

Enrolment and attendance birth to year 12 – policy

Policy statement

Quality education is fundamental to the development of individuals. Through education, people develop the knowledge, skills and attributes that they need to participate and thrive in a complex society. Success in education leads to self-esteem and personal empowerment, better health and wellbeing, better employment, and more choices in life. To achieve this end, ensuring enrolment and attendance is the first step.

Education begins at birth. The Northern Territory (NT) Department of Education (department) encourages families to engage their children in early learning, which lays the foundation for children's development and learning. 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.

Once a child turns six years of age on or before 30 June, they become of compulsory school age. Pursuant to the *Education Act 2015* (the Act), 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. When they have completed year 10 and have not yet turned 17 years of age, they can choose to enter a compulsory participation phase and participate in an external eligible option.

The department recognises the diverse needs of children and young people and provides different options to meet individuals' specific needs, including distance education, special schools and special centres, and home education. The department also provides education opportunities for eligible interstate, international, and mature age students. Where there are special circumstances and flexible education is not suitable, a formal approval for exemption from attendance must be sought from the department.

The department actively promotes and works in partnership with families, children and young people to ensure enrolment and attendance. Where reasonable and sustained efforts have been exhausted to satisfactorily achieve compulsory enrolment and attendance, enforcement powers provided for under the Act may be undertaken.

The Enrolment and attendance policy suite consists of four topics:

- Enrolment
- Attendance
- Distance education enrolment
- Mature age student enrolment.

Each topic contains procedures and templates that articulate stakeholder roles and responsibilities, requirements, and processes to be undertaken to achieve enrolment and attendance.

Purpose

The Act stipulates specific requirements for departmental staff, parents, and children and young people to ensure compulsory enrolment and attendance.

Departmental staff, including principals and school staff, also have specific responsibilities under the *Public Sector Employment Management Act 1993*, the *Financial Management Act 1995*, the *Information Act 2002*, the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* and the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*, relevant to student enrolment and attendance.

Scope

The policy suite applies to all:

- school-aged children and young people who live with their parents or who live independently
- interstate and international school-aged children and young people
- eligible mature age students

who are enrolled in, or wish to enrol in, NT Government schools, including distance education centres, eligible options, and flexible education programs.

The policy suite also applies to:

- parents or those with parental responsibility of school-aged children and young people
- relevant department staff.

Age of entry requirements

The department delivers education to children from birth to year 12 with specific age of entry requirements applied to ensure that children are engaged in age-appropriate teaching and learning programs. The table below provides an outline of the phases of schooling and minimum age requirements for entry into programs and year levels.

Phase of schooling	Year level/program	Minimum age* By 30 June of the year of enrolment
Early childhood	FAFT	0-4
	Very remote preschool	3
	Preschool	4
	Transition	5
Compulsory school age	Year 1	6
	Year 2	7
	Year 3	8
	Year 4	9
	Year 5	10
	Year 6	11

Phase of schooling	Year level/program	Minimum age*
		By 30 June of the year of enrolment
	Year 7	12
	Year 8	13
	Year 9	14
	Year 10	15
Compulsory participation phase	Year 11/Eligible option**	16
	Year 12/Eligible option**	17

*The minimum ages outlined are indicative only. Student age will vary slightly depending on individual student circumstances particularly if a student has repeated a year level, or in the case of gifted and talented students, advanced through a year level.

**Once a student has completed year 10, the student must participate in an eligible option until they reach 17 years of age. An eligible option is approved education or training or, provided the student is 15 years or over, paid employment or a combination of the two.

Early childhood education

The department provides a range of quality early childhood education programs for children from birth to five years of age. Specific age of entry requirements applies to each program.

Families as First Teachers

Families as First Teachers (FaFT) delivers quality early learning and parent support programs to children and their families. It develops place-based programs to engage families and communities and builds parents' capacity to give their children the best start in life.

Where available, children from birth to four years of age can be enrolled at a school and participate with a parent in the FaFT program.

Preschool

Preschool is a play-based education and care program that reflects the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework. All children have access to a preschool program for at least 600 hours, equivalent to 15 hours a week, in the 12 months prior to full-time schooling.

- Children who turn four years of age, on or before 30 June, can commence preschool at the beginning of the school year.
- Children who turn four after 30 June are eligible to enrol in a preschool program after their birthday if places are available and with the understanding the child will access more than 12 months of preschool.
- Children in very remote schools may be enrolled in a preschool program when they turn three years of age. Parents may accompany their child and remain with them at each preschool session if they choose. This can assist both children and families to transition into the school environment.
- Preschool aged children enrolled in FaFT must also be enrolled in preschool and will be supported to regularly attend the preschool program. Parents may accompany their child and remain with

them at each preschool session if they choose. This can assist both children and families to transition into the school environment.

Transition

Transition is a full-time program using the Australian Curriculum. Transition is a planned, play-based learning and development program that also applies the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework.

Children who turn five years of age on or before 30 June of the school year are eligible to enrol in transition at the commencement of that school year.

