



Blue Mountains Steiner School Policies and Procedures

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Date of review	Reviewed by:	Actions taken	Next review
Dec 2022	Principal	Made changes to procedures to reflect current practice. e.g responsibilities, late notes, Edumate procedures, addition procedures around Exemption from School added.	Dec 2023

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- A: Application for Exemption for Attendance at School
B: Certificate for Exemption for Attendance at School

POLICY

Blue Mountains Steiner School's Attendance Policy seeks to ensure that government legislation and NES requirements in relation to student attendance at primary school are followed. This policy includes processes and procedures to support school attendance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Education Act 1990 and the Education Amendment (School Attendance) Bill 2009 state that it is the parent or guardian's duty to ensure that their child(ren) 'attend the school at all times when the school is open for the child's instruction or participation in school activities' except when reasonable causes prevent attendance.

All parents with a child(ren) enrolled at Blue Mountains Steiner School must adhere to the rules regarding student attendance. Inconsistent attendance is considered to be detrimental to children's progress, and holidays in term time are discouraged for the same reason.

2. PURPOSE

To monitor the attendance of students at school in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act and to properly document student absences.

To set out the requirements for maintenance and retention of attendance and enrolment records.

3. ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Routine and rhythm are considered an important part of the school day at BMSS. Punctuality, which engenders a healthy respect for work and study, is also considered very important.

Students should be at school with enough time to feel relaxed and ready for when classes begin. The continuity and rhythm of lessons from day to day and from week to week are important and require attendance from beginning to end.

- It is essential that all students arrive at school on time.
- It is essential to the curriculum and the class that all students experience the opening of the day together.
- It is expected that students attend school except in cases of illness.
- It is expected that students complete the full school term with their class before going on vacation.

Students are to report to the Front Office accompanied by a parent/carer for late notes if they arrive after bell time or later during the day. Late notes are to be handed to the Class Teacher, or to the teacher taking the class at the time of arrival.

Students who leave early for any reason, e.g. medical appointments, must be signed out by a parental carer at the Front Office before being collected from class.

3.1 ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Under the Education Act 1990 and the Education Amendment (School Attendance) Bill 2009, attendance at school is necessary at all times while the school is open for the child's instruction or participation in school activities, except when reasonable causes prevent attendance. Reasonable causes may include:

- Illness.
- Other special leave requested from and approved by the school. Such special leave would include medical appointments or similar and other exceptional

circumstances such as family emergencies.

In respect of illness, parents should notify the school by telephone, email or written note. In the case of absence for illness longer than 5 consecutive days the absence notification should be accompanied by a doctor's certificate.

Parents should be aware that if school attendance falls below acceptable levels without reasonable cause it may be necessary for the school to report the non attendance **to Family and Children's Services (FACS) under its obligations as a mandatory reporter.**

3.2 REGISTER OF ENROLMENTS/ADMISSIONS

Blue Mountains Steiner School maintains a Register of enrolments/admissions via its 'Edumate' Electronic Database System that includes the following information for each student:

- Name, age and address
- The name and contact number of parent(s)/ guardian(s)
- Date of enrolment and where appropriate the date of leaving the school and student's destination
- For students older than six (6) years, previous school or pre-enrolment situation

The register of enrolments is retained for least five (5) years before archiving and the register of attendance for a student is retained for at least seven (7) years after the last entry was made in respect of the student. Attendance archives are kept on the school database and in the archives.

3.3 MONITORING ATTENDANCE

Attendance is monitored by the Class Teacher, Front Office and School Principal. Parents/Carers are contacted by SMS on the day of any absence without notice. This includes children who arrive late to school without an explanation from a parent/carer.

Attendance is taken daily at the beginning of the school day by the Class Teacher in a roll book. (See Procedures Section: 3.0 'Marking of Rolls').

Absent children are recorded on an absentee slip which is returned to the Front Office where attendance is recorded in the school's database. Attendance reports are generated regularly and provided to the Principal for review. Any students in danger of falling below the required attendance level are referred to the Principal for follow up.

Where the school has unsuccessfully tried a range of strategies to help resolve a student's attendance problems the school may seek external assistance including from the Association of Independent Schools (AISNSW) to ensure the parents/carers are suitably supported to assist their child/ren to attend school.

