NUMURKAH SECONDARY COLLEGE
ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy last reviewed	July 2023
Consultation	School leadership team
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	July 2026

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Numurkah Secondary College has in place to:
    - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
    - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Numurkah Secondary College.
This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's School Attendance Guidelines and with the Numurkah Secondary College Attendance Strategy (appendix 1)
This policy does not replace or change the obligations of *Numurkah Secondary College* parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 11 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Numurkah Secondary College during normal school hours (9:00am to 3:20 pm) every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Example School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Numurkah Secondary College for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Numurkah Secondary College believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Numurkah Secondary College parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Numurkah Secondary College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Numurkah Secondary College's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy supports student attendance.

Recording attendance

Numurkah Secondary College will record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge our school's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by classroom teacher at the start of each lesson/period using COMPASS.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify NSC of absences by:

- contacting reception if it is an unplanned absence, informing the classroom teacher if it is a planned absence. Parents may also enter the absence in COMPASS.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Numurkah Secondary College will notify parents by SMS. The College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Numurkah Secondary College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The principal will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education Training Reform Act 2006 and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If the school considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as 'excused absence'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'unexcused absence'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence.

The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, *Numurkah Secondary College* will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan

- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Numurkah Secondary College decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in our Regional Office (NEVR) for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
    - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
    - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
    - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
    - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- School Attendance Guidelines
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: Attendance
- Numurkah Secondary College Attendance Strategy (appendix 1)

APPENDIX 1

Numurkah Secondary College Attendance Strategy

Establishing a guide for attendance:

Attendance plays a key role in setting students up for success

Regular attendees: miss less than 10 days a year (approx. less than 5% absence)

Risk of chronic absence: miss between 10 and 20 days a year (approx. 5-10% absence)

Chronically absent: miss 20+ days (approx. 10-15% absence; average 1 day per fortnight)

Severe chronic absence: miss 30+ days a year (approx. over 15% absence). This cohort is at high risk of becoming an Early Leaver. Students who go on to be chronically absent in their later years of schooling on average have higher absence rates than their peers in primary school, starting as early as Grade Prep. It is never too early or too late to establish positive attendance habits. Attendance plays a key role in setting students up for success in later years

NSC Attendance Guidelines	
WHO	**PROCESS**
Whole school prevention	**Respectful Relationships** Respectful Relationships (education.vic.gov.au) Contact: Simone Nolan, Project Lead Simone.Nolan@education.vic.gov.au Laura Powell, Liaison Officer Laura.Powell@education.vic.gov.au **School Wide Positive Behaviour** Behaviour — Students: Advice | education.vic.gov.au
Classroom teacher	• Welcome students, (especially those who have been away) building positive relationship. • **Consistency with roll marking**. Allow at least 5 minutes for students to arrive prior to marking the roll. This allows time for slower students (if student is persistently late flag this with Year Level Leader)
Office/ Lorraine Madex	• Daily text to students who are absent and adjust absence where required • Identify students who have unexplained absence within a week and make a call to check in with home. See Appendix 1 for procedure. **Record this call home in Compass.** • Check in with AP regarding ongoing attendance concerns and audit
Homeroom teacher	• Acknowledge students who have had extended absence (great to see you here) make them feel valued and missed. • Celebrate student attendance each day. • Let YLL know and complete wellbeing referral if there are concerns
Year Level Leader	• Set aside a period for weekly attendance check. • Check attendance concerns raised by the Office Staff • Filter year level data on Compass to identify attendance concerns using the VCE % data for attendance

