



Bicton Primary School Attendance Policy



BICTON PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Background to Attendance Policy

At Bicton Primary School we believe that by attending school each day students have a much greater likelihood of actively engaging in the curriculum and developing the knowledge and skills they need for future personal and career success.

While the majority of our students (Historically 89%) attend school regularly there are some students who miss an average of at least one half day of school each week. Over the school year this results in them missing around 10% of their schooling, placing them in an “at educational risk” category.

Unfortunately, once students develop a pattern of non attendance, staying away from school can often seem easier than attending.

Reasons for staying away from school are many and are often influenced by external factors. We recognise that there are legitimate health, personal and cultural reasons for non attendance. However, we have also noticed a trend at Bicton Primary School for absences attributed to vacations and other unexplained or unacceptable reasons. Of greater concern is that there is a trend at Bicton PS for attendance in the early years (Kindy to year 2) of schooling to be poorer than that of students in the latter years (Year 3 to year 7).

Our aim at Bicton Primary School is to monitor and record student attendance daily and regularly review attendance data to determine whether a student’s attendance is of concern. We also aim to monitor the reasons for student absence and to work with students, parents and teachers where necessary to improve the attendance of students who are at risk.

Policy Statement

Bicton Primary School monitors and manages student attendance in order to maximise the opportunities of all students to learn.

Attendance Records

Teachers at Bicton Primary School will:

- keep accurate attendance records for every student enrolled at the school (including attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions for Kindergarten, Pre-primary and Primary students, and every lesson/period for Secondary students) that are able to be reproduced in a written form;
- record whether a student’s absence was authorised or unauthorised;
- issue a leave pass to a student under the age of 18 who has been granted permission to leave the school unaccompanied by a responsible adult; and
- record a student as:
 - present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction;

and

present if they are on a school-approved activity or attending off-site under a section 24 arrangement.

Retention of Records

The principal or deputy principal will:

- retain attendance records in accordance with the *School Education Regulations 2000* and the *Retention and Disposal Schedule for Department of Education School, College and Campus Records*; and
- retain documentation of all contact and intervention strategies implemented in addressing a student's absence.

Management of Non-Attendance

The deputy principal or classroom teacher will:

- request a reason for a student's absence be provided to the principal's satisfaction;
- where a student is participating in a section 24 arrangement, manage the student's attendance in conjunction with the alternative school or provider; and
- where a student's attendance is below 90% or is identified as a concern:
 - investigate the reasons for the student's absence;
 - organise a parent/teacher meeting and/or case conference at the earliest opportunity to identify issues concerning the student's absence; plan improvement strategies; and
 - include identified attendance improvement strategies in a documented plan.

Persistent Non-attendance

The principal, deputy principal or nominee will develop and implement an attendance improvement plan consisting of:

- a consultation phase;
- a formal meeting phase if attendance is not successfully restored through actions taken as a result of consultation; and
- a process to monitor and review engagement with any plan or agreement developed in the formal meeting.

The principal, deputy principal or nominee will document all intervention strategies used to address a student's absence, so that, should it become necessary to proceed to prosecution, it can be clearly established that all reasonably practicable steps to restore attendance have been taken.

Where absence persists, the principal will offer the option of an attendance panel to the parent, the purpose of which is to provide advice and assistance to restore regular attendance.

Formal Meeting

If school attendance or engagement in an educational program is not successfully restored through consultation with an appropriate network or regional officer, the principal will request the parent attends a formal meeting using Appendix E: *Letter from principal to parent regarding formal meeting*. At the formal meeting, the principal or nominee will:

- Ensure any factors preventing attendance or participation are explored;
- Request the parent engages with alternative strategies to improve attendance; and
- Document a formal attendance improvement plan.

Reporting and Disclosure of Attendance Data

The principal will comply with requests from regional offices and Central Office to provide information on student attendance.

Requests for school attendance data (for example, participation in the Attendance Audit) must include the attendance data of every student enrolled.