3.4 NOTICE OF LEAVE

We require at least two weeks' notice made in writing by completing an *Application for Exemption for Attendance at School* Form (See Attachment A) for special leave to be approved. In this case, the approval of the school may be granted by the Principal and a Certificate for Exemption from Attendance of School will be provided to the parents/carers (see Attachment B).

If there has been no notification of a reason for absence, which has continued for more than one day, it is the responsibility of the Front Office to contact parents to determine the reason

for absence.

The school regards non-compliance with this policy very seriously and any departure from it is to be referred to the Principal. At all times we expect students to be present during the normal hours of attendance. Absence for holidays during term time is considered unsatisfactory.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal will:

- Ensure structures and procedures are in place so that teachers are supported when dealing with attendance problems.
- Decide, in the case of unexplained or unjustified school absence, what form of school intervention is appropriate.
- Investigate all cases where a student has been absent without satisfactory explanation.
- Notify the parent/carer in writing where a student has a poor record of school or class attendance.
- Seek external assistance where required.

The Principal may grant exemptions from school attendance. The Principal, is empowered under Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990* to grant an exemption from school attendance for periods totaling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student.

Exemption from school attendance should only be granted where conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable in the view of the Principal that a Certificate of Exemption be granted. These may include:

- Exceptional domestic circumstances, including but not limited to participation in family holidays during school term subject to being satisfied that this is in the best educational interests of the child;
- Other exceptional circumstances such as health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate;
- The child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under Section 42D of the *Public Health Act 1991*;
- Employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite sporting events for short periods of time i.e. for one or two days, and at short notice;
- Other cases not specifically referred to in the above but where an exemption appears to be in the best interests of the child.

The Principal may refer cases to the Minister for Education (State Government) in cases where the exemption is considered not reasonable.

Where a student leaves BMSS without providing a forwarding address or information about which school the student will be attending, the Principal will:

- Forward a letter by Registered Post to the last known address of the family, and
- Notify the Home School Liaison Officer at the Department of Education and Training.

4.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL

- BMSS will monitor the daily attendance and absence of students in the school by maintaining a weekly roll sheet for each class.

- Student absences, late arrivals and early departures will be identified and recorded in a consistent manner by the class teacher and Front Office staff. (See *Procedures Section 3.0 of this policy: 'Marking of Rolls'*).
- All absences including late arrivals and early departures require verbal or written notification from the parent/carer stating date and reason for absence.
- Unexplained absences from classes or school will be followed up on the same day via an SMS.
- Where unsatisfactory class or school attendance is identified, the attendance issue and any action taken will be recorded in the student's file.

4.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEACHERS AND STAFF

Class teachers will:

- Provide an example of punctuality and responsibility in their class commitments.
- Ensure that weekly attendance sheets are filled out and sent to the Front Office in a timely manner.
- Follow up cases of inconsistent attendance with the parents concerned.
- Communicate with the Front Office in relation to recording late arrivals and early departures.
- Notify the Principal of any absence concerns as they arise.

The Front Office Staff will:

- Maintain the school's database with up-to-date information on student attendance.
- Follow up with parents/carers via SMS, email or phone asking for an explanation for absence on the day of absence.(see Section 1.3).
- Provide printed reports on student attendance as required to either parents, teacher or the Principal.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this policy are met and the correct procedures are followed appropriately.

The Education Manager in consultation with the Principal and the Management Team is responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to throughout the school.

5. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Application for Exemption for Attendance at School Form
 Certificate for Exemption for Attendance at School Form
 AIS Sample Letters to Parents notifying them of absence concern
 Student Attendance Improvement Plan
 The Education Act 1990
 Education Amendment (School Attendance) Bill 2009

PROCEDURES

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the attendance procedures is to facilitate the following expectations and requirements:

- To ensure that all students arrive at school on time To support the curriculum and the class by ensuring that all students experience the opening of the day together.
- To ensure that students attend school (regular classes and school activities) except in cases of illness.
- To ensure that students complete the full school term with their class before going on vacation.
- To ensure that all cases of unexplained absence are investigated promptly and appropriate intervention strategies are implemented. (e.g *Student Attendance Improvement Plan*)
- To ensure that school staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures.
- To ensure that parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements.

2. PROCEDURES

2.1 The Attendance Roll

Rolls are provided to all Class Teachers at the beginning of each school year in a format that is in accordance with the Education Act (1990) (Section 24).

Rolls must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, excursions, camps and similar events.

The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all teachers. Only the codes listed in the front of the Roll are to be used.