	• Contact home about unexplained absence identified in weekly check unless call has been made already within the past week according to Compass (via phone/text or email). Discuss concerns with parent/carer and record details on Compass • Return attendance report with absence reason to Office (Lorraine) • Notify the Wellbeing team of concerns regarding continued poor engagement, health or concerns regarding lack of contact. Students with **<u>10 or more</u>** days absent or below 90% 1. Phone home to set an attendance SSG with parents and Wellbeing team member. Include any other professionals who have been involved, (Bridge, Berry Street, SSS) 2. Once Attendance SSG is confirmed send home attendance letter 2, confirming Attendance SSG 3. If unable to make contact speak with Wellbeing and Engagement LT/AP to consider making a home visit or involving Orange Door. 4. Chair the SSG meeting and provide copies of the Attendance plan to parents/carers and relevant teaching staff. 5. Following SSG and attendance plan for any students who have an additional 5 days of unexplained absence consider a SSS referral for additional support Celebrate all student attendance each day, welcome back students who have re-engaged at school and have been working towards increased attendance. In weekly Year Level assemblies celebrate students with 95% attendance. Certificates/canteen vouchers/prize draws.
Wellbeing School Psychologist, Chaplain and Nurse	• Receive referrals for students that are displaying a consistent pattern of school non-attendance. • Participate in the SSG that is focussing on Attendance • Focus on identifying barriers to participation. • Key intervention is the development of Attendance Plan which will set out what the barriers have been and how these can be addressed. Discussion of alternative options and ongoing counselling support to be included.
Leading teachers and Assistant Principal (Engage-ment and Wellbeing)	• Oversee and support the actions of the YLL. • Participate in SSG if required. • Include an agenda item in YLL meetings that tracks students with poor attendance. • Support YLL in in discussing what alternative programs or counselling support can be made available • Key intervention is the development of an Attendance Plan which is agreed to and accepted by all participants. It should set out what the barriers to attendance have been and how these can be addressed. Discussion of alternative options and ongoing counselling support to be included. • Prepare letters going home to students at the end of each term for students with less than 90% attendance and record this on compass • Include information on school newsletters focussing on the importance of attendance • Ensure school attendance policy is included in school enrolment packs

	If efforts to make contact and engage with student and family are not successful • Seek advice through consult with SSS team regarding attendance barriers. Fatmatta (NSC SSS support) Fatmatta.DumbuyaMunu@education.vic.gov.au, Jo Madden SSS Team Leader Johanna.Madden@education.vic.gov.au • If attendance continues to decline seek advise through consult with SWEO Misti Gow Misti.Gow@education.vic.gov.au or HWSO Desley Byers Desley.Byers@education.vic.gov.au • If all above avenues have not seen an improvement and a student's attendance declines to 30% or below consideration of a referral to the Navigator Program is recommended. You can contact David Bennett David.Bennett@education.vic.gov.au for a consult, or referral directly on line https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/behaviour/engagement/Pages/navigator.aspx • If the school have exhausted all strategies for addressing a student's chronic absence (prior to a Navigator referral) and deems it appropriate they can make a referral to a **School Attendance Officer** • You will find the referral template https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/resources towards the bottom of the page under **Referring to a school Attendance officer** – Referrals can be emailed directly to Desley Byers & Misti Gow

Does your child have a chance of being successful?

1 or 2 days a week doesn't seem much but.....

If your child misses....	That equals....	Which is.....	and over 13 years of schooling that's...	Which means the best your child might perform is ...
1 day per fortnight	20 Days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly **1.5 years**	Equal to finishing in grade 11
1 day per week	40 Days	8 weeks	Over **2.5 years**	Equal to finishing in grade 10
2 days per week	80 Days	16 weeks per year	Over **5 years**	Equal to finishing in grade 7
3 days per week	120 Days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly **8 years**	Equal to finishing at grade 4

EVERY DAY COUNTS!

Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Everyday Counts
https://www.telethonkids.org.au/our-research/research-topics/school-attendance

Attendance and Missing School

- https://www.vic.gov.au/attendance-and-missing-school

Click the subheadings below to access Department of Education Information:

- Why going to school is important
- What to do if your child can't go to school
- If your child misses a lot of school
- Example situations
- Children who refuse to go to school
- Students with a disability
- Tips to help improve your child's attendance
- Get advice

Attendance Improvement Strategies
https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance/7-attendance-improvement-strategies

Student Attendance Guidance
https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/website/PAL/attendance-student-attendance-guidance.pdf

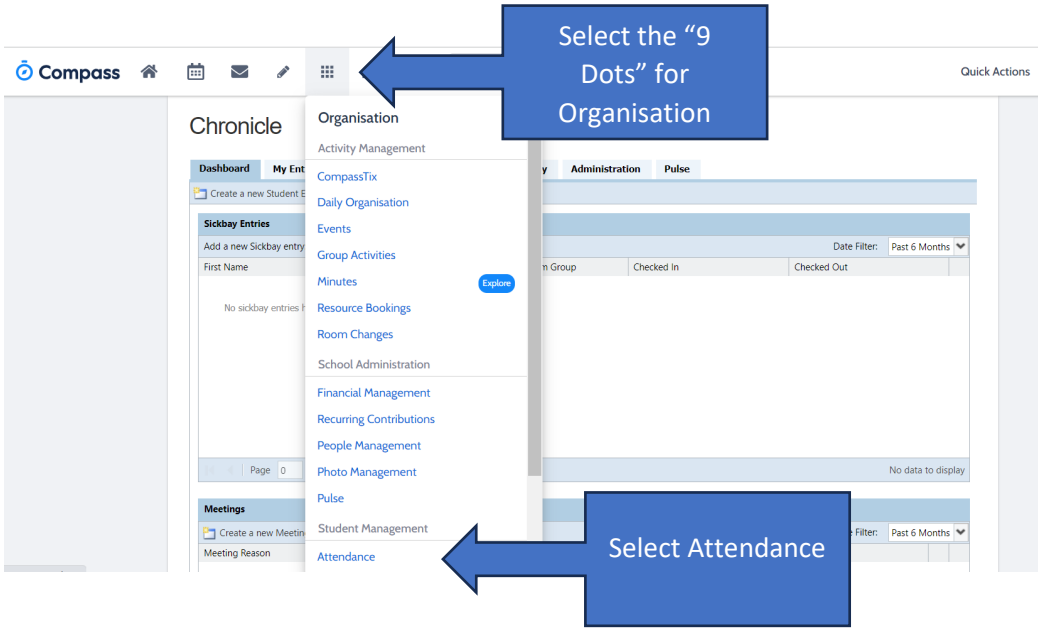
Appendix 1: Checking for 2 Consecutive Unexplained Absences

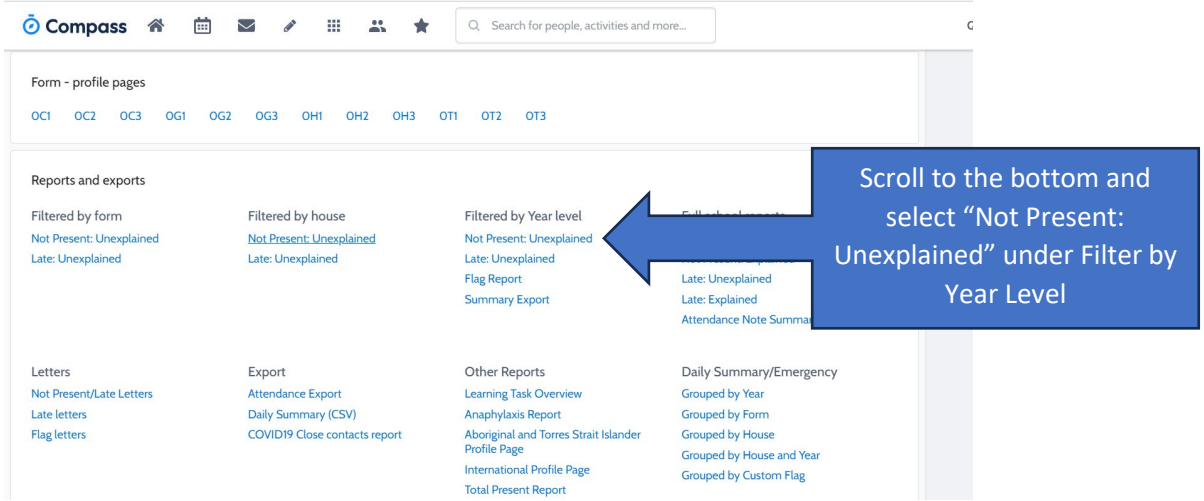
Connecting with families to check on student absences is essential for fostering connection, supporting the importance of attendance at school, and identifying opportunities to support students and families as required. It also assists in correctly recording reasons for absence and in the development of attendance plans if required.

