Walford

*Policy 9.2*

**STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

**PURPOSE**

Walford is committed to working in partnership with parents and caregivers to provide learning opportunities to build a solid foundation for the future. Regular school attendance is a shared responsibility between parents, students, and the school. Schools are required to ensure that enrolled students are attending school or participating in an approved learning program. Schools are also required to maintain appropriate attendance registers.

This policy describes Walford's practices for monitoring and managing student attendance. The purpose of this policy is to assist students to receive the maximum benefit from education through regular attendance, and that Walford is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding student attendance.

**OBJECTIVES**

This policy aims to support the following outcomes:

- Improvement in student attendance and participation as shown in the data collected by the school;
- Improvement in learning outcomes as measured by school assessment processes;
- Increased understanding of the importance of regular attendance by the community of educators, learners, and families of [School name];
- Annual reporting to [School name]'s community and educational authorities on attendance;
- Ongoing analysis of attendance data, which informs continuous school improvement; and
- Development, implementation, and monitoring of procedures based on the analysis of data to improve attendance.

**LEGISLATED OBLIGATIONS**

Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of 16 years) residing in South Australia are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless an exemption has been granted. Students of compulsory education age (between 16 and 17 years) are required to be in attendance at school or a combination of school and other approved training unless an exemption has been granted.

In meeting its legislated obligations, Walford is required to maintain attendance rolls and enrolment registers and may be required to produce these upon request by the Education Standards Board, as part of the registration process, and to State and Australian governments to ensure accountability for the receipt of government funding.

Walford is also required to publish attendance data as part of the School Performance Information and participate in attendance reporting processes including the Australian Government student attendance data collection (STATS) and the State Government requirement to report unauthorised absences of 10 or more days in a term on a termly basis.

The *Principal* is responsible for ensuring that processes are in place to:

- Promote the importance of attendance;
- Maintain attendance records as per the School's legislated obligations;
- Document any intervention;
- Develop and implement attendance improvement plans;
- Monitor and analyse attendance data and report to the school community through the school's appropriate reporting mechanisms;
- Follow up on non-attendance, including parent notifications;
- Ensure intervention between the student and the School after a period of accumulated absence (10 days may be a guide) or sooner if the student has a poor attendance record;

- Make referral to, and seek support from, agencies and support services when a student's pattern of attendance becomes irregular;
- Ensure that the analysis of data is used effectively to inform action at the School;
- Ensure that notifications about suspicions of neglect and/or abuse are made;
- Meet all Australian Government and State Government legislative compliance and the School's duty of care obligations.

*Walford staff* have a responsibility to support the agreed Student Attendance Policy of the School and will:

- Provide a learning program that seeks to engage all students and offers opportunity for success, thus encouraging regular attendance;
- Record attendance and absences according to the School's requirements;
- Contribute to the analysis of attendance trends and the development and implementation of school attendance improvement plans;
- Implement School procedures, including parent notification, to follow up non-attendance;
- Work with parents and associated agencies to support learners' regular attendance in the education program; and
- Make Mandatory Notifications as appropriate.

*Parents* must enrol their child in an education program from six years of age (the age of compulsion). When enrolling their child, parents accept the responsibility to:

- Enable their child to attend punctually and regularly on every day the education program is offered and to comply with the education program being offered;
- Provide an explanation to the school whenever their child is absent.
- Agree to the terms of an exemption as required; and
- Work with the school on intervention strategies to improve attendance.

*Students* enrolled at Walford have a responsibility for their attendance. The level of responsibility will be determined by the individual circumstances of the child. Walford has expectations that each student will:

- Attend school or other educational program as negotiated regularly on every day the program is offered;
- Be punctual in arriving at school or the educational program and for all associated lessons and activities; and
- Engage appropriately in the education program as negotiated.

**RESPONDING TO, REPORTING and MONITORING ABSENCES**

Walford has an obligation to follow up the extended absence from school of students under the age of compulsion and has developed a number of targeted and specific actions it will take in response to student absences. These include the following.

- Unexplained absences are followed up in an appropriate manner with the student and/or their parent. Walford has an obligation to follow up the extended absence from school of students under the compulsion age. In certain circumstances, [School name] may need to seek the assistance of external agencies, such as the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) or the Department for Education's Social Work Truancy Service in responding to an extended absence.

- A medical certificate may be requested for any absence for medical reasons in excess of three days.

- Walford will notify the parent in an appropriate manner where a student has a poor record of school or class attendance.

- The attendance issue and any action taken is recorded, as appropriate, in the student file when unsatisfactory class or school attendance is identified.

- Walford will maintain ongoing communication with parents regarding curriculum activities and events when a student is unable to attend school for an extended period due to injury or illness. The School may provide a modified program to assist with recovery, where appropriate.

- Permission will be sought from Walford when parents wish to remove their child from class during term time for the purposes of leisure, family travel or holiday or non-school related activities. An exemption application may be required to be submitted when absences longer than five days are planned. Exemptions are not automatically granted and are dependent on a decision by the Principal.

- In cases of ongoing student absenteeism, Walford will implement strategies aimed at restoring a student's attendance to a satisfactory level in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy, such as an attendance improvement plan which outlines agreed actions and the persons responsible.

**EXEMPTIONS**

If a parent or caregiver wishes to take their child out of school temporarily, they should apply in writing to the Principal and her Executive Assistant via email, copying in the relevant Head of School.

Exemptions for part-time attendance are only given under exceptional circumstances and require supporting documentation.

**MONITORING AND MANAGING ATTENDANCE**

Walford will implement strategies to monitor and manage student attendance. The School will follow up unexplained absences from classes up in an appropriate manner with the student and/or their parent/caregiver.

In certain circumstances, the School may seek the assistance of external agencies (i.e. AISSA or DECD Attendance and Engagement Officers) in responding to an extended absence.

Where unsatisfactory class or school attendance is identified, the cause and any action taken will be recorded, as appropriate, on the student's file.

Where a student is unable to attend school for an extended period of time due to injury or illness, the School will maintain ongoing communication with parents/caregivers regarding curriculum activities and events.

A student may be placed on a plan to improve attendance, which outlines agreed actions and the persons responsible, with the intention of restoring the student's attendance to a satisfactory level.

**MANDATORY NOTIFICATIONS FOR NON-ATTENDANCE**

Walford is committed to ensuring that the advice and steps outlined in the South Australian Department for Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Guide will be followed when there are suspicions that a child or young person has been harmed, or is at risk of harm and:

- The student is persistently absent from or not enrolled in school, with no satisfactory explanation;
- Interventions have been attempted with student and family; and
- The non-attendance has continued despite the intervention attempts.

In some instances, Walford may access the Department for Education's Student Support Services which offers a truancy social work service.

Walford may request SA Police (SAPOL) involvement for a wellbeing check or address check only when all other possible courses of action have been taken.

**RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS**

*Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)*

*Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)*
*Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 (SA)*
*Education (Compulsory Education Age) Amendment Act 2007 (SA)*
*Standards for Registration and Review of Registration of Schools in South Australia, 2019*

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| Last reviewed: | January 2025 |
| Next Review | January 2027 |
| Responsibility: | Principal |
| Policy Number: | 9.2 |