

Attendance Policy

Policy Statement

The NSW Education Act 1990 (the Education Act) requires all students of compulsory school age to be enrolled in and attend school unless they are registered for home schooling.

Under the Education Act and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) registration requirements, Waranara School is responsible for monitoring, recording, and following up student absences as well as implementing intervention strategies to improve student engagement and school attendance.

Legislative Requirements

Legislative requirements The NSW Education Act (1990) (Education Act) sets out requirements for enrolment and attendance of students at school in NSW. Children of compulsory school-age are required to be enrolled in, and attend, school or be registered for home schooling (section 22 of the Education Act).

In NSW, the compulsory school age is from the age of 6 to 17. However, a child under the age of 17 ceases to be of compulsory school age if they have completed Year 10 and are enrolled in approved education or engaged in training, or paid work (or a combination of these) on a full-time basis (an average of 25 hours per week) (section 21B of the Education Act).

Waranara School has students ranging from Grade 9 to 12. Therefore compulsory schooling is often relevant to all Stage 5 students and students in Year 11. For students over the age of 17 enrolled at Waranara School their enrolment is a choice.

School Registration Requirements

Schools and principals have legal obligations in relation to attendance under the Education Act (Part 5 and section 47(g)(iv)) and NESA's school registration requirements outlined in NESA's Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual (sections 3.6.2 and 3.8).

Schools are required to have policies and procedures for school registration that address the following school responsibilities in relation to attendance:

- maintain a register of daily attendance
- monitor the daily attendance/absence of students
- identify absences from school and/or class(es)
- follow up unexplained absences
- notify parent(s) and/or guardian(s) regarding poor school and/or class attendance
- transfer unsatisfactory attendance information to student files

Waranara School utilises a cloud-based school management system and school mobile phones to manage the responsibilities outlined above.

Monitoring of daily attendance/absence of students

Schools are required to monitor the attendance of every student enrolled at the school each day to identify and record any absences in a register of daily attendance. Waranara School uses the following procedures:

- Both Senior and Junior Student Wellbeing Advisors are responsible for maintaining a register for daily attendance. They are required to input and verify official attendance records into the school management system at the end of each school day. They use the *attendance codes* approved by the NSW Minister for Education identifying both full and partial absences, and for partial absences, the time the student arrived or left the school as well as reason/s for student absence.
- Teaching staff are responsible for inputting attendance data for each of their individual classes on the school management system.

Waranara School's registers of daily attendance will be retained for a minimum of 7 years after the last entry was on our school management system.

Identifying and following up absences including those unexplained

Schools are required to follow up unexplained absences with parents/carers, notify them regarding poor attendance and maintain records of unsatisfactory attendance in student files. Waranara School uses the following procedures:

- For students who **have not** arrived by 10am, both the Senior and Junior Student Wellbeing Advisors send a standardised text message from their work phone to parents/guardians letting them know their young person is absent from Waranara School.
- Should a student arrive at school after 10am on any given school day, they should *sign in* on the mounted tablet before going to class.
- Both the Senior and Junior Student Wellbeing Advisors are responsible for corresponding and following up with students, parents and/or guardians, identifying the reason/s for absence, including those which are unexplained, from school and classes daily.
- The attendance record for each student at Waranara School is input and monitored through their individual file collated on our school management system

Exemption from attendance

Under section 25 of the Education Act students may be eligible for an exemption from attendance.

Grounds for attendance exemptions at Waranara School may include:

- exceptional circumstances
- direction under the Public Health Act 2010
- employment in the entertainment industry
- participation in elite arts or elite sporting events.

Independent school principals have been delegated authority by the Minister for Education to grant exemptions in some circumstances.

If a student would like to be exempt from attendance at Waranara School for the above reasons, a meeting is to be held with the Principal, student and parent/guardian. Following this, the Principal will utilise necessary procedures outlined in the *Guidelines for Exemptions from Attendance and Enrolment for Independent Schools* resource to make their decision. The Principal will next send a letter to the student and parent/guardian outlining their decision. The Principal will maintain a record of this meeting in individual student case notes and in circumstances where necessary save the *Exemption Certificate* in the student's electronic file.

