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LALOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

Attendance Policy

2025 – 2028

AIM

This policy articulates the school community shared expectations in the areas of attendance.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2025
Approved by	Principal and School Council
Next scheduled review date	June 2028

ATTENDANCE

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the general office Ph 9463 7300

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 Lalor 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 Lalor Secondary College.

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 Lalor Secondary College, 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

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 Lalor 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, at Lalor Secondary College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Lalor Secondary College for particular activities.

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

Lalor 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 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 approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Lalor Secondary College 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 Lalor Secondary College 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

Lalor Secondary College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by presenting opportunities for students to contribute to the school, while offering a range of supports for students around their attendance. Lalor Secondary College has the following strategies to effectively engage students in their learning by:

- Promoting pro-social behaviours that are through many programs.
- Scheduling Student Conferences that provide opportunities for students to share goals and reflections with their parents/carers and set new/modified goals for the coming semester/term.
- Providing student leadership programs such as: School Captain, SRC, Sports Captains, House Captains, Arts Captains, Stem Captains, Class Captains, SMAD (Students making a difference) and other roles of responsibility that provide opportunities for students to influence change within the school community.
- Encouraging student voice through the use of student forums held once a term as well as student led assemblies.
- Encouraging parents/carers and the wider community to be involved in the school's programs.
- Early intervention to identify/respond to student needs for social and emotional support.
- Providing of a range of opportunities for students to be involved and feel connected to the community.
- Recognising and responding to the diverse needs of our students through the Disability Inclusion program.
- Adaption of current pedagogical knowledge and thinking to engage students in meaningful learning experiences.
- Encouraging students to achieve full attendance to maximise their ability to learn and our teachers' ability to teach effectively.
- Providing a clearly communicated whole school approach to Welfare and Discipline to encourage engagement; build pride, respect and responsibility.
- Developing intensive literacy and numeracy improvement strategies implemented as part of the school improvement agenda and in response to the changing demographics.
- Ensuring that professional learning is given high priority to ensure strategies and approaches are adopted and implemented.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Lalor Secondary College must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Lalor Secondary College'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 at the start of each lesson 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 Lalor Secondary College of absences by:

- Providing an explanation to the school on the day their child is absent where possible by phone, or in writing on the day their child returns. If the absence is an extended one then the parent is expected to ring the school.

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, Lalor Secondary College will notify parents by SMS via Compass. Lalor Secondary College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

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, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Lalor 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 meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Lalor Secondary College considers that the parent 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 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. Though there are no approved family holidays for students studying VCE subjects due to the attendance requirements and needs of in person delivery for aspects of the VCE.

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, Lalor Secondary College will work collaboratively with parents, 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 student wellbeing staff

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 Lalor 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 in the Greensborough 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.

FOLLOWING UP ABSENCES - SCHOOL PROCESSES

Most absences will be excused and require no further follow up. (See Appendix A)

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, the school will involve the parents and the student as appropriate in developing strategies to improve attendance.

Parents should be informed that if a student has repeated absences without a reasonable excuse or explanation, the parent may be issued with a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer.

Notes:

- Schools should keep records of all attempts to contact parents or students and any information obtained.
- Department of Education provides letter templates to be used for notifying parents of absences and seeking explanations

The following steps will be followed as a staged response to extended absence to support the processes listed above.

Stage One – Unexplained Absence

- An SMS will be automatically generated through Compass and sent based on rolls marked.

Stage Two – Three to Five days unexplained absences.

- **SMS message.**
- **School Attendance Officer or Student Manager will make contact with home via phone and record actions on Compass chronicle.**
- **If contact cannot be made via phone the Stage Two letter/email will be sent to parent/guardian. (refer Appendix B)**
- **All actions recorded on Compass**

Stage Three – Five days or more unexplained absences.

- **SMS message**
- **School Attendance Officer or Student Manager will make contact with home via phone and record actions on Compass chronicle.**
- **Stage 3 letter/email will be sent to parent/guardian. (refer Appendix C)**
- **Offer of support if required through school support networks.**
- **All actions recorded on Compass**

Stage Four – Ongoing unexplained absences.