Setting Attendance Targets

The principal or nominee (deputy principal) will conduct an annual analysis of Attendance Audit Data and set improvement targets for the following year.

Students identified as being significantly at risk through the Attendance Data with no reasonable cause will have a documented plan for the following year.

Vacations

Parents of students wishing to go on family vacations during school term should be directed to the principal to determine a reasonable duration for the absence and whether a package of work should be prepared for the student to complete whilst absent. A significant amount of notice would be expected. Absences longer than the agreed duration will be recorded with an X for an unacceptable reason.

Please See Appendix A and B for

APPENDIX C INFORMATION REGARDING CHILDREN WHOSE WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN

If a student cannot be located within 15 days of the start of an absence, and their parent/s cannot be contacted, the principal will:

- complete an SWU Request form and email it to the Student Tracking Coordinator at Student.Tracking@education.wa.edu.au; and
- retain the student on the school's current enrolment register until email notification is received from the Student Tracking Coordinator that the student has been placed on the SWU list.

APPENDIX D LETTER TO PARENT FROM PRINCIPAL ADVISING OF CONSULTATION WITH NETWORK OR REGIONAL OFFICER

School Letterhead

[Parent First Name] [Parent Last Name]
[Address]
[SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [Parent Last Name]

I am writing regarding the attendance of your son/daughter, [Student Name] at school. The *School Education Act 1999* requires parents to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on each day that the school is open for instruction. If children are absent from school, a parent or responsible person must provide the school with an acceptable explanation within three days of the absence. Attendance requirements do not apply for students undertaking home education.

I have previously advised you that [Student Name]'s attendance is a matter of concern. We have tried to work with you and implemented a range of strategies to encourage [Student Name]'s regular attendance at school without success.

Strategies attempted include the following:

- [insert a list of strategies offered or attempted here]

I have recently reviewed [Student Name]'s pattern of attendance and it is clear that absences without a good reason being provided are still at an unacceptable level. A summary of absences is attached for your reference. It is very important that we work together to resolve this issue and I intend to consult with [Name and Role of Appropriate Network or Regional Officer], at [Location of Officer] to provide additional support and advice.

I will ask the officer to assist me to review the case and provide advice to the school. As part of this process, the officer may contact you directly and arrange a meeting to discuss [Student Name]'s attendance or attend a planning meeting so we can develop further strategies together. If [Student Name]'s attendance does not improve through these strategies, I may ask you to attend a formal meeting to discuss the situation and will advise you in writing if this will happen. In the event that we are unable to resolve this situation together it may be necessary to refer the matter to the Department's solicitors for legal action.

It is important that we work together to resolve the issue.

Yours sincerely
[Principal Name]

Principal

[Date]

APPENDIX E LETTER FROM PRINCIPAL TO PARENT REGARDING FORMAL MEETING

School Letterhead

[Parent First Name] [Parent Last Name]
[Address]
[SUBURB] WA [POSTCODE]

Dear [Title] [Parent Last Name]

NOTIFICATION OF FORMAL MEETING REQUIRED

I am writing regarding the attendance of your son/daughter, [Student Name] at school. The *School Education Act 1999* requires parents to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend school on each day that the school is open for instruction unless there is good reason for them not to attend. If students are absent, a parent or responsible person is required to provide the school with an acceptable explanation within three days of the absence.

Parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly or who fail to provide satisfactory explanations for absences may be committing a serious offence. The maximum penalty is \$1 000 for each offence.

I have previously advised you that [Student Name]'s attendance is a matter of great concern. I have also consulted with [Name and Role of Network or Regional Officer] to provide additional advice and support and develop alternative strategies with us to improve the situation.

I am very concerned that [Student Name]'s attendance is still at an unacceptable level and that we need to work together to resolve this issue.

I am now asking you to attend a formal meeting to discuss this matter.

