

This procedure must be read in conjunction and interpreted in line with the [Education Participation \(Enrolment and Attendance\)](#) policy.

1. OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This procedure applies to all children of compulsory education age living in the ACT and enrolled at an ACT public school. A child is required to be enrolled and attend school or apply to be registered for home education no later than 14 school term days after the day the child turns six years old, or begins to live in the ACT.
- 1.2 For children enrolled at a school, the ACT *Education Act 2004* (the Act) stipulates under section 10A that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the child:
 - 1.2.1 attends school on every day, and during the times on every day, when the school is open for attendance, and
 - 1.2.2 attends every activity of the school (including attendance at an approved educational course) that the school requires the child to attend.
- 1.3 This is referred to as the *school attendance requirement*.
- 1.4 All principals are responsible under the Act for encouraging attendance and participation at school and school activities (such as sports carnivals and excursions).
- 1.5 Sections 32 and 33 of the Act require the keeping of records associated with the enrolment and attendance for all students at ACT public schools.

2. RATIONALE

- 2.1 The Act requires all children of compulsory education age to be enrolled with an education provider or registered for home education. If a child has completed Year 10, they may elect to participate in an approved training or employment alternative. A child who is enrolled with an education provider that is not a school must meet the full-time participation requirement (except where an Exemption Certificate has been issued).
- 2.2 The aim of this procedure is to:
 - 2.2.1 clarify the responsibilities of public schools in encouraging attendance, reporting and dealing with absenteeism as determined under the Act;

- 2.2.2 clarify the statutory obligations of parents under the Act;
- 2.2.3 provide consistency in school attendance record keeping procedures throughout the ACT school system; and
- 2.2.4 ensure that attendance data is credible and accurate.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 In addition to the definitions detailed in the overarching *Education Participation (Enrolment and Attendance)* policy, the following definitions are specific to this procedure.
- 3.2 **Attendance roll** means any and all hard copy documents or electronic records, which record both the attendance and non-attendance of a child at school, scheduled sessions at the school and/or an approved educational course.
- 3.3 An **authorised person** is a person appointed by the Director-General under the Act to exercise inspection powers for ACT schools.
- 3.4 **Directorate's record keeping system** means the database used in the Directorate to record details of student enrolments, attendance and related matters.
- 3.5 The term '**duty of care**' is a legal concept that defines the duty a person has to ensure reasonable care is provided towards another in order to protect them from known or reasonably foreseeable risk of harm or injury.
- 3.6 The **school attendance requirement** applies to children who are enrolled at a school, and requires the child's parents to ensure that the child attends the school on every day and during the times on every day when the school is open for attendance, and attends every activity of the school that the school requires the child to attend.
- 3.7 A **student** is a person enrolled in an ACT public school in accordance with section 33 of the Act.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Duty of care

- 4.1.1 Principals are required to ensure that schools are organised in a way that properly provides a duty of care and to account for student absence from the classroom, school grounds and buildings.

4.2 Encouraging school attendance and individual schools' attendance procedures

- 4.2.1 Based upon the provisions of the Act, schools should develop their own school-based attendance procedures, which, where possible, should be negotiated with the school's community.
- 4.2.2 The school attendance procedures should be communicated to students, parents and staff regularly and written information given to each child's parents on enrolment at the school.
- 4.2.3 Schools should provide all staff (teaching, non-teaching, temporary and permanent) with information about attendance procedures when they commence at the school.
- 4.2.4 Individual school procedures should clearly outline the procedure for principals to follow in notifying the non-attendance of a child. The unexplained non-attendance of a child should be reported by the school to the parent as soon as reasonably possible to ensure the safety of the child.
- 4.2.5 The principal will assess regular school attendance on a case-by-case basis having due regard for the individual circumstances of each child.
- 4.2.6 Principals should be aware that the responsibility for attendance of a child lies with the parents under the Act.
- 4.2.7 A school's procedures should include provision of support and strategies to work closely with appropriate individuals, parents and community organisations having regard for social, cultural and religious factors associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, students with disabilities and socially disadvantaged children.
- 4.2.8 The relevant School Network Leader will support the principal to develop appropriate strategies where attendance of a student is an issue.
- 4.2.9 These strategies may involve an appropriate authorised person appointed by the Director-General to carry out a number of functions on behalf of the Directorate.
- 4.2.10 For further information about authorised persons refer to the Directorate's *Appointment and Functions of Authorised Persons* policy available on the website: http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.

4.3 Child of compulsory education age – school attendance requirement and school absence

- 4.3.1 Parents are responsible for notifying the school of their child's absence. Each school will promote acceptable ways of notification. Parents do not have to meet

the school attendance requirement on a particular day if they have a reasonable excuse for the child not attending school on that day.

4.3.2 Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' for a child's absence may include:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings
- participation in sanctioned debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school, or
- participation in interstate, national, or international academic or sporting event or equivalent.

4.3.3 Principals are required to follow-up unexplained absences. When unexplained absences reach a maximum of seven days in a school year, principals will commence official procedures to ensure that students meet the school attendance requirement, in consultation with their School Network Leader. Partial day unexplained absences will be counted as one day.

4.3.4 Extended absence beyond a five week period requires an Exemption Certificate. An Exemption Certificate is not required for a graduated return to school or part-time attendance that spans a period of less than five weeks. For further information about Exemption Certificates refer to the Directorate's *Exemption Certificate* procedure available on the website:

http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.

