

POLICY: SCS42: Attendance Policy	Issued: June 2019
REVIEW: June 2020	Approved: Sue Holmes (Principal)

## ATTENDANCE

### 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 Sherbrooke Community 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 Sherbrooke Community school, 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 Sherbrooke Community 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 Example School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Sherbrooke Community school for particular activities.

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

Sherbrooke Community 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.

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

Sherbrooke Community 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 Sherbrooke Community school 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**

Sherbrooke Community school *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by breakfast clubs or other school programs designed to support attendance

## **Recording attendance**

Sherbrooke Community school must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Sherbrooke Community 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 lesson/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 Sherbrooke Community school of absences by:

- contacting reception on 03 97552007 or completing the notifications and approvals area on compass for the student.
- 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, Sherbrooke Community school will notify parents by SMS notification message at 930 am and at 4pm for any lateness of absence from lessons. Sherbrooke Community 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 the student is not present and has been previously present in a lesson.
- 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.

Sherbrooke Community 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 Sherbrooke Community school considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**notified absence**'.

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

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Sherbrooke Community 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
- 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 school wellbeing officer and other agencies.

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 Sherbrooke Community 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 North Eastern Victorian 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.

## **MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

- [School Attendance Guidelines](#)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)
- [School intranet](#)

## Exemption from school Attendance and enrolment

To ensure student exemptions from attendance or enrolment at school are managed in accordance with Departmental requirements.

Schools must follow the Department's student exemption processes.

Attending school every school day for the whole day enables students to participate in the school's educational program as well as develop their social skills. Regular attendance enables the school to:

- plan an organised educational program that is delivered in a consistent way and has continuity
- facilitate shared student learning experiences that support the educational program
- monitor student progress and adjust the educational program to meet student needs.

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in certain circumstances. All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision, the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the student's educational progress, wellbeing and development are also considered.

Note: No exemption is required if a student is not of compulsory school age (6-17 years of age).

A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.

## Exemption Categories - Overview

This table outlines:

- the circumstances in which an exemption from school attendance may be sought
- who can authorise the exemption
- a link to the process for applying for an exemption.

Circumstances	Who authorises
<b>Child turns 6 (compulsory school age) while attending kindergarten.</b>	Regional Director  For process see: Participation and Engagement - <a href="#">Children of School Age Attending a Kindergarten Program</a>
<b>Student has completed Year 12 or equivalent qualification, or the student has completed Year 10 and will participate in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full time basis.</b>	Principal  For process, see below: <a href="#">Students who have completed Year 10 and will participate in approved education, training or employment</a>
<b>Student has not completed Year 10 of schooling and will participate in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full time basis.</b>	Regional Director following consideration by the Principal  For process, see below <a href="#">Students who have not completed year 10 and will participate in approved education, training or employment</a>
<b>Student is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry.</b>	Principal  For process, see below: <a href="#">Short-term Entertainment Industry Employment</a>
<b>If leaving school is in best interests of the student.</b>	Regional Director following consideration by the Principal  For process, see below: <a href="#">If leaving school is in student's best interests</a>

## Exemption Application Process

**Students who have completed Year 10** and will participate full-time in approved education or training and/or employment. This table describes how to manage an attendance and enrolment exemption for students who have completed Year 10 and will participate in approved education or training, or employment on a full-time basis (Ministerial Order 705, Part 1).

