

General information for parents on attendance

In the Northern Territory (NT), schooling is compulsory for all children and young people aged from 6 until 17 unless there is an approved exemption from attendance. For parents of children and children living independently, meeting compulsory attendance requirements is not a choice; it is an obligation under the law. Daily attendance is important for children and young people to succeed in education. Positive education outcomes further contribute to the children and young people's future, including better health outcomes and better employment opportunities.

Attendance is encouraged for preschoolers

Quality early childhood education gives children the best start in life. Preschool helps provide children with important opportunities to learn and develop, make friends, develop independence and learn new routines. Research shows that children who regularly participate in a quality preschool program are more likely to arrive at school equipped with the social, cognitive and emotional skills they need to help them continue to learn. Although not compulsory under the *Education Act 2015*, the NT Government is committed to achieving the objectives of the national Preschool Reform Agreement which aims to ensure every child has access to, is enrolled in, and regularly attends a quality preschool program in the year before full-time school.

The department encourages families to engage their children with the early learning programs delivered by schools including preschool, transition and Families as First Teachers. Quality early childhood education and care lays the foundation for your child's development and learning. It helps your child develop self-esteem, resilience, communication skills, and a good habit of learning. For more information about early childhood education and care, go to the department's Early childhood education and care webpage.

Attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 until 17

Children who turn six years of age on or before 30 June become of compulsory school age from the start of that school year. They must be enrolled in an NT Government school or a registered non-government school and attend the school each school day, or each part of a school day, on which the school is open for instruction.

Students who have completed year 10 and are not yet 17 years of age may enter a compulsory participation phase and participate in an eligible option. For detailed information about eligible options, go to the Department of Education's (department) Enrolment webpage.

If your child is unable to attend school, you must contact the school and provide a reason for your child's absence before or on the day of absence, or as soon as practicable. This enables the school to:

- determine if the reason you have provided can be excused, in line with the school and the department's enrolment and attendance policies
- determine the appropriate follow-up to ensure your child's education and wellbeing is supported and
- accurately record your child's attendance each school day.

If ongoing, un-notified non-attendance of your child persists, you may be subject to enforcement measures and may also face legal consequences.

Supporting attendance and participation

Whilst ensuring daily attendance at school is a legal obligation for parents, supporting children and young people to attend school each school day, including participation in early learning programs, is a shared responsibility of parents, children and young people, the school, and the wider community. Department staff, including school staff, may take different approaches to achieve this goal, including:

- building strong relationships with children and young people, their families, and the broader community
- encouraging high levels of attendance from early childhood
- addressing social-emotional learning needs through a whole-of-school approach to ensure positive wellbeing and behaviour
- facilitating successful transition between years of schooling and between feeder schools
- ensuring access to high quality flexible education programs
- ensuring students' awareness of their learning and future pathways
- working with external agencies and the non-government sector
- working with the broader community to minimise the impact of cultural and non-cultural events on school attendance.

Useful information

- Early childhood education and care – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care>
- Enrolment – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>