Processes for Monitoring Attendance Data and Intervention Strategies

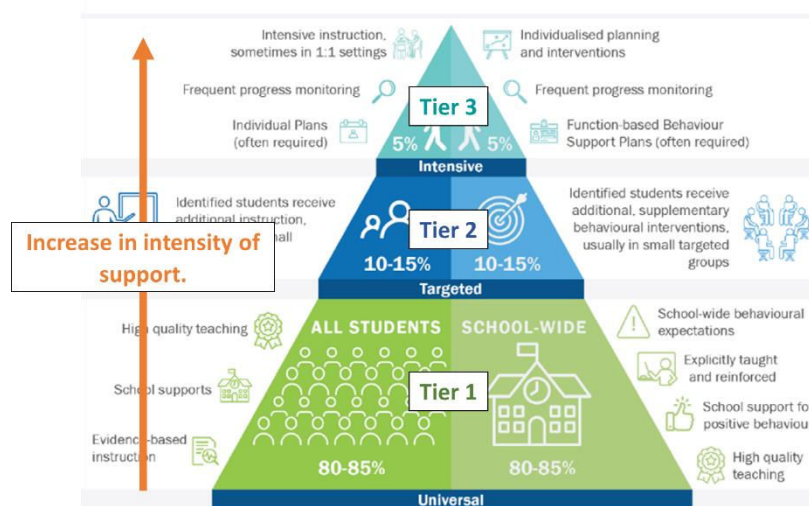
As per the requirements NESA's school registration requirements outlined in NESA's Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual sections 3.6.2, Waranara School must have policies and procedures related to:

- processes for monitoring attendance data
- intervention strategies to improve unsatisfactory attendance, including implementing strategies designed to improve student engagement in school and learning

Waranara School Multi-Tiered System of Support (Attendance)

Using a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model, Waranara School routinely analyses and monitors attendance data to identify students at risk and implement individualised interventions.

An MTSS model is a data-driven decision-making tool whereby students are provided with an increased intensity of support and intervention based on their percentage attendance.



Source: AISNSW, Fact Sheet, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

The Waranara School MTSS Attendance Team

The Waranara School MTSS attendance team at Waranara School consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal and the Junior and Senior Wellbeing Student Advisors who are responsible for processes related to monitoring attendance data and intervention strategies.

Determining MTSS Attendance Tiers

The Waranara School MTSS attendance team meets at the beginning of the school year to determine the percentage thresholds for Tier 3, Tier 2 and Tier 1 attendance students. This decision is based on historical data, the needs of students, the resourcing capacity of school staff and the school's overall strategic goals. For example in 2023, Tier 3 students had attendance <40%, Tier 2 students >40.1% and <60% and Tier 3 students >60.1%.

MTSS Attendance Monitoring Meeting

The Waranara School MTSS attendance team meets each fortnight.

Prior to each meeting, up-to-date attendance data is extracted from the school management system and input into a pre-formatted spreadsheet with categories for each Waranara School student:

- Yearly Attendance Percentage
- Termly Attendance Percentage
- Fortnightly Attendance Percentage

Based on the pre-determined tiered threshold students are determined to be a Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 attendance student in each category above. These tiers dictate the appropriate level of intervention for each student.

The following processes are undertaken as part of the fortnightly MTSS attendance meeting:

1. Actions related to student attendance interventions from the previous MTSS meeting are reviewed
2. Discussion of Tier 3 Attendance Student Updates, Issues and Intervention Plan/s
3. Discussion of Tier 2 Attendance Student Updates, Issues and Intervention Plan/s
4. Any other students of attendance concern
5. Attendance Progress and Wins

In a separate tab on the MTSS spreadsheet, notes are taken about each student including any update and actions plans for intervention.

Following the meeting, an email is sent to all Waranara School staff with the on-going attendance data spreadsheet, student attendance updates, plans of action for intervention discussed in the meeting and any existing student attendance plans.

