccessful in contacting parents/caregivers or failure to receive a medical certificate.
- Following up with Subject teachers in regard to unmarked rolls.

# 7. Definitions

## 7.1. Independent Home Study

Year 11 and 12 students may apply for Home Study. Students must obtain parental approval and maintain a passing grade for all subjects to continue to be on Home Study.

Home Study allows students to independently study at home during their first and last Supervised Study lessons of the day. This does not include Supervised Study lessons that are between regular subject lessons. Students on Home study are still expected to attend all regular subject lessons, Project U and Supervised Study lessons that are between regular subject lessons.

| | |
|---|---|
| adult | Person who has attained 18 years of age |
| approved learning programs | Include:<br>• SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education)<br>• International Baccalaureate (IB)<br>• Steiner Education (Waldorf Schools) Secondary Certificate<br>• Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses or accredited courses offered by RTOs<br>• apprenticeships or traineeships<br>• university degrees, diplomas or other university award courses<br>• other programs authorised by the minister (or delegate)<br>• a combination of the above |
| authorised officer | The Education and Children's Services Act 2019 sets out people who are authorised officers. This includes any member from SAPOL |
| habitual non-attendance | Student absence for 5 days or more in a term for any reason |
| chronic non-attendance | Student absence for 10 days or more in a term for any reason |
| compulsory school age | A child of or above the age of 6 years but under the age of 16 years (ie from 6 years 0 months to 16 years 0 months inclusive) |
| compulsory education age | A young person who is under 17 years of age |
| home education | A child exempted from attending school whose education will be conducted by one or both of a child's parents from a home base. A child must be registered for home education with the department |
| home visits | Any meeting with clients and families outside of the school/educational setting. By definition, they most regularly occur in the home but they may also be held in other public places such as a local café or library. |
| legal guardian | A person who has the legal authority (and the corresponding duty) to care for the personal and property interests of another person. |

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|---|---|
| parent | For the purposes of this policy, the term 'parent' refers to all persons responsible for the child. A person responsible for the child means a person who is the child's:<br>• biological parent, adoptive parent or other person recognised as a parent if the child was conceived following a fertilisation procedure or under a surrogacy arrangement<br>• guardian<br>• person standing in loco parentis. This does not include a person who has had their legal custody, guardianship or responsibility for the child removed by a Court, Act or Law. As an example, a biological parent who has had their custody, guardianship or parental responsibility for the child removed by a parenting order made under Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) is not a person responsible for the child. |
| prescribed reason for non-attendance | Under the Education and Children's Services Act 2019, the following are prescribed reasons for nonattendance at school and approved learning programs by children and young people:<br>• The child was prevented from attending on the occasion in question by his or her sickness, or by his or her temporary or permanent infirmity.<br>• There was a danger of the child being affected by an infectious or contagious disease.<br>• The child was prevented from attending on the occasion in question by some other unavoidable and sufficient cause. Additionally, the following is also a prescribed reason for non-attendance in an approved learning program.<br>• The child was prevented from participating in the approved learning program on the occasion in question by reason of having to care for a member of their family. |
| staff | Applies to all persons who are employed in the department. |

## 8. Appendices

Nil.

## 9. Supporting information

### 9.1. Related legislation

Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum

Reporting suspected harm of children and young people

Student exemptions from attending school



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### 9.2. Related policies

Attendance policy, procedure and resources

### 9.3. Supporting Information

Australian Curriculum – General Capabilities

Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

Tailored Learning for student engagement

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## 10. Approvals

Status: Approved
Version: 2.3
Policy officer: Maja Williams, Deputy Principal, Underdale High School
Approved by: Mary-Lou Michael
Approved date: 14 October 2027
Next review date: 15 October 2028

## 11. Contact

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