

ATTENDANCE POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you require assistance with understanding this policy, please do not hesitate to contact the College and someone will organise a multicultural aide or the relevant person to assist you.

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 Mount Ridley P-12 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 enrolled at Mount Ridley P-12 College.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's (DE) [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Mount Ridley P-12 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 maximises 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 Mount Ridley P-12 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 at Mount Ridley P-12 College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment at Mount Ridley P-12 College for particular activities.

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

Mount Ridley P-12 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 to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Mount Ridley P-12 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 Mount Ridley P-12 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

Mount Ridley P-12 College's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- providing a Breakfast Club program accessible by all students
- running support tutoring and homework programs for secondary age students
- offering Attendance Club for students who are identified as 'At Risk'
- publishing articles in our newsletters and other correspondence promoting the importance of regular attendance (It's not OK to be Away)
- encouraging families to review strategies and presentations showcased on the SchoolTV (family wellbeing) resource linked to the College website
- working actively with parents/carers and supporting them
- engaging external providers to run programs / activities before, during and after school, and
- recognising positive attendance through provision of certificates during assemblies.

Recording attendance

At Mount Ridley P-12 College attendance is recorded by classroom teachers every session of the day. Attendance will be recorded by classroom teachers by imputing the data directly into the COMPASS portal.

This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Mount Ridley P-12 College's duty of care for all students, and
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Mount Ridley P-12 College of absences by:

- providing either a written note or medical certificate explaining the reason for the absence upon their child's return
- contacting the College Absence Line (8338 3636) on the day of the absence, or
- directly entering the reason on the COMPASS portal.

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, Mount Ridley P-12 College will notify parents by sending an SMS notification message in the morning. Mount Ridley P-12 College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

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.

Mount Ridley P-12 College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The College 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.

Where Mount Ridley P-12 College considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence, the absence will be marked as 'parent choice – approved **excused absence**'.

Where the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'parent choice unapproved' **unexcused absence**'.

The College Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The College 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, or
- 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 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file. Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

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, Mount Ridley P-12 College will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student services staff.

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

Where Mount Ridley P-12 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 Regional Office] for further action.

Where, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the College 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.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2023
Consultation	College Council
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2026

APPENDIX

Implementation

- All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- As per the *College Student Promotion Policy*, students should achieve the following attendance to be considered for promotion to the next year level:
 - Early Years: Students in the Early Years must have achieved a minimum of 75% attendance to be promoted to the next year level. Exceptions will be made for extended family holidays or illness. These will be considered on an individual basis.
 - Junior School: Students in the Junior School must have achieved a minimum of 75% attendance to be promoted to the next year level. Exceptions will be made for extended family holidays or illness. These will be considered on an individual basis.
 - Middle School: It is an expectation that students achieve a minimum of 85% of attendance. The individual circumstances of each student will be taken into account.
 - Senior School: It is an expectation that students achieve a minimum of 85% attendance. The individual circumstances of each student will be taken into account.
- Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 must provide a medical certificate if they are absent on the day of a School-Assessed Coursework (SAC).
- Parents/Guardians should notify the College in writing prior to any anticipated extended absence.
- Students who are taking extended absences from the College must have a Student Absence Learning Plan to support their education.
- Parents/Guardians will be notified by the Student Manager or Director of Student Management if their child's extended absence will impact on their ability to be promoted to the next year level.
- Students who are late to school disrupt the class and often miss vital work at the start of the day. A student arriving late to school must sign in and their late arrival will be recorded on the daily attendance roll and will count against their overall attendance.
- Parents/Guardians must provide a reason for their child arriving late to school.
- The Mini-School Administrative Officer will notify the class/mentor teacher of students who are consistently late to school. The class/mentor teacher will then follow up with parents to seek their support and co-operation. If the lateness continues, the College Student Wellbeing Team and/or the Deputy Principal for Engagement and Wellbeing will follow up with the family.
- Parents/Guardians and students will be regularly informed about College and community attendance expectations and absence notification procedures.
- Staff will be encouraged to recognise their role and responsibility in promoting and supporting strong attendance.
- Individual class/mentor teachers have the responsibility to follow up absences in their class and request written notification or explanation from parents/guardians for all student absences.
- On the third day of consecutive unexplained absence, the class/mentor teacher will contact the parent/guardian. If unable to do so, the teacher will notify the Team Leader and/or Director of Student Management who will endeavour to contact the family. If

contact is unable to be made, the Deputy Principal for Wellbeing and Engagement/College Principal will notify the Regional Office.

- All absence notes and records of communication must be retained and stored at the College for auditing purposes by the Department of Education and Training Victoria.
- In line with the Merit / Caution system implemented at Mount Ridley College, each unexplained late arrival or absence from class will result in a caution. This can then lead to redemptions/detentions such as the requirement to attend after school or Saturday mornings to make up the absences. In extreme cases suspensions may be issued.
- The Deputy Principal for Wellbeing and Engagement / College Principal has a responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences are investigated and that high levels of absenteeism are explained.
- Attendance Officers will produce a report reflecting students with attendance under 80 per cent.

Early Years Mini School: Monthly reports

Junior Mini School: Monthly reports

Middle Mini School: Fortnightly reports

Senior Mini School: Weekly reports

- A letter is sent home to the parents/guardians explaining the impact this level of attendance has on their child's education.
- If attendance does not improve, follow up meetings are held, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- If deemed appropriate, the College Student Wellbeing Team will become involved to further implement intervention strategies.
- Ongoing unexplained absences, or a lack of co-operation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised.
- Ongoing unresolved attendance issues may be reported by the Deputy Principal for Wellbeing and Engagement / College Principal to the Department of Human Services.
- Student absence figures will appear on student mid-year and end of year reports.
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the (Department of Education) DE and wider community each year as part of the annual report.
- Appropriate DE transfer and enrolment procedures will be utilised when students enrol or transfer from the College.
- The College will promote the DE policy of '*It's Not Okay to be Away*'.
- The DE student engagement guidelines, '*Engaging Schools are Effective Schools*' will be followed and support materials, including proformas, checklists and brochures, will be used as a key resource.

Supporting Documentation

- Mount Ridley P-12 College Procedures for Attendance
- Mount Ridley P-12 College Student Promotion Policy (2021)
- Mount Ridley P-12 College Student Engagement Policy
- Effective Schools are Engaging Schools (Student Engagement Policy Guidelines)
- DE Schools Policy and Advisory Guide
- Attendance and Absence Reporting Guide
- DE School Attendance Guidelines