

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2023



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact 9309 66258

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 Example School 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 Jacana School for Autism.

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 Jacana School for Autism, 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 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 Jacana School for Autism 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 Example School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Jacana School for Autism for particular activities.



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

Jacana School for Autism 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 to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Jacana School for Autism 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 Jacana School for Autism 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

Jacana School for Autism *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by of Integration/Dual Enrolment Program, Individual Education Plan, Breakfast Club and School House Groups.

Recording attendance

Jacana School for Autism must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Jacana School for Autism duty of care for all students

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 Jacana School for Autism of absences by:

- texting the STUDENT ABSENCE mobile **0439 114 197**, informing the name of the student, room number and reason for absence.

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, Jacana School for Autism will notify parents by [SMS/push notification message email/telephone/other method of notification]. Jacana School for Autism 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.

Jacana School for Autism 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.

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If Jacana School for Autism considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**authorised absence**'.

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

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, Jacana School for Autism will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing a care team meeting to discuss further support
- implementing an Individual Education Plan with reasonable adjustments
- implementing a Re-engagement Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from 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 School Attendance Officer

If Jacana School for Autism 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 North-western Victoria Region 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.

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COMMUNICATION

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

- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Included in transition and enrolment packs

- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	4 August 2023
Consultation	4 August 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	Term 3, 2026

Reasonable Excuses for absences

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Ministerial Order 625, December 2013* describes a reasonable excuse for a student not attending school, among other factors as:

- The school recognises illness as a reasonable ground for an absence, including medical and dental appointments.
- The school recognises cultural observance as a reasonable ground for an absence.
- The school recognises bereavement of a significant person in the student's life as a reasonable ground for an absence.
- There is no Government school within a prescribed distance of the child's residence and the child is receiving a distance education program through a registered school.
- The child is undertaking an educational program provided by a registered education and training organisation.
- The child has been suspended or expelled and is undertaking other educational programs provided by the Department or another registered school.
- The absence from school or instruction was because of the child's disobedience and was not due to any fault of the parent/carer.
- The child is exempted from attendance at school by the Minister.
- Social and leisure activities are **NOT** a reasonable ground for an absence.

Notification of Absences

Parents/Carers must contact the school for each day that their child is absent. Parents/Carers are asked to text the school absence line number **0439 114 197**

Who is responsible for attendance?

All the learning community at Jacana School for Autism is responsible for attendance. This includes Leadership, Teachers, Education Support Staff, Students and Parents/Carers.

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Expectations of Leadership

- Provide guidance and support to teachers in regard to curriculum development and student engagement/wellbeing issues.
- Provide guidance and support to classroom staff members to develop, implement and evaluate programs that contribute to the academic and social development and engagement of students.
- Monitor attendance through collection, analysis and evaluation of data.

Expectations of Teachers

- Mark the roll accurately for Class Group by **10am daily**
 - Specialist Teachers are required to mark the roll accurately and should call the office to record attendance
 - Casual Relief Teachers are required to mark the roll and should call the office to record student attendance.
 - Amend the roll if a student leaves school early.
- Provide programs that engage and support students to learn.
- Informally advise parents of their obligations in regard to school attendance where appropriate.
- Notify school Attendance Officer if student has been absent from school for 3 days, **which includes any unexplained absences throughout the year** (see expectations of Attendance Officer).
- Refer students to Student Welfare Team and Attendance Officer if student has been absent from school for 5 or more unexplained days throughout the year and contact with family has not been successful.
- If applicable, provide appropriate work when a student is unable to attend.
- It is their duty of care to mark the rolls correctly using codes applicable to student's absence. Most important codes include:

CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXPLANATION
200	Medical / Illness	Parent approved and gave this health-related reason. Includes: sent home unwell, sports injuries.
600	Educational Activity	For Students who are integrated (Part time at a mainstream school.) Please indicate if part day – AM or PM
804	Extended Family Holidays Minimum 5 Days	Parent approved and gave this reason. Includes: Student is taken out of school to go on a family holiday.
806	Parent choice Unauthorised Includes less than 5 days extended holiday.	Parent approved **but didn't give a reason, or Parent approved** and gave a reason but the reason is not health related, nor religious/cultural observance nor has approval been sought and granted for a family holiday or special circumstance. Includes: going shopping, visiting friends or relatives and missed school bus.
807	Parent Choice School Approved	Parent approved ** gave a reason that is not health related, or religious/cultural observance, or family holiday and sought approval from the principal. Includes: special circumstances, unavoidable cause, unforeseen circumstances, and family member ill.
900	School Choice	Sent home due to behaviour

Expectations of Attendance Officer

- Monitor and update student records of student absences notices made from parents/carers.
- Notify and contact parents via text message or phone call when students are absent from school with unexplained reasons for absence.

Expectations of Student Welfare Team

- Formally advise parents of their obligations regarding school attendance where appropriate.
- Engage with the family, student, and other support services (if applicable) to implement support strategies and re-engagement plans through Care Team Meetings.
- Refer students to internal and external support services when needed to implement further support to engage students back to school.
- Send a formal letter home with listed student absences and schedule a meeting with parents do discuss a return to school plan with a member of the Student Welfare Team and School Principal.
- If attendance concerns continue and all the above expectations have been implemented then a report of concern to Child Protection or a referral to the Health and Wellbeing Support Officer, Department of Education and Training (DET) or referral to Child First.

Expectations of Students

- Attend school daily and to all classes (no less than 90%) without medical certificate.
- Arrive to school on time and ready to learn.

Expectations of Parents/Carers

- Always ensure their child attends school (see Education and Training Reform Act 2006, Section 2.1.1)
- Ensure that their child is on time for school each day.
- Notify the school attendance officer through the school absence line, of their child's absence as soon as possible for each day of the child's absence.
- Notify the school in advance if an absence is planned and complete **“Extended Period of Absence Application Form”** (see attachment).
- Provide the school with a medical certificate if their child has been absent for 3 consecutive days with an illness or medical reason.
- Support their child's learning during continued or prolonged absences through the implementation of an agreed student Absence Learning Plan.
- Work co-operatively and collaboratively with the school and their child to develop and implement improvement strategies when attendance has been inconsistent due to reasons deemed unsatisfactory by the school.
- Work co-operatively with the school in supporting the child to return to school.
- Ensure that contact details for their child are correct and up to date.

Please Note:

Department of Education and Training Expectations

- Where the family are undertaking an extended family holiday of more than 3 school days, recommendations and approval must be sought from the sub-school leader and the principal.
- Where school refusal and re-engagement processes are in place, the school will work with the family and student to increase student attendance.
- Clear written/verbal statements are made regularly to parents/carers/students about school and community attendance expectations.
- Ongoing unexplained absences/lateness, or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will be referred to the Student Welfare Team and attendance issues may be reported by the principal nominee to the Department of Education and Training, where it is believed to be impacting on the student's educational progress.
- Where a student has been absent from school on at least 5 full days in the previous 12 months, the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences, and measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances,



Jacana School *for Autism*

principals can exercise their discretion to refer the matter to a School Attendance Officer for further action.

- School Attendance Officers can then issue a School Attendance Notice to the parent giving the opportunity to provide a reasonable excuse for the absences or, where necessary, nominate the parent responsible for the absences. Failure to comply with this Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice, which carries with it a penalty of approximately \$70.00.

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**EXTENDED PERIOD OF ABSENCE
APPLICATION FORM
(3 school days or more)**

Date: ____/____/____

Start Date: ____/____/20____

End Date: ____/____/20____

Name: _____

Home Phone Number: _____

Mobile Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____

TYPE OF REQUEST

Family Holiday

Medical

Overseas Business

Sporting Trip

Other: _____

Please describe nature of the extended leave requested:

All applications for extended absences will be reviewed by the Sub School Leader and Principal. This will be followed with direct communication with a parent or guardian.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

For Administrative Use Only:

Date Received: ____/____/____

Action taken by Sub School Leader:

Recommendation: _____ **Date:** ____/____/____

Action taken by Principal:

Recommendation: _____

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