



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### RATIONALE

The *Education Act* requires that children of school age (six to seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

- Schooling is compulsory for children who are 6 to 17 years old.
- Students are expected to attend their enrolled school during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:
  - the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities
  - the student has an approved exemption from school enrolment or attendance
- Students employed in the entertainment industry must seek approval from the principal prior to be granted permission for the absence. DET approval forms must be completed and presented to the principal for signing and an education plan will be developed for an extended absence.

### 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 Thomastown Secondary College 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 Thomastown Secondary College.

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 Thomastown Secondary College, 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 maximizes 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 Thomastown Secondary College 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 Thomastown Secondary College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Thomastown Secondary College for particular activities

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

Thomastown Secondary College 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.

Thomastown Secondary College 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 Thomastown Secondary College 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**

**Thomastown Secondary College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.**

Our school also promotes student attendance through breakfast club, school productions and sports events including athletics.

### **Recording attendance**

Thomastown Secondary College must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Thomastown Secondary College'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 every session using COMPASS. If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will create a cover note on COMPASS.

### Recording absences

- i.e. contacting reception if it is an unplanned absence, informing the Home Group teacher if it is a planned absence

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, Thomastown Secondary College will notify parents by SMS at 10:30am each day and then follow-up with a phone call later on the same day by the Home Group Teacher or as soon as practicable.

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.

Thomastown Secondary College 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 Thomastown Secondary College considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**authorised absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unauthorised 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 'unauthorised absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been authorised.

### Attendance Monitoring:

In order to monitor attendance our school will:

- check and record the daily attendance of all students
- monitor attendance twice daily and identify absences from school or class
- identify the person(s) with responsibility for monitoring daily attendance
- follow up unexplained absences on the day of a student's absence or when practical
- notify parents and guardians of unsatisfactory attendance
- maintain current contact details for parents and guardians
- accurately record attendance on student files

### **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, Thomastown Secondary College will work collaboratively with parents, the student and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- Parent meetings with Home Group teacher
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Learning Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant staff at Thomastown Secondary College

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 Thomastown Secondary College 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-Western 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](#)

*Reference: The School Attendance Guidelines are available at:*

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/attendance/Pages/default.aspx>

*Education and Training Reform Act 2006*

*Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*

*Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013*

## **REVIEW PERIOD**

This policy was last updated on 2/7/19 and is scheduled for review on July 2020.