At this meeting it will be important for you to talk about any problems that might be preventing [Student Name]'s attendance. A plan will be developed with you to improve [Student Name]'s attendance and it will be expected you take all reasonable steps to ensure your child attends school.

[Name of Organising Officer] will be contacting you shortly to arrange the formal meeting.

Alternatively you may wish to make contact on telephone number [Phone Number]. It is very important that you attend the formal meeting and work closely with the school to avoid the matter being referred to the Department's solicitors for legal action.

Yours sincerely

[Name of Principal]

PRINCIPAL

[Date]



Bicton Primary School
View Terrace
BICTON WA 6157
ABN: 80 641 027 747
Phone: 9339 3659
Fax: 9339 1446
Email: bicton.ps@education.wa.edu.au

<ParSalutation1>
<ParAddress1>
Dear <ParSalutation1>

Thank you for notifying the school that you plan to take <FirstName> <Surname> out of class (Class Name) for intern holiday to <Destination> from <Dates>.

Research undertaken by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, shows a clear link between student absence and achievement in school. Each day a child is absent from school has a direct impact on their educational outcomes. This is particularly evident in a child's first few years of schooling.

Effect of absenteeism

5 days a term missed	90% attendance rate 1 year of school missed
1 day per week missed	80% attendance rate 2 years of school missed
1.5 days per week missed	70% attendance rate 3 years of school missed
2 days per week missed	60% attendance is 4 years of school missed

Every school day missed impacts your child's education and results

Establishing and maintaining a positive attendance career for all students ensures success in their future study and career pathways.

School Principals have received notification from the Director General indicating that family holidays should be categorised as unauthorised absences, except in exceptional circumstances.

On this occasion your request to take <FirstName> out of school for an in-term family holiday will be approved and the absence will be recorded as an Authorised Vacation provided you meet the following requirements:

- Informing the class teacher of the absence within a reasonable timeframe.
- Discussing with the class teacher the requirements and missed content.
- Collecting and completing required class work from the teacher.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Doherty
Principal
15 August 2017



Bicton Primary School
View Terrace
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<ParAddress1>
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Research undertaken by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, shows a clear link between student absence and achievement in school. Each day a child is absent from school has a direct impact on their educational outcomes. This is particularly evident in a child's first few years of schooling.

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Establishing and maintaining a positive attendance career for all students ensures success in their future study and career pathways.

School Principals have received notification from the Director General indicating that family holidays should be categorised as unauthorised absences, except in exceptional circumstances. Consequently, your request to take <FirstName> out of school for an in-term family holiday will not be approved and the absence will be recorded as an Unauthorised Vacation.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Doherty
Principal
15 August 2017

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

THE IMPACT OF HOLIDAYS DURING SCHOOL TIME



Developing the habit of going to school every day is vitally important so your child does not miss out on important ideas and skills they need for future learning.

That is why we strongly encourage you not to go on family holidays during school time.

Why is going to school regularly so important?

At school, many concepts such as literacy and numeracy are taught in a sequence. Missing school means missing out on learning – which can often make it difficult to catch up later. This is particularly important in the early years when essential foundation skills are being taught.

Going to school every day helps children learn the important life skill of 'showing up' – at school, at work, to sport and other commitments.

Research from the Western Australian Telethon Kids Institute shows that every day at school counts towards a student's learning. Students who attend more, generally do better at school and in life.

The *School Education Act 1999* does not allow principals to give permission for families to take holidays during the school term. As students are required to attend school every day, time off for holidays is recorded as an absence.

What can you do?

While it can be tempting to take advantage of discount offers for accommodation and flights, we strongly encourage you to organise holidays during school holiday periods to make sure your child doesn't miss out on school.

Please contact Megan Morley at the front office on (08) 9339 3659 or advise your child's teacher in person if you have been considering taking a holiday during the school term. We will be able to tell you what learning your child would be missing out on.

For more information please contact:

Stephen Doherty, Principal,
Stephen.doherty@education.wa.edu.au

