

Enrolment and attendance birth to year 12 policy

Contents

1. Policy statement	3
2. Purpose	4
3. Scope	4
4. Age of entry requirements	4
4.1. Early childhood education	5
4.2. Families as First Teachers.....	5
4.3. Preschool	5
4.4. Transition	6
5. Roles and responsibilities	6
5.1. Parents of children, children living independently, and prospective mature age students.....	6
5.2. Teachers.....	6
5.3. Principals, assistant principals and nominated staff members.....	7
5.4. Senior Directors Education	7
5.5. Student Attendance and Engagement Programs and Services, including authorised persons	8
5.6. School-based attendance and engagement staff, including authorised persons	8
5.7. Quality Standards and Regulation	9
5.8. Early Years and Primary	9
6. Related legislation and policy	9
6.1. Legislation.....	9
6.2. Department of Education policies and procedures.....	9
6.3. Other relevant policy.....	10

Enrolment and attendance birth to year 12 policy

1. 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 and Training (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 6 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 4 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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 indicative minimum ages for entry into programs and year levels.

The minimum ages outlined are indicative only. Student age will vary depending on individual student circumstances. For example, a student has repeated a year level, or has been advanced a year level as a gifted or talented student.

Phase of schooling	Year level or program	Indicative 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

Phase of schooling	Year level or program	Indicative minimum age by 30 June of the year of enrolment
Compulsory school age	Year 4	9
	Year 5	10
	Year 6	11
	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

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 both.

4.1. Early childhood education

The department provides a range of quality early childhood education programs for children from birth to 5 years of age. Specific age of entry requirements applies to each program.

4.2. 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 4 years of age can be enrolled in a school and participate with a parent in the FaFT program.

4.3. 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 4 years of age, on or before 30 June, can commence preschool at the beginning of the school year.
- Children who turn 4 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 3 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.

4.4. 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 5 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 5 years of age after 30 June of the school year are eligible to enrol in transition from the commencement of the following school year.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. 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.

5.2. Teachers

Teachers must:

- accurately record attendance information in the department's mandated student administration system or approved compliant third-party program daily as per Attendance recording and reporting procedures
- create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment through explicit teaching and modelling of expected student behaviour
- build positive relationships with students and their families to promote regular school attendance and meaningful engagement in learning
- monitor student attendance, including monitoring the Intensive Support Roll, and work collaboratively with school-based attendance and engagement staff to address attendance concerns in a timely manner.

5.3. Principals, assistant principals and nominated staff members

Principals, assistant principals and 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
- ensure school staff understand the department's policies and procedures and their individual roles and responsibilities in relation to improving student attendance and engagement in education are fulfilled
- ensure that the school leadership team has established an explicit focus on the continuous improvement of attendance and engagement of every student in consultation with the school community. This includes establishing and implementing Annual School Improvement Plan (ASIP) Attendance and Engagement Goals and Actions
- plan for, recruit, develop, and strengthen a school-based workforce dedicated to promoting student attendance and engagement
- support relevant school staff to develop and implement a variety of approaches to improving student attendance and engagement. These approaches may include delivering differentiated instruction through a flexible education program, providing team around the learner case management support, and, where necessary, considering issuing notices and directions in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation
- ensure that the school builds positive relationships and partnerships with families, community stakeholders and organisations, local businesses, and service providers to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students
- where sustainable efforts have been exhausted to satisfactorily achieve compulsory enrolment, attendance, and participation requirements, refer the case to Student Attendance and Engagement Programs and Services (SAEPS) for intensive case management support. Intensive case management typically involves students who have been chronically absent or require multi-agency support services.

5.4. Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education must:

- support schools to implement and meet the legislative and departmental requirements for enrolment and attendance
- based on regional enrolment and attendance data and evidence, establish a strategic vision and plan for the region on improving student attendance and engagement in consultation with schools and wider communities, and oversee the implementation of this plan

- support schools to develop and implement their ASIP Attendance and Engagement Goals and Actions
- ensure principals have exhausted all school-level engagement efforts to meet compulsory enrolment, attendance, and participation requirements before they refer the case to SAEPS for intensive case management
- coordinate or contribute to regional multi-agency initiatives aimed at improving student attendance and engagement.

5.5. Student Attendance and Engagement Programs and Services, including authorised persons

SAEPS, including authorised persons must:

- provide advice and guidance to schools on the implementation of departmental policies and strategies aimed at improving student attendance and engagement, including Enrolment and Attendance Policy Suite, NT Quality Standards Framework for Flexible Education Programs, and Team Around the Learner Case Management Framework
- support schools to identify, develop, and deliver suitable programs and initiatives, including flexible education programs, aimed at improving student attendance and engagement school wide
- promote evidence-informed and best practice approaches and processes to improve student attendance and engagement across NT Government schools through training, professional development, and establishing a community of practice for knowledge sharing and mutual learning
- promote regular attendance and meaningful engagement in education and learning by raising awareness and educating parents on legal requirement to send their children to school
- increase attendance in NT schools through targeted compliance activities
- lead intensive case management in consultation with schools and other identified stakeholders using a team around the learner approach. Intensive case management typically involves students who have been chronically absent and require multi-agency support services
- partner with government agencies and community-based organisations to integrate service delivery to ensure education engagement and re-engagement of students who are at risk of disengaging or already disengaged from education.

5.6. School-based attendance and engagement staff, including authorised persons

School-based attendance and engagement staff, including authorised persons must:

- work collaboratively with other school staff to improve student attendance and engagement through creating a safe, welcoming learning environment; building positive relationships with students and their families; and supporting the implementation of attendance and engagement strategies and processes at the whole school and individual student levels
- work with identified students, generally those who are at risk of disengaging or already disengaged from education, their families, and community members to improve attendance and engagement, including providing team around the learner case management support, and where necessary, issuing notices and directions in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation.

5.7. Quality Standards and Regulation

Quality Standards and Regulation must:

- 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.

5.8. Early Years and Primary

Early Years and Primary must:

- 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.

6. Related legislation and policy

6.1. 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* – <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/sl-2011-0653>.

6.2. 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>

6.3. Other relevant policy

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

Acronyms	Full form
ASIP	Annual School Improvement Plan
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
NT	Northern Territory
SAEPS	Student Attendance and Engagement Programs and Services

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