There are various forms of attendance intervention utilised at Waranara School such as but not limited to:

Tier 1

- Positive Student/Teacher Relationships
- High Expectations and Accountability re: assessment tasks
- School wide expectations regarding % attendance
- Attendance Awards including highest attendance and most improved
- Positive Attendance Texts and Letters to Parents
- All students have personalised attendance goals
- Access to food and nutrition – including individual choice when needed
- Access to individualised learning support at school
- Offering of Extra-Curricular Activities and School Clubs

Tier 2

- Individualised Student Attendance Plans (see below)
- Meeting with parent/carer and Student Wellbeing Advisor
- Collaborate with External Supports to identify and implement attendance strategies
- Frequent wellbeing checks via text and calls to student
- Assistance with health appointments
- Referral to Professional Service or Case Worker

Tier 3

- NSW Assisted Transport Application
- Scheduled Morning Pick-ups by Waranara School Staff
- Home visits for Attendance and Wellbeing Check from Waranara Staff
- Attendance Warning Letters
- Increased feedback to parents/carers
- Case Conference with external supports/professionals
- 1:1 guidance and assistance with public transport
- Meeting with Principal, Parent/Carer and Student Wellbeing Advisor

Waranara School Attendance Plans

Waranara School's attendance plan is a collaborative tool used to identify specific barriers prohibiting a student from attending school and strategies to address those issues.

Members of the MTSS Attendance Team determine whether an attendance plan would be an effective intervention strategy for individual students.

Following this, a meeting is held with the student, parent or carer, relevant Student Wellbeing Advisor and the Deputy Principal OR Principal.

In this meeting the following is discussed and noted using the Waranara School Attendance Plan template:

- Date of Plan
- Partial Attendance Level (min by min)
- Current Attendance Level (day by day)
- Start Date
- Reasons for Attendance Plan
- Strategies to Improve Attendance:
- Any outstanding assessment tasks
- Overview of the plan - *For example, 3 days a week, half days, specific days, specific times, calling/texting student, student to be picked up, home visits*
- Review Date

The attendance plans are signed by the student, parent/guardian, Principal, Deputy Principal and relevant Student Wellbeing Advisor. A copy of the attendance plan is then sent via email to the parent/carers.

An attendance plan review meeting is then held at an agreed time and date. The following is discussed in the review meeting:

- Level of attendance before plan
- Level of attendance after plan
- What strategies worked? What strategies did not work?
- Rate of achievement – 1=no progress, 5=excellent progress
- Does another attendance plan need to be made
- What are the next steps for this student's attendance? Can the school support further?