4.3.5 Failure to comply with the school attendance requirement may lead to the Director-General issuing a Compliance Notice. Failure to comply with a Compliance Notice is an offence for which parents may be prosecuted. Information about Compliance Notices is available in the *Non-compliance* procedure on the Directorate's website:

http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.

4.4 **Part-time attendance and graduated return to school**

4.4.1 Attendance other than full-time may be permitted if there is an Exemption Certificate in place for the child or the child is registered for home education. A copy of the Exemption Certificate should be placed on the student's file. Information regarding Home Education is also available on the website:

http://www.det.act.gov.au/school_education/alternative_education.

4.4.2 If a child's Exemption Certificate permits a graduated return to school (after an absence due to illness or for other reasons), the child should be marked present for

the time spent at school and absent with a valid Exemption Certificate for the time not at school.

- 4.4.3 The status of a child on graduated return in accordance with an Exemption Certificate should be recorded on the child's file held by the school.

4.5 **Management of records**

- 4.5.1 Principals are responsible for ensuring that records of all enrolments and attendance rolls are made in accordance with division 2 of the *Territory Records Act 2002*. For further information regarding the management of records refer to the *Student Record Keeping* policy available on the Directorate's website: http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.

4.6 **Record-keeping**

- 4.6.1 The Act provides for the keeping of registers and records of enrolment in schools and attendance at school. Section 33 of the Act requires that a record of the attendance or non-attendance of a student must be kept for every day when the school is open.
- 4.6.2 Public school enrolment information should be maintained in accordance with the Directorate's *Enrolment in ACT Public Schools (Preschool to Year 12)* procedure, which is available on the Directorate's website at: http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.
- 4.6.3 The school principal must ensure that the following information is entered in the school's register of enrolment and attendances:
- The full name of each child enrolled at the school or course, and
 - A record of the attendance or non-attendance of the child at the school or course on every day when the school or course is open for attendance.
- 4.6.4 ACT public schools must maintain records in accordance with the Directorate's *Student Record-Keeping* policy. A central register of enrolment and attendance at public schools is kept on the Directorate's record-keeping system.

4.7 **Keeping of attendance rolls/class lists**

- 4.7.1 Attendance rolls may be required as proof of a student's enrolment and attendance for a variety of purposes, such as eligibility for Youth Allowance or matters being dealt with by the Family Law Court
- 4.7.2 To ensure consistency in the keeping of attendance rolls, all public schools must employ the following codes when recording absences and the reason for absences:

NB: these codes are consistent with the Directorate’s record keeping system and will be used when entering and retrieving data or generating reports.

CODE	REASON	NOTES
\	Attended in the morning	Physically present in the morning or only during the first part of a scheduled session.
/	Attended in the afternoon	Physically present in the afternoon or only during the last part of a scheduled session.
X	Attended entire day	Physically present at roll call or for the whole of a scheduled session.
L	Absent with parental approval	The school has received an explanation for the absence.
A	Absent without approval	The school has not received an explanation for the absence.
S	Illness	Absence due to an illness, injury or other medical condition.
C	Cancelled Class	The school cancels a timetabled class.
E	Excursion	Attending any excursion organised by the school.
P	Partial attendance - Late	The school should develop and implement a late procedure that can be applied in a fair and consistent manner.
Z	Suspended	This is a formal process of withdrawing students from school if their behaviour contravenes the Directorate’s <i>Suspension, Exclusion or Transfer of Students in ACT Public Schools</i> policy and guidelines.
W	Work Experience	Attending work experience as part of the school program.
I	Absent at an alternative sanctioned program	Schools will need to develop a list of alternative sanctioned programs and inform staff of what they are and when students are expected to be attending them (e.g.: music or dance lessons, religious education classes, AIS students, articulated courses, partial home education etc.).
D	Exemption Certificate	Exemption Certificate issued by the Director-General or delegate, releasing the child or young person from their participation obligations. Students attending part-time should be marked absent with a valid Exemption Certificate for the time not at school.

4.7.3 Attendance rolls provided to a class teacher must be marked each scheduled session as per below:

- preschools, each preschool session, regardless of the length of time of the session
- primary schools, the morning session and the afternoon session, and
- high schools and colleges, each timetabled class or activity.

4.8 Complaints

4.8.1 Where there are concerns regarding the application of this procedure or the procedure itself, people should:

- contact the school principal in the first instance;
- contact the Directorate's Community Liaison section; or
- access the Directorate's *Complaints Resolution* policy, which is available on the Directorate's website at http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z.

5. PROCEDURE OWNER

School Network Leader, North/Gungahlin, School Improvement Division

For support in relation to this procedure please contact North/Gungahlin School Network on (02) 6205 9400.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Education Participation (Enrolment and Attendance) policy

Approved Educational Courses: Government Schools policy

Appointment and Functions of Authorised Persons policy

Attendance at ACT Non-government Schools procedure

Complaints Resolution policy

Education Participation (Enrolment and Attendance) policy

Enrolment in ACT Public Schools (Preschool to Year 12) procedure

Exemption Certificates procedure

Excursions policy

Family Law and the School policy

Infectious Diseases – Outbreak Procedures and Exclusion Periods policy

Non-compliance procedure

Student Record Keeping policy

Suspension, Exclusion and Transfer: ACT Public Schools policy