



Coomera State School

We believe in exceptional learning. Every student. Every day.

Attendance Policy

Rationale

All schools in Queensland are committed to providing safe, disciplined and supportive learning environments that address student educational needs.

Coomera State School expects students to attend school every day unless there is a reasonable excuse. Research has shown strong evidence confirming the link between school achievement and attendance. Whilst Coomera State School acknowledges that at times absences are unavoidable due to ill health, enforced school disciplinary absences or the like; some absences are not. It is the avoidable days that we aim to reduce. The short-term effects of high absences that can be observed within the school environment may include lower academic outcomes, social difficulties and possible disengagement.

At Coomera State School we acknowledge that the primary responsibility for a student's attendance at school rests with the parents or carers however we believe that our school can have a positive influence on student attendance. This influence can be achieved by promoting the value of school attendance and supporting students and families to deal with barriers to school attendance where possible.

Coomera State School's Attendance Policy aims to ensure our average attendance data is 95% or higher. We aim to focus on Schoolwide processes to positively encourage attendance and then provide support to those families who are falling below school expectations.

School community beliefs about the importance of attending school

It is important that students, staff and parents have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school. Our school:

- Is committed to promoting the key messages of Every Day Counts
- Believes all children should be enrolled at school and attend school all day, every school day
- Monitors, communicates and implements strategies to improve regular school attendance
- Believes truancy can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- Believes attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

Responsibilities

School responsibilities:

- Regularly inform students, staff and parents/carers about the Coomera State School's Attendance Policy and Procedures through the School's website and newsletters.
- Monitor and identify student absences as outlined in *Roll Marking in State Schools V4.3*
- Follow up absences quickly and address absence issues with parents and carers through correspondence through letters, phone calls and meetings.
- Follow Education QLD policy and procedures for enforcing enrolment and attendance in *Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State School (Ed Qld Truancy Policy will be followed if concerns are raised – this may involve a referral to Department of Child Safety)*
- Provide exemptions from compulsory schooling when approved by the Principal
- Provide students with school work when they are absent for legitimate extended periods of time

Student responsibilities:

- Attend school each day unless there is an acceptable reason for an absence
- Make every day count in their learning
- Report to the office if arriving to school after 9am and provide a note from parent/career explaining their lateness
- Never leave school grounds during school hours without permission from parents/career or the school
- Ensure all missed work is completed that has been missed due to absence.

Parent responsibilities:

Ensure that their child attends school every day for the program in which they are enrolled

- Ensure that their child arrives on time each day
- Contact the school prior to any planned absence or on the day of the absence either by phone or email. Where this is not possible, parents must provide the reason for any absences **prior to 10.00am** on the day of absence, or within 2 days of the student returning to school. This should take the form of a medical certificate for regular illness of a satisfactory explanation of the absence.
- Contact Administration if student absences are for an extended period of time and request school work.
- Contact Administration if a student is refusing to attend school. Initiate or attend meetings to seek support and discuss their children's attendance or participation.
- Provide a written note or explanation (signed and dated) from parents/careers explaining their lateness.
- Advise the school of any change of address or phone numbers to ensure school records are accurate.
- To apply for an *exemption from compulsory schooling* when lengthy absences are planned

Absences – Satisfactory or unsatisfactory reasons

Guidelines for determining whether excuses for student absences are considered reasonable excuses

Pursuant to s176(1) of the Education General Provisions Act (EGPA) 2006, each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age must ensure that the child is enrolled and attends school on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. Pursuant to s239(1) of the Education General Provisions Act (EGPA) 2006 a parent of a young person in the compulsory participation phase must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.

A student who is participating in one of the following activities must be recorded as not physically present at the school site but will not be recorded as absent for the purpose of report cards or school attendance data:

- School activity** – A student is participating in an authorised activity for school purposes.
- Excursion** – A student is participating in an excursion which occurs outside the school grounds and is conducted, organised and/or approved by the school. Excursions include part-day, full-day or multi-day class visits to venues outside the school, and school camps.
- Natural Disaster** – A student is unable to attend school due to an extreme weather event or other natural disaster.
- Sport – Representative** – A student is representing the school, district, region, state or country at a sporting event approved by the school. For non-representative sport, see below.

The following circumstances will be considered absences for which a reasonable excuse has been given:

- Illness** – If a student is genuinely too ill to attend to school. A parent should provide the school with an explanation for the absence, in line with the school's agreed processes for notifying of student absence. This may take the form of a written explanation note/email containing the student's name, date(s) of absence(s) and reason for absence(s), a verbal explanation through either a phone call or visit to the school, or a medical certificate. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required.
- Infectious or contagious disease** – A student is absent from school if the student, is subject to a direction or order given about an infectious or contagious disease or condition.