School absences must be recorded on the Roll early in the school day and absentee slips should be returned to the Office by 9.30am (only acceptable exception is when classes are away on camps or excursions. Students involved in off-site activities organised by the school must not be marked as absent.)

Staff responsible for maintaining Rolls must be acquainted with requirements of this document and correct procedures for maintaining the Roll.

The Class Teachers responsible for maintaining the Rolls are to sign the Roll each day in the place indicated.

Where an alteration is necessary on the Roll a line is to be ruled through the entry and the correct entry made above. Correction fluid must not be used.

2.2 Students who are Suspended from School

The correct attendance register code symbol for suspension is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on (out of school) suspension, 'E'. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the suspension and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the suspension period. In such cases, the student's absence would be unjustified and recorded accordingly as 'A'.

2.3 Security of Rolls

Rolls must be stored in a secure location within the school.

Rolls must not be removed from school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood. Teachers must not take Rolls home.

The loss of a Roll is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to the Front Office staff.

A new Roll should be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to the commencement of the new Roll must not be included.

A notice signed by the Principal must be attached to the new Roll. The notice must state the period for which the original Roll was a record of student attendance and the date from which the replacement Roll commences.

At the end of each school year the Principal must ensure that the Rolls and attached special circumstances are preserved as a complete record of student's absences for that year.

2.4 Database entry of Attendance Data

School Attendance information is entered daily into the school's 'Edumate' database.

This data entry is completed by Front Office staff who have been trained to use the 'Edumate' Attendance Module.

In weeks 5 and 10 (approx.) of every term an attendance report is generated, printed and forwarded to the Principal for review.

2.5 Follow up of Unexplained Absences

Each morning when absentee slips have been returned to the Front Office, reception staff are to make note of any unexplained absences of students. Unexplained absences are as follows:

- Absences where no phone call, phone message or email explaining the absence has been received by either the Front Office staff or by the responsible Teacher and where the student is not known to be unwell via prior recent communication.
- The student has arrived late to school and not collected a 'Late Arrival/Early Leave' slip on arrival.

In each instance of an unexplained absence Front Office staff are to contact the student's parent or carer by SMS to enquire about the reason for the absence. A written memo outlining the reason for absence is to be inserted into the Roll.

Parents are to be courteously reminded that it is their responsibility to advise the school about their child's absence from school.

If parents/carers cannot be contacted a letter should be sent to them by the Principal.

The Principal may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent should be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

The Principal may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to illness are frequent or prolonged.

2.8 Approved Leave - Extended Leave - Travel Applications

The School may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence and which has been accepted by the Principal.

Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the discretion of

the Principal in consultation with the Management Team.

At least two days' notice in writing is required for special leave to be approved. In this case, the approval may be granted by the Principal.

2.9 Exemption from Attendance

The Principal may grant an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student in accordance with the provisions of Section 25 of the Education Act (1990).

3.1 MARKING OF ROLLS

3.2 Manual Rolls

Symbols to be used where students are absent from school Symbol Meaning

a The student was absent on that day.

Pa The student was late or was absent for part of a day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded.

Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence

Note: The following symbols should be recorded above the **a** or **Pa** symbol as appropriate

Symbol Meaning

A The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no notice has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.

S The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: a medical certificate is provided or the absence was due to sickness and the Principal accepts this explanation. The Principal may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted or the duration of the absence is more than four days.

L The Principal may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the Principal. Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the Principal's discretion. This symbol is recorded where a student's absence is due to reasons accepted by the Principal. This may be due to:

- misadventure or unforeseen event
- participation in special events not related to the school
- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- attendance at funerals
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.

E The student was suspended from school.

M The student was exempted from attending school.

B The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the Principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake:

- school sport (regional and state carnivals)
- school excursions.

H The student is attending two or more education settings for a period of time (shared enrolment). This symbol is recorded where a student accesses a specialist educational setting on a sessional or full-time basis with the full knowledge and approval of the school. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as:

- tutorial centre and programs
- behaviour centres
- hospital schools.

3.3 Electronic Rolls

Symbols to be used where students are absent from school Symbol Meaning

- W** The student was absent on that day.
- P** The student was late or was absent for part of a day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded.

Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence

Note: The following symbols should be recorded above the **a** or **Pa** symbol as appropriate

Symbol Meaning

- A** The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no notice has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.
- S** The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases:
- a medical certificate is provided or
 - the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. The Management Group may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted or the duration of the absence is more than four days.
- L** The Management Group may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the Management Team. Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the Management Team's discretion. This symbol is recorded where a student's absence is due to reasons accepted by the principal. This may be due to:
- misadventure or unforeseen event
 - participation in special events not related to the school
 - domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
 - attendance at funerals
 - recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
- E** The student was suspended from school.
- M** The student was exempted from attending school.
- B** The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake:
- work experience
 - school sport (regional and state carnivals)
 - school excursions.
- H** The student is attending two or more education settings for a period of time (shared enrolment). This symbol is recorded where a student accesses a specialist educational setting on a sessional or full-time basis with the full knowledge and approval of the school.

The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as:

- tutorial centre and programs
- behaviour centres
- hospital schools.

4.0 **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All teaching staff are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of this procedure are met and the correct procedures are followed appropriately.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to throughout the school.

5.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Attendance Policy

Exemption from Attendance at School Form Certificate of Exemption for Attendance at School

Student Attendance Improvement Plan Document

Date created: 12 July 2018

Date Revised: Dec 2022

Due for revision: Dec 2023

Attachment A:



Blue Mountains Steiner School

Application for Exemption from Attendance at School

To be completed by the student's parent/carer

Please read the following information carefully.

1. Government law requires students between the ages of 6 - 16 to attend School on each teaching day.
2. Lengthy absences or inconsistent attendance can have serious consequences for children's academic, social, behavioral and mental well-being.
3. The Principal is empowered to grant exemption from school attendance for periods up to 100 days/year, but must carefully take into account the educational consequences of such leave.
4. Parents are required to apply in advance to the Principal for any student exemption from attendance for all circumstances other than sickness over one week.
5. Parents are strongly encouraged to organize family holidays within school holiday time.
6. **Where family holidays will result in students missing 3 weeks or more of school, parents/guardians are required to meet with the Principal to discuss how the student's educational and social needs will be addressed.**
7. Parents/guardians will be responsible for the payment of full term fees.

STUDENT DETAILS

Family name: _____ Given name(s): _____

Class: _____

Student address: _____ Postcode: _____

DATES

Date of exemption applied for: ____/____/20__ to ____/____/20__

Number of school days absent: _____

REASON FOR APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION (Please tick one)

- Employment reasons
- Exclusion under Section 42D of the Public Health Act 1991, relating to an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease
- Financial Reasons
- Exceptional family circumstances, including family holidays
- Other exceptional circumstances, including special medical grounds

Please provide details about the reason for the application for exemption from attendance here:

PARENT/GUARDIAN DETAILS

Family name: _____ Given name(s): _____
Parent/guardian address: _____ Postcode: _____
Contact number: _____ Relationship to student: _____

As the parent/guardian of the above mentioned student, I hereby apply for a Certificate of Exemption from attendance at school, under the Education Act 1990. I understand that if the exemption is granted:

- I am responsible for his/her supervision and education during the period of exemption.
- The exemption is limited to the period indicated.
- I understand that I am responsible for my child/ren’s school fees during their absence.
NB. Under exceptional circumstances you may be eligible for a discount of fees. If you wish to apply for this please provide supporting documentation to be considered by the Business Manager (i.e. medical certificate, proof of emergency).

Signature of applicant/s: _____
Date: _____

Signature of Principal: _____
Date: _____

Office		Principal	Bus Manager (only if fee related)
Enter absence in Edumate	Email Class Teacher	Date: Sign:	Date: Sign:
Date:			
Sign:			

Attachment B:



**Blue Mountains
Steiner School**

**Certificate for Exemption from Attendance at School under Section 25 of
the *Education Act 1990***

The student whose details appear below has been granted an exemption from attendance for the period indicated.

STUDENT DETAILS

Family name:

Given name(s):

Date of birth:

Address:

Postcode:

Date of exemption from:

Reason for the exemption:

Conditions of the exemption: (Note: for a part day exemption the hours of program participation must be specified, including the plan to have the student attend school full time).

As the parent of the above mentioned student, I am responsible for his/her supervision during the period of exemption. I understand that this exemption is limited to the period indicated. I understand that this exemption is subject to the conditions listed and that the exemption may be cancelled at any time.

Name of parent: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Principal: _____

Signature of Principal: _____ **Date:** ___/___/___

**This certificate has been issued without alteration and must be produced
when requested by police or other authorised attendance officers**