Children who turn five years of age after 30 June of the school year are eligible to enrol in transition from the commencement of the following school year.

Roles and responsibilities

Parents of children, children living independently, and prospective mature age students

Parents of children, children living independently, and prospective mature age students must:

- ensure they fulfil the enrolment requirements as per relevant procedures including Enrolment procedures, Distance education enrolment procedures, Mature age student enrolment procedures, Enrolment in special schools and special centres guidelines, and International student enrolment procedures
- apply for a formal exemption from school attendance or from participation in an eligible option when there are special circumstances and flexible education is unsuitable, as per Exemptions from attendance procedures.

Teachers and school staff

Teachers and school staff must:

- record attendance information in the department's mandated student administration system or approved compliant third-party program on a daily basis as per Attendance recording and reporting procedures
- monitor individual student attendance and alert relevant school staff to low attendance and non-attendance.

Principals or nominated staff members

Principals or nominated staff members must:

- review applications for enrolment and determine eligibility as per relevant procedures including Enrolment procedures, Distance education enrolment procedures, and Mature age student enrolment procedures
- work with children and young people and their parents to explore alternative enrolment options when there are special circumstances, including assisting in preparation for a formal application for exemption

- ensure accurate attendance records are entered daily or as soon as practicably able where access to internet inhibits and maintained in accordance with legislation and departmental policies and procedures, including Attendance recording and reporting procedures
- monitor student attendance, including monitoring the passive form, and assist authorised persons in case management
- apply school-level engagement strategies and processes to address low attendance and non-attendance and optimise student attendance
- where sustainable efforts have been exhausted to satisfactorily achieve compulsory participation requirements, refer the case to Student Engagement Programs and Services for case management support.

Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education will:

- manage schools' compliance with legislative requirements and department procedures for attendance recording and reporting
- review applications for exemptions from attendance as per Exemptions from attendance procedures
- monitor regional and school efforts that address low attendance and non-attendance, including the effectiveness of school-level strategies and processes in reducing absenteeism
- ensure principals have exhausted all school-level strategies to resolve attendance issues before referring the case to an authorised person
- work with schools where attendance or engagement issues have been identified with the support of Student Engagement Programs and Services
- as the vetting entity, consider enrolment applications from prospective mature age students as per Mature age student enrolment procedures.

Student Engagement Programs and Services

Student Engagement Programs and Services will:

- provide advice to principals and school staff regarding the appropriate use of attendance codes in the department's mandated student administration system
- work in partnership with schools, children and young people, and their families on attendance barriers, including developing strategies to promote re-engagement
- manage authorised persons
- collate and report on attendance data of NT Government schools.

Authorised persons

Authorised persons will:

- work with identified students, generally those who demonstrate low attendance and non-attendance, their families, schools and community members to improve attendance, including using enforcement powers as per Enrolment and attendance enforcement procedures

- work with schools to support student transition between years of schooling.

Quality Standards and Regulation

Quality Standards and Regulation will:

- develop and review policies and resources relating to eligible options and manage their implementation
- implement prosecution actions to re-engage students in education and to deter future offending.

Early Years and Primary

Early Years and Primary will:

- develop and review policies and resources relating to early childhood, preschool and transitioning to school
- manage the delivery of early learning programs such as the Families as First Teachers.

Related legislation and policy

Legislation

- *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/CARE-AND-PROTECTION-OF-CHILDREN-ACT-2007>
- *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/DOMESTIC-AND-FAMILY-VIOLENCE-ACT-2007>
- *Education Act 2015* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>
- *Financial Management Act 1995* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/FINANCIAL-MANAGEMENT-ACT-1995>
- *Information Act 2002* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/INFORMATION-ACT-2002>
- *Public Sector Employment Management Act 1993* – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/PUBLIC-SECTOR-EMPLOYMENT-AND-MANAGEMENT-ACT-1993>
- *Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*, which adopts the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011* in the NT – <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-AND-CARE-SERVICES-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations* – <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653>

Department of Education policies and procedures

- Attendance recording and reporting procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>
- Distance education enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>

- Enrolment and attendance enforcement procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Exemptions from attendance procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment>
- International student enrolment procedures – <https://nt.gov.au/learning/international-education/study-at-an-nt-government-school/how-to-enrol-at-a-government-school>
- Mature age student enrolment procedures – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Enrolment in special schools and special centres guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/student-enrolment/enrolment>
- Enrolment and orientation of new children and their families in preschool guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care/preschool-specific-policy>
- Families as First Teachers policy, procedures and guidelines – <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/early-childhood-education-and-care>

Other relevant policy

- Preschool Reform Agreement - <https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/agreements/preschool-reform-agreement>

Acronyms	Full form
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
NT	Northern Territory

Document title	Enrolment and attendance birth to year 12 – policy
Contact details	Inclusion and Engagement Services, Student Engagement Programs and Services, enrolattend.policy@education.nt.gov.au
Approved by	Executive Director Inclusion and Engagement Services
Date approved	28 April 2023
TRM number	50:D23:5854

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
1	May 2023	Student Engagement Programs and Services	First version