



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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses).

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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses), 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) for particular activities
- the student attends the Re-Engagement Campus and follows a particular timetable established to meet their individual needs

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

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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. Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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.

Attendance in each subject is set at a minimum of 90% for each class and individual attendance will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Students can fail a Unit or subject based solely on poor attendance.

For VCE and VCAIL students, an absence from a coursework assessment task will mean a student will not receive a grade for that part of the task, unless he/she is able to provide Portland Secondary College with a satisfactory medical certificate. This task will then need to be completed during a designated 'redemption' session and be of an acceptable standard in order to receive a pass.

If a student can foresee a legitimate reason for an absence from an assessment task, he/she must apply in writing at least 10 days before the set time of the assessment. If the student is given less than 10 days notice of an assessment, application time will be at the discretion of the Level Leader and relevant Sub-School Assistant Principal. Such applications should be given to the Level Manager and will be reviewed by the Level Manager and the Sub-School Assistant Principal.

"Redemption" opportunities will be offered and must be taken up within 2 weeks in order to satisfactorily pass an assessment.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by regular roll marking, mentor time each morning and SMS alerts to parents.

Change in Living Arrangements

Students whose living arrangements change with the result that they either become independent or move in with an alternative family must complete a 'statutory declaration for informal relative carers' and lodge this with the College for the period they are living out of the family home. The 'independent student' or the 'designated carer' is then responsible for alerting the school of student absence. Please note the statutory declaration for informal relative carers does not prevent a student's legal guardian from accessing attendance information unless the student is living independently and over the age of eighteen.



Recording attendance

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 Compass.

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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) of absences by:

- Compass notification to the school explaining why an absence has occurred or
- Providing a written note to the General Office or
- Phoning the General Office by 9am.

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, Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) will notify parents by SMS/push notification message. Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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.

Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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. Any explanation which needs review will be alerted to the Principal by the Attendance Manager.

If Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.

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

Level Leaders will be responsible for monitoring and investigating student absences and will do so following the Student Absence Guidelines.

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- 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 relevant student wellbeing staff
- referral made to Navigator Program

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 Portland Secondary College (Must Street and Victoria Parade Campuses) 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 South West Regional Office or the Navigator Program 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.



ADDITIONAL POLICIES, GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES

- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.docx](#)

REQUIRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

- Portland Secondary College Council
- Staff induction process
- School Website

REVIEW CYCLE

DATE	VERSION	RATIFIED BY	NEXT REVIEW
Oct 2020	4		Oct 2023