



WINMALEE High School

Student Attendance Policy Information for Parents and Caregivers

Rationale

In our school community we take pride in being:

- Respectful
- Responsible
- Learners

Regular attendance is essential for students to effectively embrace our school values and maximise their potential. It is an important component of the school's learning program – academic, sporting, cultural and social.

Winmalee High School encourages regular **attendance** and **punctuality**. These are essential for academic achievement, self-discipline and employment opportunities.

To help our students achieve full potential we need team work between the student, the school and parents. Therefore we seek assistance from parents to:

- **Encourage** students to **attend** and to be **punctual** (before 8.30 am).
- Supply the school with written explanations (notes) of student absences on the **first** day of return to school after the absence. The note must state the days and dates it covers **AND** the reason for the absence. Where reasons for absence are not provided records will indicate unexplained absence.
- Contact the school **immediately** to report any ongoing absence so that we can work together to address any issues.
- Arrange appointments at the doctors, dentists, etc., outside school hours wherever possible (preferably **NOT** Wednesday afternoons as Sport is an integral part of the school's curriculum).
- Contact the school by **phone** if the absence will be 3 days or more. A written note is still required with the student on their first day of return to school.
- Please take the time to write the notes in your own handwriting rather than merely signing a sheet which is filled in by the student.

Please see the FAQ below for more information on attendance at school.

Why do I need to attend school?

The *Education Act 1990* requires that parents (including carers) ensure that children of compulsory school age are enrolled at and regularly attend school, or are registered with the Office of the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling. The NSW DEC may take legal action against parents and carers who do not send their children to school without a valid reason.

It is the responsibility of parents/caregivers and the school to jointly encourage and reward regular attendance. Winmalee High School has developed an attendance system which enables us to monitor accurately the attendance of every student enrolled at our school. The system also enables us to identify and assist students with unsatisfactory attendance. The early detection of poor attendance and the positive measures used to assist the students who fall behind with their work due to absence is an integral part of this system.



WINMALEE High School

When is student attendance checked at WHS?

The school is responsible for maintaining accurate records of student attendance.

A formal roll is marked each morning in Roll Call, and attendance is checked every lesson by classroom teachers. A daily attendance sheet is distributed to all staff each morning outlining the students who are absent, late or involved in school activities. This sheet is cross checked with class rolls taken each lesson.

Winmalee High School runs vertical Roll Groups, where students are grouped with students from all year groups across school. This structure helps to keep family members together and provides students with opportunities for peer support, role modelling and building relationships across year groups.

All students, of compulsory school age, enrolled at this school are expected to attend school on time every day on which instruction is provided until 17 years of age.

What am I required to do if my child is absent from school?

If your child has to be absent from school, for any length of time, it is important to tell the school and provide a **reason** for the absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- Send a note either prior to absence or on the day your child returns to school
- Use the Skoolbag app
- Telephone the school and request to be put through to the Student Services Office (02 4754 2822)
- Email: winmalee-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au
- Or visit the school.

Whenever possible, parents and carers are encouraged to provide an explanation for absences before the absences occur. Explanations must be provided to the school within seven school days. If an explanation is not provided to the school after seven (7) days the absence will be recorded as **unjustified** and recorded on the semester reports. Parents are not permitted to provide 'bulk' absences justifications at the end of the semester or year to clear attendance issues.

It is important to note that the Principal of the school has the right to question parents' request for their child to be absent from school. They may also question an explanation given for a child's absence.

The school regularly sends home written notification of unexplained absences for parents.

What is a justified reason for being absent from school?

Justified reasons for absences may include the student:

- Having an **unavoidable** medical or dental appointment (preferably, these should be made after school or during holidays)
- Being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- Being required to attend an exceptional or urgent family circumstance (such as attending a funeral)
- Being sick, or having an infectious disease

What may be 'unjustified' as a reason for being absent from school?

Absences for reasons such as some of the following may not be justified:

- Shopping
- Sleeping in
- Working around the house
- Minding younger siblings and other children
- Minor family events such as birthday



WINMALEE High School

- attending strike action

It is important to realise that parents and/or carers may be prosecuted if children have recurring unjustified absences from school.

What if my child is away for more than 3 days?

Parents are required to inform the school by contacting the Student Services office on 47542822. Medical certificates are required for prolonged illness.

What if my child is late to school?