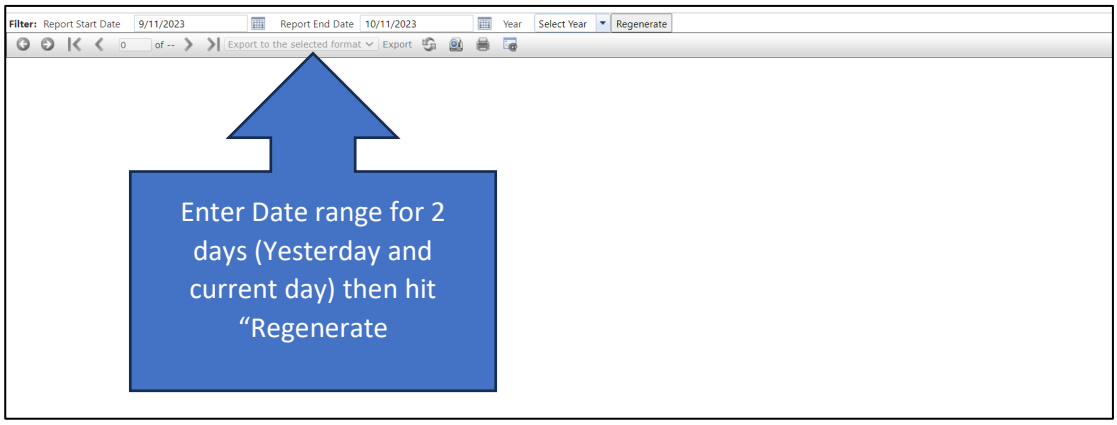
Office staff will run a report daily after 11:40am (period 2) to identify any students who have been absent for 2 consecutive days without explanation. They will then call families to check on the wellbeing of the student and determine if the school can offer any support for the student such as posting work on Compass or attendance support.

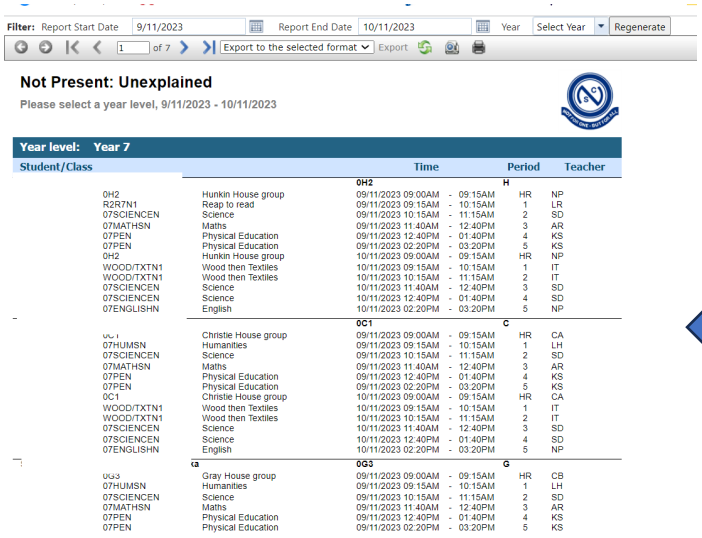
Once generated, the report may show students with known attendance problems who have been referred to School Attendance Officers, SSS, Navigator or have supportive steps in place already. Office staff will liaise with the Assistant Principal (Engagement and Wellbeing) if uncertain of students needing follow up.

To generate the report please follow the steps below:









Report will generate. Use the dates to determine if they have 2 days of unexplained absences in a row, then call with a check in. Record call in Compass.