



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

WHY MUST I SEND MY CHILD TO SCHOOL?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory. This means all children from six years of age and under the minimum school leaving age are legally required to attend school.

WHY IS REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IMPORTANT?

Regular school attendance will help your child to succeed in later life. Attending school every day makes learning easier for your child and helps children to build and maintain friendships with other children. If your child doesn't learn the basic skills in the early years of school, they may develop learning problems in later years.

DID YOU KNOW? IF STUDENTS MISS AS LITTLE AS EIGHT DAYS IN A SCHOOL TERM, BY THE END OF PRIMARY SCHOOL THEY WILL HAVE MISSED A YEAR OF EDUCATION.

Must I send my child every day? YES. It is a condition of enrolment that you send your child to school every day. A small number of absences may be justified if your child has to:

- go to a special religious ceremony;
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (e.g. a funeral); and
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.

Must my child attend all activities, including daily fitness and sport? YES. Sport and other physical activities help to keep your children healthy. Children are expected to attend all regular school activities, including sport. Do not keep your child away from school for the following:

- birthdays;
- shopping;
- minding other children;
- routine check-ups or care such as hair cuts;
- minor family events; and
- sleeping in.

Medical and other health appointments for your child should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

WHY IS ARRIVING AT SCHOOL ON TIME IMPORTANT?

Arriving at school and class on time:

- ensures that your child doesn't miss out on the important learning activities scheduled early in the day when they are most alert;
- helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine; and
- gives your child time to greet their friends before class and therefore reduces the opportunity for classroom disruption.

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained to the school the same way as other forms of absence.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD HAS TO STAY AWAY FROM SCHOOL?

If your child has to be absent from school, it is important to tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- send a note, fax or email to the school;
- telephone the school or; and
- visit the school.

All absences must be explained to the school.

Principals are legally responsible for keeping accurate records of student attendance. The Principal of the school has the right to question parents' or carers' requests for their child to be absent from school. Principals are also responsible for deciding if the reason given for an absence is justified. For this reason, Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences explained by parents as being due to illness. If Principals don't consider an explanation to be satisfactory, they will record the absence as unjustified.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF OUR FAMILY IS GOING ON HOLIDAY IN SCHOOL TIME?

Parents and carers are encouraged not to withdraw their children from school for family holidays. Families should try to arrange holidays during school vacations. If the family holiday is planned during school time, the family need to speak with the Principal in advance and complete an Application for Extended Leave.

MY CHILD WON'T GO TO SCHOOL. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Here are some suggestions to help:

- have a set time to be out of bed;
- have a set time to go to bed;
- have uniform and school bag ready the night before;
- make lunches the night before;
- have a set time for starting/ending breakfast – routine is important;
- set time for daily homework activities;
- turn the television on for a set time and only if appropriate;
- be firm, children must go to school;
- provide lots of positive encouragement;
- be firm, a birthday is not a holiday; and
- time arrival at school to coincide with bell time and leave quickly. If arranged with the teacher beforehand, place your child's hand into that of the teacher and then leave.

If you are still having problems after trying some strategies you should contact the Principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help.

WHAT IF MY CHILD CONTINUES TO HAVE UNSATISFACTORY ATTENDANCE?

It is important to understand that the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities may take further action in cases where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unjustified absences from school. This can include requesting that parents and sometimes their child go to a compulsory attendance conference to help identify the barriers to the child's attendance and implement strategies with parents, the school and other agencies who might be able to assist. If all attempts by schools and systems to improve attendance have been unsuccessful, fines imposed by the Local Court can reach a maximum of 100 penalty points. This is equivalent to a maximum of \$11,000.00.

AT WHAT AGE CAN MY CHILD LEAVE SCHOOL?

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10. After Year 10 and until they turn 17 years of age students must be:

- in school or registered for home schooling; or
- in approved education or training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship), in full-time, paid employment (average 25 hours per week) or in a combination of work, education and/or training.