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 Fairhills High School has in place to:
    - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
    - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

POLICY

Fairhills High School 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.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Fairhills High School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of Fairhills High School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

Detailed implementation guidelines are developed by the staff through the established consultative committee process. These are developed within the parameters of the Council policy and can be changed as circumstances or strategies change without further reference to Council.

DEFINITION

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

GUIDELINES

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 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 Fairhills High School during normal school hours 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 Fairhills High School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Fairhills High School for particular activities.

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

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

Fairhills High School 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 Fairhills High School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will promptly 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.

Fairhills High School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Recording attendance

Fairhills High School records attendance in every class.

This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Fairhills High School's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at the start of each period using the Compass roll marking system. The roll marking system will also be used to record student lateness to class.

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 Fairhills High School of absences by contacting the Attendance Officer through the General Office. An email or voicemail message can be left on the schools' absence hotline. Alternatively, parents can provide explanations via the Compass portal.

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, Fairhills High School will notify parents by SMS each morning and/or a follow-up email and telephone. Fairhills High School 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.

Fairhills High School 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 Fairhills High School considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as 'parent choice'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'parent choice: unauthorised'.

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
- 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 (not VCE students) where the parent notifies the school in advance and a student absence learning plan is in place.

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, Fairhills High School 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
- Team Leader to arrange an Attendance strategy meeting (ASM)
- implementing a return to school Attendance Strategies Plan (ASP)
- 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 the Student Wellbeing Team.

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 the School Attendance Officer

If Fairhills High School 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 the Regional Office 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 DET School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
    o the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
    o measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful

- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  o the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  o no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- School Policy and Advisory Guide

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated on 23/10/2023 and is scheduled for review in October 2026.

VERSION CONTROL TABLE

Version	Author	Date	Change Made
1.1	Silvana La Leggia	23/10/2023	updated title panel, added version and date to footer and added version control table
1.2	Ian Van Schie	05/01/2024	Non impactful errors
1.3	Silvana La Leggia	13/06/2026	Updated Appendix to reflect 2025 changes

APPENDIX A

Fairhills High School – Attendance process

STAGE 1 > = 90% class schl %	**All staff communication** • Clearly communicate high expectations around 90% attendance policy • Accurately mark the roll in Compass • Period 1 SMS from Attendance Officer(AO) and Compass post • Regularly promote message that 'everyday counts' • Motivate students to attend through engaging learning and strong relationships • Reward and incentivise >=90% attendees with SWPB points, AO allocates SWPBS for every fortnightly cycle • End of term AO to send positive communication to parents/carers • 90-94% • 95-100%
STAGE 2 below 90% class schl %	**Teacher communication** • Teachers are encouraged to to speak to any student below 90% for class schl % • Refer to Team Leader if required e.g. wellbeing concerns • AO makes weekly phone calls to follow up any unexplained absences
STAGE 3 below 85% class schl %	**Team Leader communication** • Team Leader to communicate with parents/carers attendance concerns, expectations and attendance process. • Parent/carer may wish to communicate further with the Team Leader to discuss possible support/concerns.
STAGE 4 below 80% class schl %	**Attendance Strategies Meeting (ASM)** • Team Leader/sub-school leader to communicate with parent/carer and set-up an **Attendance Strategies Meeting (ASM)** • The ASM main aim is to set student-led SMART goals via an **Attendance Strategies Plan (ASP)**. • A follow up ASM (6-8 weeks) may be required for ongoing support. .... If all goals on the ASP are achieved the student may receive a satisfactory attendance result.
STAGE 5 ASP goals not met or parent/carer did not actively engage with school	**Unsatisfactory due to attendance communication** • The Team Leader informs the student and teacher(s) that an 'unsatisfactory due to attendance' will be placed on their report. The student is expected to continue to attend and complete the required learning to the expected level. • The sub-school leader will inform the parent/carer via an emailed letter. The school will continue to support the student to attend and include: • Ongoing contact home by Attendance officer • Further ASM **For chronic absenteeism** • Referral to the School Attendance Officer at the Department of Education • Referral to Navigator program • Police welfare check if the parent/carer is not responding.
STAGE 6 Appeal only if attendance is above 75%	**Appeal** A parent may wish to appeal the decision within 14 days by writing a letter to the Principal outlining the reason(s) e.g. exceptional circumstances. The Principal may set up an appeal panel to investigate the information provided. **Possible Outcomes** **Appeal not successful** — Student will receive an N on their report for attendance and is expected to continue to attend to support their learning. **Appeal successful** — Student may meet attendance requirements. Conditions may be imposed. Any breaches may result in an attendance unsatisfactory.