- **SMS message**
- **School Attendance Officer or Student Manager will make contact with home via phone and record actions on Compass chronicle.**
- **Stage 4 letter/email will be sent to parent/guardian formally requesting presence at an attendance SSG. (refer Appendix D) (Sent by registered post)**
- **Hold Attendance SSG to establish causes of non-attendance, develop Student Absence Learning Plan and/or Attendance Improvement Plan or Return to School Plan.**
- **Offer of support through school support networks.**
- **Home Visit if deemed appropriate by Wellbeing team.**
- **All actions recorded on Compass**

Stage Five – unresolved on-going non-attendance.

- **SMS message**
- **Stage 5 letter/email will be sent to parent/guardian formally summarizing all intervention and support offered to signed and sent via the relevant Assistant Principal. The letter is to offer an opportunity to meet with the school for an Attendance Student Support Group Meeting and advising the parent/guardian unless there is improvement the matter may be referred to SAO. Parents/Guardians will have 7 days to respond. (refer Appendix E) (Sent by registered post)**
- **Home Visit if deemed appropriate by Wellbeing team.**
- **All actions recorded on Compass**

Stage Six – referral to SAO.

- **Stage 6 letter/email from the Principal advising parents that the matter has been escalated to the School Attendance Officer. (refer Appendix F)**
- **School Attendance Officer and Principal to complete appropriate referral documentation and forward to the regional office as per local arrangements.**

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): Attendance

Appendix A

Common reasons for absence	Parent approval required	School required to confirm reason is authentic	Reasonable excuse for parent	General advice for principals	Basis in ETR Act for reasonable excuse	Follow up required
Illness or accident	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Medical/dental appointment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if an out of hours appointment is not possible or not appropriate	2.1.3(fa)	No, unless absences become excessive
Attending or observing a religious event or obligation	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(f)	No
Suspended	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(d)	Yes (suspension guidelines)
Bereavement such as a death of a family member, attendance at a funeral and/or related mourning activities (sorry business)	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve	2.1.3(fa)	Offer and provide support as required
Truancy	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(e)	Meetings, Attendance Improvement Plan
School refusal	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents and school are working on plan to address cause	2.1.3(fa)	Yes - meetings to identify and address the cause
Family holiday	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents notify in advance and on a case-by-case basis dependent on Year level and course requirements.	2.1.3(fa)	Student Absence Learning Plans developed in conjunction with classroom teachers, when appropriate notice is provided by parents.
Required to comply with another law	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(ii)	No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required
Cultural observance	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parent notifies in advance	2.1.3(fa)	No
Leisure or social activities	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Case-by-case basis	2.1.3(fa)	No
Unforeseen event	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied event was unforeseen and prevented attendance	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Unavoidable cause	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied cause was	2.1.3(a)(i)	No

				unavoidable and prevented attendance		
Other – special event or participation in elite sporting event/training	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Case-by-case basis	2.1.3(fa)	No
Exemption	No	No	Yes		2 .1.3 (g)	Ensure any conditions of exemption are met. Monitor attendance at other provider
Employment in the entertainment industry	Yes	Yes (through approving exemption)	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(g)	Yes, to ensure conditions of exemption are complied with
Study Leave	Yes	Yes	Required	Case by Case Basis	2.1.3(fa)	No
Parent Choice	Yes	Yes	Required	N/A	2.1.3(fa)	No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required
Parent Choice: School Approved	Yes	Yes	Required	N/A	2.1.3(fa)	No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required

Appendix B – STAGE 2 Letter/Email

Dear «PARENTS»,

It has come to our attention that your child «M_1ST_NAME» «SURNAME»'s rate of absenteeism has increased recently.

Students develop good habits by attending school every day, habits that are necessary to succeed after school, whether in the workplace or in further study. Missing school can have a big impact on students academically and socially, it can affect their test results, including VCE, and just as importantly, it can affect their relationships with other students, and lead to social isolation.

We are concerned about «M_1ST_NAME»'s recent absences and ask that you please contact a student manager on 9463 7300 as soon as possible to address these concerns, so that we can work together to make every day count.

We also require you to explain the reason(s) for your child's absences as soon as possible as this is a requirement under the Department of Education Attendance Guidelines.

Appendix C – STAGE 3 Letter/Email

Dear «PARENTS»,

Following our previous contact on _____ concerning «M_1ST_NAME» «SURNAME»'s attendance, it has been brought to my attention that «M_1ST_NAME» has continued to be absent from school.

The Department of Education (DE) requires that you explain these absences. The date/s of the absence/s recorded by the school's attendance system Compass are attached.

