

POLICY

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Responsibility of: School Support Services
Effective Date: April 2016
Next Review Date: April 2018
Target Audience: Staff/Parents/Community

File: DET2013/61
EDOC2016/07735
Version Number: 1.0

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Attendance – Compliance guidelines
- Attendance – Exemptions from Attendance and Participation guidelines
- Attendance – Recording and Reporting guidelines
- Attendance – Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions

1. POLICY

Regular attendance at school and engagement in learning is fundamental in achieving improved educational outcomes and increasing student wellbeing and life options.

1.1 Compulsory attendance/participation

A child who turns six years on or before the 30 June of the school year is of **compulsory school age** and must attend school or an approved alternative education program on a full time basis from the beginning of that school year.

Once a student has completed Year 10 the child must participate in an eligible option until they reach 17 years of age. An eligible option is approved education or training or, if the student is 15 years or over, paid employment, or a combination of the two. This is the **compulsory participation phase**.

Parents must ensure their child is attending school or participating in an eligible option unless the child is exempt or sanctioned from attendance under the Northern Territory [Education Act](#) (the Act).

Whilst early childhood programs such as preschool and Transition are not compulsory, they play a vital role in building children's capabilities and developing strong patterns of engagement and attendance. In line with this, once a **pre-compulsory school age** child enrolls in a Northern Territory government school, the child is encouraged to attend every day of instruction and transition in a school environment, to compulsory school age.

1.2 Attendance strategies

Students and families will be supported by school and departmental staff, where appropriate, to improve a student's attendance at school. The department acknowledges there is a range of factors contributing to non-attendance and staff will employ a variety of strategies, including:

- building strong relationships with students, parents and the community

- encouraging strong patterns of attendance from early childhood
- addressing social-emotional learning needs through a whole-of-school approach to ensuring positive well-being and behaviour
- facilitating the effective transition of students between year levels and feeder schools
- making flexible education available, as required
- ensuring students' awareness of their learning and future pathways
- working with external agencies and the non-government sector
- working with the community and other stakeholders to minimise the impact of events (cultural and non-cultural) that affect school attendance.

1.3 Recording attendance

All Northern Territory government schools are required to maintain accurate attendance records for each student enrolled at the school, every school day. Attendance records, and the collation of data, assist school staff to monitor individual student engagement and the department to plan whole-of-school attendance strategies. Attendance data provides the foundation for resource allocation and is used for reporting purposes.

1.4 Non-attendance

Principals will have detailed local school processes in place to follow up on un-notified student absences with parents. Local processes must include the requirement that school staff will endeavour to contact a parent within the first day of an absence where no notification has been received. Parents must be notified that where a child is absent from school for a period exceeding three days, a medical certificate must be provided.

Where a child demonstrates ongoing non-attendance, the parent may be subject to enforcement measures and may face legal consequences.

2. BUSINESS NEED

This policy and associated guidelines outline how the department and schools will:

- manage processes concerning attendance and participation
- enforce attendance requirements under the Act and contribute to the **School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM)**.

3. SCOPE

This policy and its associated guidelines apply to all Northern Territory government schools. It governs the actions of all departmental staff working with students and their families on matters relating to school attendance and participation.

4. DEFINITIONS

Approved education or training provides the education and training programs available to a student who has completed year 10 as defined by section 38(5) of the Act (refer to Attendance-Compliance guidelines).

Child of compulsory school age is a child who has turned six years of age on or before the 30 June of the school year and has not completed Year 10, or turned 17 years of age, whichever comes first.

Compulsory participation phase applies to a student who has completed Year 10 and has not turned 17, where the student must participate in an eligible option on a full-time basis until they turn 17. A student who has completed year 10 and has not turned 17 will transition from compulsory school attendance to compulsory participation in an eligible option.

Eligible option is participation on a full-time basis in one of the following:

- approved education or training
- if 15 years or over, paid employment (minimum average of 25 hours per week) or
- a combination of approved education, training and paid employment.

Flexible education arrangement is an arrangement that allows a student's educational program to be delivered through the school and/or alternative approved providers.

Parent signifies a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for the child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition.

Pre-compulsory school age is the age of a child that has not reached compulsory school age.

School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) is an Australian Government initiative designed to support parents or persons responsible for a child in ensuring the child is enrolled in and attending school.

Student living independently is a child who is of or above the age of 14 years and not living with a parent. A child who is living with a parent is also considered to be independent if the parent is unable to control the child's behaviour in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Regional Directors will:

- plan for strategic improvement of school attendance within their region
- monitor regional and school effort in relation to student non-attendance including the effectiveness of local school processes in reducing absenteeism
- with the support of Regional Attendance and Truancy Managers, work with schools where attendance issues have been identified.

Enrolment and Attendance unit will:

- in consultation with departmental and school staff, contribute to the strategic direction in regard to enrolment and attendance and develop productive partnerships for Territory-wide attendance initiatives.

Regional Attendance and Truancy Managers will:

- work with departmental and school staff to develop service delivery plans for schools, ensure their implementation, and monitor the progress of such plans
- manage Senior Attendance and Truancy Officers and ensure their actions are in accordance with departmental policy, guidelines and legislation.

Senior Attendance and Truancy Officers (SATO)s will:

- work with schools, families and community members to improve individual student attendance
- intervene where appropriate and enforce attendance and participation in accordance with the Act
- ensure all actions are in accordance with departmental policy, guidelines and legislation
- implement the **School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM)** in identified remote communities pursuant with the powers provided under Part 3C of the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) and agreements between the Northern Territory Government and the Australian Government.

Principals will:

- ensure accurate and daily attendance records are maintained for all students enrolled in the school
- ensure appropriate local processes and support mechanisms are in place to optimise student attendance, address non-attendance and re-engage students when required
- ensure school staff have an understanding of, and actively apply, departmental policies and guidelines.

6. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enrolment policy and guidelines
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Act• Education Regulations
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM)• Part 3C of the Social Security (Administration) Act and agreements between the Northern Territory Government and the Australian Government.

7. EVALUATION

Executive Directors, Regional Directors and principals are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of performance at the school and regional level in line with this policy. The policy and associated guidelines will be reviewed in accordance with departmental requirements.

The Enrolment and Attendance unit will, in collaboration with regions and schools, contribute to the evaluation of whole of department performance using the following measures:

- ongoing analysis of enrolment and attendance data
- SATO activity data.