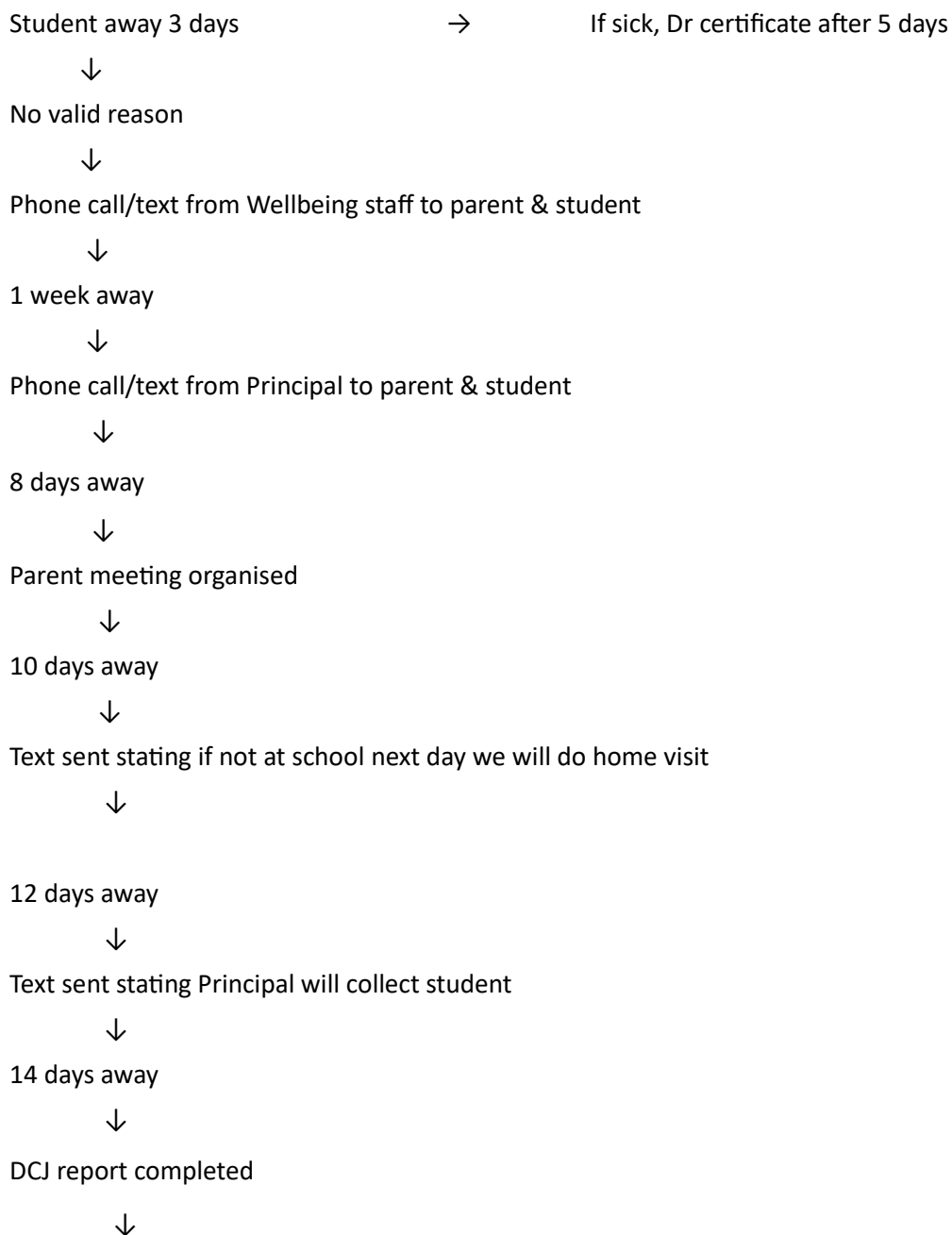
The attendance plan review is signed by the student, parent/guardian, Principal, Deputy Principal and relevant Student Wellbeing Advisor. A copy of the attendance plan is then sent via email to the parent/carers.

In some circumstances, the parent or guardian may be unavailable for an attendance plan meeting, they will be emailed a copy of the plan and notified via text message.

If a student's attendance does not improve whilst on the agreed plan, other intervention strategies should be used. The plan will then be ended by Waranara School staff and the student and parent or guardian are notified, and other attendance strategies discussed.

Attendance Flowchart

When a student is not responding to implemented interventions and continue to not attend school, there is a clear step-by-step flowchart used by Waranara Schol for contacting and working with students and families to encourage re-engagement.



If continued absence and all the above options have been exhausted, a student may be withdrawn and HSLO report and DCJ report again completed.

Child wellbeing and child protection concerns

School attendance issues can occur in the context of child wellbeing and child protection concerns and may occur as part of a picture of other concerns related to parenting vulnerabilities potentially leading to child abuse and neglect.

Waranara School uses the NSW Keep Them Safe Mandatory Reporters Guide (MRG) to accurately identify attendance concerns under the Neglect Concern – Education: Habitual Absence. The MRG decision tree for educational neglect refers to situations where a ‘child/young person is of compulsory school age AND is habitually absent’.

Habitually absent is described as a minimum of 30 days absence within the past 100 school days. Other factors may warrant action to report earlier than the 30 days indicated and should be used as a guide only. Where a school has a concern that a student may be at risk of significant harm, the Waranara School follows its mandatory reporting procedures regardless of how many days the student has been absent.

Relevant Documents and Legislation:

- The NSW Education Act (1990) (Education Act)
- Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual, NESA, November 2022
- AISNSW, Fact Sheet, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
- AISNSW Attendance Register Codes
- Attendance Student Destination Unknown Notification
- Guide to School Attendance Requirements and Attendance Improvement Planning – *Advice for NSW Independent Schools*
- MTSS Attendance Interventions and Incentives – Template.xlsx
- Waranara School Attendance Plan Template