The Department of Education's School Attendance Guidelines and Department attendance policy require that we address non-attendance. The unexplained absences to date may also mean that you may not have met your obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. These absences could lead to a notice from the DET and possibly a fine of approximately $79.00.

I have attempted to contact/contacted you on _____to discuss this matter.

I am very concerned about this emerging pattern of non-attendance and the potential impacts this can have on «M_1ST_NAME's» learning.

I am requesting that you contact the school to make an appointment with me to discuss possible solutions for improving «M_1ST_NAME's» attendance. In partnership we can work to ensure that your child can participate fully in their learning.

For further support you might also like to contact the Parentline Victoria 13 22 89/ www.parentline.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Sub School Leader

Appendix D – Stage 4 Letter/Email

STAGE FOUR LETTER/EMAIL – ongoing unexplained absences

Dear «PARENTS»,

«M_1ST_NAME» «SURNAME»'s has continued not to attend school regularly.

Up to the date of this letter/email, «M_1ST_NAME» has not attended for_____ days this year out of a possible _____ which means s/he have only been at school for_____ % of the current school term/year.

Prior to sending this letter/email the following actions have been undertaken by the school to promote your child's attendance and participation in their education:

- Daily Compass SMS
- Phone calls
- Letters/Emails home
- Attempts to schedule a Student Attendance Support Group
- Referral to the school's Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- Creation of an Attendance Improvement Plan

According to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* a child must attend school until the compulsory school age of 17. This means that you may not have met your obligations under the Act and these absences could lead to a notice from a School Attendance Officer and possibly a fine of approximately $79.00.

It is critical that «M_1ST_NAME» can participate fully in education. Poor patterns of attendance place students at risk of not achieving their educational, social and psychological potential. Such students are often disadvantaged in the choices they are able to make in later life.

I am requesting that you contact me within 7 days to arrange an Attendance Student Support Group meeting so we can work together to develop a support plan so that «M_1ST_NAME» can participate fully in their education.

For further support you might like to contact Parentline Victoria 13 22 89/ www.parentline.vic.gov.au

Ongoing attendance issues will be referred to the Principal in accordance with our *Attendance and Engagement Policies.*

Yours Sincerely

Sub School Leader

Appendix E - STAGE 5 LETTER/EMAIL – ongoing unexplained absences

Dear «PARENTS»,

«M_1ST_NAME» «SURNAME»'s has continued not to attend school regularly.

Up to the date of this letter/email, «M_1ST_NAME» has not attended for_____ days this year out of a possible _____ which means s/he have only been at school for_____ % of the current school term/year.

Prior to sending this letter/email the following actions have been undertaken by the school to promote your child's attendance and participation in their education:

- Daily Compass SMS
- Phone calls
- Letters/Emails home
- Attempts to schedule a Student Attendance Support Group
- Referral to the school's Student Wellbeing Coordinator
- Creation of an Attendance Improvement Plan

According to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* a child must attend school until the compulsory school age of 17. This means that you may not have met your obligations under the Act and these absences could lead to a notice from a School Attendance Officer and possibly a fine of approximately $79.00.

It is critical that you make every effort to ensure «M_1ST_NAME» can participate fully in education. Poor patterns of attendance place students at risk of not achieving their educational, social and psychological potential. Such students are often disadvantaged in the choices they are able to make in later life.

I am requesting that you contact me within 7 days to arrange an Attendance Student Support Group meeting so we can work together to develop a support plan so that «M_1ST_NAME» can participate fully in their education.

Ongoing attendance issues may be referred to the Department of Education Regional Office School Attendance Officer.

For further support you might like to contact Parentline Victoria 13 22 89/ www.parentline.vic.gov.au

Yours Sincerely,

Assistant Principal

Appendix F – Stage 6 Letter/Email

Dear «PARENTS /carers»,

I write in reference to the letter/email dated --/--/-- relating to the poor attendance record for your child «M_1ST_NAME» «SURNAME».

The Department of Education requires schools to closely monitor student attendance and respond where there are unexplained absences or absence levels are of concern. We have invited you, on _____occasions, to discuss and develop a plan to improve «M_1ST_NAME»'s attendance.

You may not have met your obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*. An accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from the DE Regional Director, the School Attendance Officer. Failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice.

This matter will now be referred to the School Attendance Officer and may result in a fine of approximately $79.00.

Please contact the school if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Principal