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students don't miss out on the important learning activities scheduled early in the day when students are most alert.
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Gives students time to greet their friends before class

Late is considered to be any time after 8.33am. Students must attend roll call where a 'partial absence' will be recorded. Any time after 8.45am students must report to the Student Services window where they will be issued with a late note to attend class.

The Department of Education requests that a reasonable explanation must be provided for lateness. Students who arrive late without a justifiable reason are recorded as unjustified lateness on the official roll and on the student's report. If the student is late on more than 3 occasions they are expected to attend a detention with the Roll Call. If lateness is persistent, an after school detention is imposed by the head teacher and the Head Administration and/or Deputy Principal are informed.

What if my child needs to leave school early?

Students must bring a note from their parent or carer and present it to student services no later than recess. On Sport Days (Wednesdays) all early leave passes require approval from the Deputy Principal. A 'Common Leave Pass' will be issued to the child and must be kept in their possession whilst on leave from school during school hours. The Principal or their delegate has the right to question an explanation or parents' request for their child to be absent from school.

As with whole day absences, the reason provided must be justifiable according to DEC guidelines.

What if I need to take my child out of school for an extended period of time?

Parents and carers are encouraged not to withdraw their children from school for family holidays. If this is necessary parents should discuss these absences with the Principal and may be asked to apply for an Exemption for travel from school. The Department of Education record the leave for travel as unjustified. Students who are representing their state or Australia in a given sport or activity can be exempted from attending school.

The Principal may grant a Certificate of Exemption for up to 100 days in a 12 month period, provided certain conditions are met. If a child needs to take greater than 100 days leave, parents will need to apply to the Principal who will then be required to notify and seek approval from the Director, Educational Leadership, Blue Mountains Network for an exemption.

If certain conditions are not met, the Certificate of Exemption from school attendance can be cancelled. For example, an apprenticeship ends. In such cases the student must notify the school and return until full time work, full time TAFE or another traineeship or Apprenticeship is found.

In some cases, applications for Distance Education may be more appropriate than seeking an exemption from attending school.



WINMALEE High School

What if my child is injured or ill and cannot participate fully in the curriculum?

If a student cannot participate fully in their learning, for example a broken wrist on their writing hand or cannot do Sport or PDHPE, they are required to present a medical certificate. The Medical Certificate must provide details of the illness or condition and advice about the sorts of activities that can or cannot be undertaken and the length for which this stands. The Certificate cannot extend longer than a six week period. A renewed medical certificate must be sought with the required advice.

What happens to students who display a pattern of non-attendance?

It is a requirement under the education Act to attend school every day. Any student who has an attendance level that drops below 90% or is generally of concern will firstly be monitored by the Year Advisors and Head Teacher Wellbeing. Reasons for non-attendance will be discussed in a supportive capacity and strategies developed to improve attendance. This may include: parental interviews, attendance monitoring.

If attendance still does not improve and drops below 85% further monitoring may occur which will involve interviews with the Head Teacher Administration, interviews with Senior Executive, further calls home, and /or a referral to the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO).

What happens if my child truant?

A student is considered to be truanting when they are not at school or their normal classroom or where they are supposed to be. For example, if they leave the school premises without the school's or their parent's permission or are seated in the lower playground. Truancy may be whole day or part day (fractional).

If a student is identified as a truant, their parents or carers are contacted as soon as possible, either by phone call or letter. If a student truant for a single lesson, they will be issued with a faculty detention, which will be issued by their classroom teacher.

If a student is identified as a whole day truant, the Head Teacher Administration will issue an After School Detention and they may be placed on an attendance monitoring sheet if a pattern of truancy is evident. In the event that a student has been found to have left the school grounds without permission, their parents or carers will be phoned as soon as possible and the duty of care for the student becomes the parent's responsibility.

How is regular attendance rewarded?

Students are recognised for outstanding attendance in the following ways:

- Each semester students with outstanding attendance will be sent a letter to acknowledge their high level of attendance and awarded a merit certificate.
- 100% attendance certificates are awarded each semester and they are invited to a BBQ lunch.
- Students with outstanding attendance for the year (100%) receive certificates which are awarded at the school Presentation Evening.

Information in this policy comes from:

- *DEC Students Attendance in Government Schools-Procedures (2015)*
- *Home School Liaison Program Support Documentation*
- *DEC Regular School Attendance – Information for Parents and Carers*
- *Memorandum to Regional Directors (DN/08/00043): Compulsory Enrolment and Attendance at School, Trevor Fletcher (Dep. Director-General Schools)*
- *DEC Guidelines for Exemption from School – Frequently Asked Questions*