



# Attendance Policy

Ratified: Feb 2021  
Review: Feb 2022



**Government of South Australia**  
Department for Education

At Felixstow Community School we aim to create a positive, flexible and collaborative learning environment that encourages academic, social and emotional growth. To achieve this and gain maximum benefit from their schooling, we expect all of our students to attend school regularly and on time. During school hours, teachers have duty of care and responsibility for students. As a part of this they have a *legal obligation* to ascertain reasons for student absence.

Research shows that attendance at school all day and every day positively affects learning, wellbeing, employment and life outcomes for children and young people. Learning is cumulative and it is disrupted if students often miss school.

### **The Department's Attendance Policy**

The South Australian Department for Education's Attendance Policy (<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/doc/attendance-policy>) guides the responsibilities of the whole school community to make sure that children and young people attend school. This includes school staff, parents, carers and students.

### **How we Work with Parents to Implement the Departments Attendance Policy**

At Felixstow Community School our attendance practices align with the department's attendance policy and we support student attendance when we:

- provide a safe, success orientated and caring environment
- promote the importance of education from the earliest years of life and throughout school and provide relevant learning programs for all students
- assess patterns of non-attendance and develop ways to address this
- actively engage and include all children, young people and their families
- provide support to address the barriers to attendance, learning and wellbeing
- monitor attendance to make sure progress is documented and supports are in place
- evaluate the need for further or ongoing support and referral for additional support.

We use data to create our attendance improvement plans. This is in partnership with our community. Our plan includes the actions we will take to make sure all students can attend school.

### **Parent Responsibilities:**

- getting their children to and from school
- keeping children home when they are ill and providing a medical certificate or written explanation if the child is ill for 3 or more days in a row
- informing the school of the reasons for a student's non-attendance.
- where possible make appointments outside of school hours
- contacting the school if they know of a reason affecting school attendance
- ensuring that home and emergency phone numbers are up to date
- signing students in and out from the office when late or leaving early
- work with the school on intervention strategies to improve attendance.

If you are aware your child will be absent for a period of 3 days or more an exemption must be applied for and signed by the Principal prior to the absence.

### **The Staff of FCS will:**

- Make sure all parents and carers are aware of attendance expectations, policies and procedures.
- Accurately record each absence, late arrival or early departure with the appropriate code.
- Contact parents or carers if there is no explanation for an absence, or a pattern of absences.
- Document contact with parents and carers about absences, including attempts to contact.
- Request a medical certificate from parents or carers if needed.
- Consult with the local Student Support Services if needed. For example Social Work, Truancy.

- Make notifications about chronic non-attendance (via the Child Abuse Report Line – [CARL](#)) guided by Responding to Abuse and Neglect – Education and Care ([RAN](#)) training and the [Mandatory Reporting Guide](#).
- Make sure the list of absences and late arrivals are given to the front office each day as early as possible.
- Work with parents to encourage attendance and participation.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

Attendance at school is compulsory. The Education and Children's Services Act 2019 states that all children must attend school from 6 until they turn 17. This could be in a school or an approved learning program.

Parents or legal guardians (carers) can be prosecuted if they do not make sure their child goes to school. This can mean being fined or getting a criminal conviction.

### **Situations where it is acceptable for a child to miss school include times when the:**

- child is too sick to leave the house
- child has an infectious illness such as gastroenteritis, chicken pox or measles
- child needs to attend medical or dental appointments that could not be made out of school hours
- school Principal is provided with a genuine reason that prevents the child attending school
- child has been granted an exemption from school
- child has been sent home or suspended from school for disciplinary reasons.

If a student is absent due to reported illness for three or more consecutive days a medical certificate is required.

### **Informing school about your child's absence**

It is important to notify the school of your child's absence and the reason for it. If you are unable to notify the school in advance, send a note or email covering the days missed.

### **Refusal to attend school**

All children aged between 6 and 16 years of age must be enrolled and attend school regularly, irrespective of distance from school or whether the child has a disability or not. Under the Education Act of South Australia, parents and/or carers are held responsible for the regular attendance of all children in their care.

The responsibility for enforcing school attendance is with the Department for Education. The Department therefore has a legal responsibility to record and monitor attendance and take appropriate action to rectify problems of non-attendance.

A child's refusal to go to school can be very distressing both to parents and the child. Non-attendance can take different forms. If you have difficulty with your child attending school you should immediately contact the school to seek help. You can discuss your concerns with your child's teacher, or the school Principal.

### **Authorisation of Exemptions:**

In some circumstances, the principal has authority to approve an exemption from school. This can be for up to 1 month. It can also be for up to 12 months for a family holiday. Before asking for an exemption, families should talk to a site leader. Students must attend school until an exemption is approved.

Our school requires an exemption for absences more than 3 school days in a row. This does not include illness. Parents or carers must apply in writing. The principal will advise them in writing of their decision. A copy is kept in the student record folder. Forms are available from the front office.

Exemptions of more than 1 month (excluding holidays) must be approved by the department's central office.

Note: Exemptions are counted as student absences from school.

### Lateness:

Lateness can just as equally effect students over a period of time. It is important to make every effort to get students to school by 8.50. We recommend arriving 10-15 minutes before this to allow student time for play and organisation. The morning is an important part of the day with discussions about plans for the day, changes for the day, and a time for social catch up and community building within the classroom.

If there is a continued pattern of lateness staff will discuss ways to support you and your child and if deemed appropriate a *Lateness Improvement Plan* will be developed in collaboration with families.

### ATTENDANCE PROCESSES

There are 365 days per year and 200 school days minus 5 closure/pupil free days = 195 school days. This leaves 170 days with family at home.

The following table outlines the actions staff are legally obligated to follow should there be an attendance concern:

	% attendance	Number of days per yr attended	Number of days absent per year	Number of days absent per term	Actions
Good	>95%	185 days +	Maximum 10days absent/school year	2 days per term	
Worrying	91 – 94%	176 - 184	11 – 19 days absent per year	3-4 days per term	Discussion with family
Serious concern	<90%	<175 days	20 school days or more absent per year	5 or more days per term	Attendance improvement plan implemented in discussion with family
Referral activated	< 85%	<165 days	>30 days absent per year	7 days or more per term	Referral to DECD Attendance Officer

ABSENCE CODE	Reason	Explanation
I	Illness	Illness prevents a students attending – note, message or phone call from family regarding medical condition required
C	Ill with Certificate	Verified by a doctor's certificate or health professional's communication.
F	Family	Absence for family, social or cultural reason (not family holiday). A pattern of regular use of this code may indicate need for intervention
U	Unexplained	Absence without explanation by family or school.
LATENESS CODE		Explanation
L	Late	After the bell & before 11.10am
M	Morning	after 11.10am
A	Afternoon	leaving before 1.40pm
E	Early	Leaving after 1.40 & before bell

Minutes late per day	Equates to days of teaching lost in one year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	10 Days	17 Lessons
10 mins	7 Days	35 Lessons
15 mins	10.5 Days	52 Lessons
20 mins	14 Days	70 Lessons
30 mins	21 Days	104 Lessons