Stage	Who	Description
1	Parent/carer	Approach the school in writing about the student seeking to leave school.
2	School	<p>Speak with the parents/carers and student about the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student's goals, aspirations, issues and reasons for wanting to leave school (using a Managed Individual Pathways plan)</li> <li>• student's planned destination</li> <li>• possible alternatives to leaving school.</li> </ul>
3	Principal	<p>To grant an exemption, the Principal must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) determine that the student meets the requirements for exemption;</li> <li>b) consider the wellbeing and development needs of the student, taking into account —             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the student's aspirations and reasons for wanting to leave school; and</li> <li>(ii) the views of the student's family;</li> </ol> </li> <li>c) assess the likelihood that the student will complete the education or training or stay with the employer while of compulsory school age;</li> <li>d) consider if there are possible alternate arrangements to exemption;</li> <li>e) consider the best interests of the student; and</li> <li>f) complete the <i>Transition from School</i> form (formerly the <i>School Exit</i> form).</li> </ol> <p>Principals should then provide a copy of the completed Transition from School form (formerly the School Exit form) and any supporting documentation (such as letter of offer from an employer) to the student and Regional Office.</p> <p>Principals should note the following definitions: <i>Full time basis</i> means—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a course of education or training considered to be full time by the provider of the education or training; or</li> <li>b) an average of at least 25 hours per week, subject to the following —             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) when computing the 25 hours, the time spent by the student in travelling to and from an education institution or employer is to be excluded; and</li> <li>(ii) normal term and public holidays of an education institution and recreation leave and other leave entitlements if the student is in employment are excluded when calculating the average number of hours spent in education, training and employment per week.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> <p><i>Approved education or training</i> means —</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) a course that leads to a qualification referred to in the Australian Qualifications Framework;</li> <li>b) any other accredited course pertaining to Year 11 or 12;</li> <li>c) a course that can be used as credit towards a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education or is a vocational education and training pathway to a Diploma referred to in the AQF; or</li> <li>d) the completion of education or training approved by the Secretary.</li> </ol>

## Students who have not completed Year 10 and will participate full-time in approved education or training and/or employment

This table describes how to manage an attendance and enrolment exemption for students have not completed Year 10 and will participate in approved education or training and/or employment on a full time basis (Ministerial Order 705, Part 2).

Stage	Who	Description
1	Parent/carer	Approach the school in writing about the student seeking to leave school.
2	School	<p>Speak with the parents/carers and the student about the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student's goals, aspirations, issues and reasons for wanting to leave school (using a Managed Individual Pathways plan)</li> <li>• student's planned destination</li> <li>• possible alternatives to leaving school.</li> </ul>
3	Principal	<p>The Principal must —</p> <p>a) consider the best interests of the student; and</p> <p>b) complete the Transition from School form (formerly the School Exit form) and forward to the Regional Director for decision.</p>
4	Regional Director	<p>To grant an exemption, the Regional Director must —</p> <p>a) determine that the student meets the requirements for exemption;</p> <p>b) consider the wellbeing and development needs of the student, taking into account —</p> <p>(i) the student's aspirations and reasons for wanting to leave school; and</p> <p>(ii) the views of the student's family;</p> <p>c) assess the likelihood that the student will complete the education or training or stay with the employer while of compulsory school age;</p> <p>d) consider if there are possible alternate arrangements to exemption; and</p> <p>e) consider the best interests of the student.</p> <p>f) decide what, if any, conditions will apply to the exemption, for example, whether the exemption will be time-limited.</p> <p>In considering the best interests of the student, the Regional Director should consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• steps taken to keep the student in school</li> <li>• the likelihood of the student completing the education, training or staying with the employer if the exemption is granted</li> <li>• whether the proposed employment (if applicable) complies with the <i>Child Employment Act 2003</i>, particularly whether it contains a training component</li> <li>• the likely outcome if the exemption is not granted.</li> </ul> <p>The Regional Director should then advise the school, the student and their parent/carer of his/her decision.</p>

## Students employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry

This table describes how to manage an attendance exemption for students employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry (Ministerial Order 714).

