GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Department of
Education

Student Attendance in Public Schools policy

Effective date: 8 September 2026

Version: 5.0

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1. Policy statement

Every day that a student does not attend school can have a negative impact on their learning.

The Department of Education monitors student attendance and works with other agencies and service providers to maximise student engagement with learning.

It does this in a way that builds shared responsibility for student attendance between schools, students, parents and the broader community.

2. Policy rules

Principals manage student attendance in accordance with the Student Attendance in Public Schools procedures. This includes:

- promoting the importance of school attendance to their school community
- engaging in community-initiated approaches to strengthen student attendance
- developing plans in partnership with students, families, communities and other agencies to improve student attendance, including documented plans where required, to address the persistent absence of individual students
- maintaining accurate attendance records
- responding to Department requests for reporting and disclosure of attendance data
- managing alternative attendance arrangements where these are in the best interests of the student
- retaining all relevant documentation.

Guidance

It is the principal's responsibility, as site manager, to manage the implementation of this policy and the associated procedures. It does not mean the principal must personally undertake the duty. The principal is responsible for what must happen but has discretion over how it happens on the site.

Education regions and Statewide Services support schools to address and improve student attendance in accordance with the Student Attendance in Public Schools procedures.

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purposes of section 80(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education employees.

Directors of Education:

- provide advice, guidance and support to schools to manage student attendance and to address persistent student absence in the context of their region
- liaise with and coordinate support from other agencies within the region that work with families and young people.

Statewide Services:

- provide resources and support to enable schools to develop local approaches to improving attendance e.g. the Student Attendance Toolkit
- provide policy advice and support to schools and education regions
- develop and implement mechanisms to maintain support, engagement and shared responsibility for improving student attendance and addressing absence across government agencies.

3. Responsibility for implementation and compliance

Implementation of the policy is the responsibility of principals.

Compliance monitoring is the responsibility of line managers.

4. Scope

This policy applies to Directors of Education, principals in public schools and the Executive Director, Statewide Services.

5. Supporting procedures

Student Attendance in Public Schools procedures

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6. Definitions

Attendance

A student is considered to be in attendance when present for, or participating in the school's formal instructional program. Typically, this will be on the school site but also includes off-site arrangements that respond to the student's learning needs and circumstances.

Community

Local people, groups and organisations in and around schools in remote, regional and metropolitan areas. This includes, but is not limited to, students, families, principals, teachers and other school staff, community leaders, local government agency staff and not-for-profit organisations.

Documented Plan

A documented plan records the actions in place to address the specific learning support needs of an individual student.

Parent

In relation to a child, means a person who at law has responsibility for the long-term care, welfare and development of the child; or the day-to-day care, welfare and development of the child.

7. Related documents

Relevant legislation or authority

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purposes of section 80(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education employees.

Children and Community Services Act 2004 (WA)

Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)

School Education Act 1999 (WA)

School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)

Related Department policies

Duty of Care for Public Schools Students policy

Enrolment in Public Schools policy

Excursions in Public Schools procedure

Student Behaviour in Public Schools policy

Student Health Care in Public Schools policy

Other documents

Assist with a family court order involving your students (staff only)

Develop a responsible parenting agreement (staff only)

Every day matters: 10-point plan to improve attendance

Organise an attendance advisory panel (staff only)

Request to become a badged attendance officer (staff only)

Retention and Disposal Schedule for Department of Education School, College and Campus Records (staff only)

School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health (Guidelines)

Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown Flowchart

Students Whose Whereabouts Are Unknown Guidelines

Support documented planning and case management for individual students

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8. Contact information

Policy manager:

Director, Student Engagement and Wellbeing

T: (08) 9402 6100

Policy contact officer:

Principal Consultant, Student Engagement and Wellbeing

T: (08) 9402 6448

9. History of changes

Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date **Policy version no.**	3.0
Notes	Major review undertaken, Student Attendance Policy and Procedures endorsed by Director General on 19 September 2014.
Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	16 July 2015
Policy version no.	3.1
Notes	Updated links as per approval D15/0265969
Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	11 August 2015
Policy version no.	3.2
Notes	Updated contact information D16/0522722

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Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	31 July 2017
Policy version no.	3.3
Notes	Updated links as per approval D17/0323036

Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	3 October 2018
Policy version no.	3.4
Notes	Minor changes to include reference to Public Schools D18/0151652 and updated legislation links D18/0207680.

Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	11 March 2020
Policy version no.	3.5
Notes	Minor change to contact details. D20/0130875

Effective date	1 January 2015
Last update date	8 February 2021
Policy version no.	3.6
Notes	Minor changes to replace the Regional Executive Director position title with Director of Education D20/0647278.

Effective date	19 July 2021
Last update date **Policy version no.**	4.0
Notes	Major review undertaken. Endorsed by Director General on 23 November 2020 D20/0629917.

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purposes of section 80(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education employees.

Effective date	19 July 2021
Last update date **Policy version no.**	4.1
Notes	Minor change to update links and definitions D20/0657410

Effective date	19 July 2021
Last update date **Policy version no.**	4.2
Notes	Minor changes to update links and Other Documents D21/0388622

Effective date	19 July 2021
Last update date	4 October 2023
Policy version no.	4.3
Notes	Minor changes to update contact details D23/1582068

Effective date	8 September 2026
Last update date **Policy version no.**	5.0
Notes	Major review approved by the Director General on 3 August 2026 (D26/0116687). Updated definition and language of documented plan.

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purposes of section 80(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education employees.

10. More information

Supporting content

Procedure

Student Attendance in Public Schools procedures

Policy review date

8 September 2029

All policy and procedural statements contained within this document are lawful orders for the purposes of section 80(a) of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA) and are therefore to be observed by all Department of Education employees.