- **Medical or dental treatments or procedures** – If a student is absent to attend a medical or dental appointment during school hours. Parents are encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours if possible.
- **Holiday** – Holidays during terms are actively discouraged. Parents should be encouraged to plan holidays during gazetted school holiday periods and student free days. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required.
- **Religious observance** - A student is absent to participate in a special religious observance. These absences should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from the parent.
- **Sport – Non-representative** – Principals will use their professional judgement to determine if it is reasonable for a student to be absent from school to participate in a sporting event where they are not representing their school, district, region, state or nation, taking into consideration the type of event and the organising sporting body.
- **Suspension** – Suspension is a reasonable excuse for absence and the following applies:
 - if a student is suspended for 5 days or less the school’s principal will take reasonable steps to ensure the student is given school work to complete during the suspension;
 - if a student is suspended for 6 to 20 days the school principal will arrange for the student’s access to an educational program that allows the student to continue with their educational program during the suspension;
 - if a student is suspended with a recommendation for exclusion the school principal will arrange for the student’s access to an educational program that allows the student to continue with their educational program during the suspension.
- **Law of the Commonwealth** – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if a Law of the Commonwealth allows a child to carry on an activity other than attending school.
- **Funeral** – Attendance at a funeral or to attend to sorry business or sorry meetings may be considered as a reasonable excuse for absence. Parents should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible. There may also be circumstances where a child is kept out of school due to grief of a close family member. In such circumstances, the school will work with families to encourage them to have the child attend school to maintain a sense of normalcy. These situations will be handled with respect and sensitivity and will be underpinned by the interests of the child.
- **Legal** – A student is absent from school where the student is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements.

The following circumstances will be considered absences for which there is NOT a reasonable excuse given:

- **Unexplained absence** – When no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school by the parent.
- **Leisure activities** – Undertaking a leisure activity such as shopping, visiting friends and relatives, or fishing, is not considered a reasonable excuse for an absence from school.
- **Any other reason for absence** – The principal will use their professional judgement in determining whether other reasons given by the parent are reasonable explanations for a student’s absence. If the reason given is not a reasonable excuse, the principal should document the decision and record the absence with the Code J.

Coomera State School Strategies / Responses to Absences

At Coomera State School we achieve our target 95% attendance by:

School-wide Strategies:

- Development of a safe and supportive school environment that promotes positive relationships, including the implantation of programs to develop social skills (PBL, Friends for Life, Rock and Water Program and School Chaplain) and to provide support mechanisms for families (Queensland Police, Department of Child Safety, Child Youth Mental Health Services, MYCP).
- Positive reward systems for both parents and students (may include raffles, celebration, free play, morning tea etc)
- Consistently recording and following up on unexplained absences (follow up calls for any unexplained absences)
- Monitoring of the school's attendance data to identify absenteeism trends and individual students with high levels of absenteeism
- Promote high expectations for school attendance by providing information about attendance to parents via the website, Facebook page, assembly, classroom discussion, class spreadsheet etc
- Discussion of Coomera State School's Attendance Policy at each Enrolment Interview
- Regular updates regarding attendance at our P&C meetings
- Record of contact with parents and carers regarding unexplained absences will be recorded in OneSchool.

Targeted Strategies for high levels of school absence:

- At 3 or more unexplained days absent, a letter is sent to the parents from the Principal requesting an explanation for the absence.
- At ten days of absence per semester (not necessarily consecutive), the Attendance Officer will phone the parent to discuss absences and if necessary, schedule an appointment with the Sector Deputy/Principal.
- Contacts will be recorded on Oneschool (referral to CT & DP).

Intensive Strategies for chronic school absenteeism:

- At twenty days of absence per semester (not necessarily consecutive), the parent will be requested to attend a meeting with the Principal or Sector Deputy to devise supportive goals to increase attendance.
- Provide links external support to the family if necessary
- Development of an Individual Attendance Plan
- Completion of the formal processes as per Education Queensland policy up to and including referral by the Director General for prosecution under the Education (General Provisions) Act.

Parent Reporting and monitoring attendance

At Coomera State School reports of absence or truanting are taken seriously. Students, parents, members of community and school staff may report an absence in the following ways:

- Phone Absence line on 5519 6360.
- Dedicated Absence email: StudentAbsences@Coomearss.eq.edu.au
- Send a note with your child on the day he/she returns to the office.
- Advise the Administration Office in person.

Some related resources

Every Day Counts

<http://education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/index.html>

Every Day Counts – Resources

<http://education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/resources.html>

Departmental Policies and Procedures

[Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance at State Schools](#)

[Roll Marking in State Schools](#)

Materials for schools including fact sheets for parents and case studies are available at

<http://education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/>

Coomera State School Roll Marking & Attendance Policy Flowchart