Stage	Who	Description
1	Parent/carer	Approach the school in writing.
2	Principal	<p>Consults the parents/carers and student about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the effect of exemption</li> <li>• identification of alternate arrangements to exemption.</li> </ul> <p>For further guidance, see: <a href="#">Guidelines to exempt students from school for employment in the entertainment industry (pdf - 432.55kb)</a></p>
3	Parent/carer	<p>Complete the Parental Consent to Employment of Child application form, see: Business Victoria, Forms - <a href="#">Parental Consent to Employment of Child</a></p> <p>Complete the: <a href="#">Application form for school exemption for work in the entertainment industry (pdf - 48.72kb)</a></p> <p>Submit the forms to the Principal.</p>
4	Employer	<p>If the student is under 15 years of age, an Application for Child Employment Permit form (which requires principal endorsement) needs to be completed.</p> <p>This completed form needs to be forwarded by the employer to the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation see: Business Victoria - <a href="#">Apply for a child employment permit: Entertainment industry</a></p>
5	Principal	<p>To grant an exemption, the Principal must —</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) determine that the student meets the requirements for exemption;</li> <li>b) assess whether the exemption would adversely affect the student’s education, taking into account — <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the short and long term benefits to the student;</li> <li>(ii) the student’s educational needs, attitudes and employment prospects; and</li> <li>(iii) the views of the student’s family;</li> </ol> </li> <li>c) consider if there are possible alternate arrangements to exemption; and</li> <li>d) if the exemption is from both enrolment and attendance at school, complete the <i>Transition from School</i> form (formerly the <i>School Exit</i> form).</li> </ol> <p>A copy of the decision to grant an exemption must be provided in writing to the student, and the relevant Regional Director, or, in relation to the decision of a Principal of a Catholic school, the Diocesan Director, Catholic Education Office within seven days of the exemption being granted.</p> <p>Note: Where a principal assesses that the proposed employment will adversely affect the student’s education the application should not be endorsed.</p> <p>If the Principal refuses to grant an exemption, a notice of the decision of the Principal must be provided to the relevant Regional Director or Diocesan Director, within seven days of the exemption being refused.</p> <p>A decision to refuse an exemption is subject to review and final determination by the relevant Regional Director or Diocesan Director, within fourteen days of receipt of notice of the decision by the Principal</p>

## If leaving school is in best interests of the student

This table describes how to manage an attendance and enrolment exemption where leaving school is in the best interests of the student (Ministerial Order 715).

Stage	Who	Description
1	Parent/carer	Approach the school in writing about the student seeking to leave school.
2	School	<p>Consults the parents/carers and student about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effect of exemption</li> <li>identification of alternate arrangements to exemption.</li> </ul>
3	Principal	<p>The Principal must —</p> <p>(a) consider the best interests of the student; and</p> <p>(b) determine that an exemption under Ministerial Order No. 705 (will participate on a full time basis in approved education or training, or employment or both) is not appropriate in the circumstances;</p> <p>(c) complete the Transition from School form (formerly the School Exit form) and forward to the Regional Director for decision.</p>
4	Regional Director	<p>To grant an exemption, the Regional Director must —</p> <p>(a) determine that the student meets the requirements for exemption;</p> <p>(b) determine that an exemption under Ministerial Order No. 705 (will participate on a full time basis in approved education or training, or employment or both) is not appropriate in the circumstances;</p> <p>(c) consider the wellbeing and development needs of the student, taking into account —</p> <p>(i) the student’s aspirations and reasons for wanting to leave school; and</p> <p>(ii) the views of the student’s family; and</p> <p>(d) consider the best interests of the student;</p> <p>(e) consider if there are possible alternate arrangements to exemption.</p> <p>In considering the best interests of the student, the Regional Director may wish to factor in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>steps taken to keep the student in school</li> <li>the likelihood of the student entering and following a meaningful, sustainable pathway</li> <li>the likely outcome if the exemption is not granted.</li> </ul> <p>Advise the Principal whether the exemption is approved, approved for a specified time or subject to conditions, or not approved.</p>

## Related policies

- [Student Engagement](#)

## Related legislation and Ministerial Orders

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- Ministerial Order 705 - student completes Year 12 equivalent, or will be engaged in at least 25 hours of approved education, training or employment
- Ministerial Order 713 - child turns six years of age while attending a second year in kindergarten program
- Ministerial Order 714 - student employed or seeking employment in the entertainment industry
- Ministerial Order 715 - leaving school is in the student’s best interests

## Department resources

- [Application for school exemption for work in the entertainment industry \(pdf - 48.72kb\)](#)
- [Guidelines to exempt students from school for employment in the entertainment industry \(pdf - 432.55kb\)](#)
- [Managed Individual Pathways \(MIPS\)](#)
- [Transition from School Form \(docx - 81.32kb\)](#)

## Other resources

For more information on child employment see: Business Victoria - [Employing children](#)

### **EVALUATION:**

This policy was last ratified by School Council in ..... and should be reviewed by

.....

Signed:

..... School Council President

..... Principal

