**Belgrave South Primary School**

PRINCIPAL: STUART BOYLE

175 COLBY DRIVE, BELGRAVE SOUTH 3160

TELEPHONE: 03 9754 2505 FACSIMILE: 03 9754 6433

EMAIL: belgrave.south.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

WEB: www.belgravesouthps.vic.edu.au

ABN: 333 96901 815



**STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

 **PURPOSE**

* 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 Belgrave South Primary School has in place to
* support, monitor and maintain student attendance
* record, monitor and follow up student absences.
* to promote in partnership with parents, the regular attendance of students.
* to ensure that school staff are provided with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school.
* to provide processes to actively monitor and support full student attendance.
* to meet legislative requirements and comply with the education and training reform act 2006, the education and training reform regulations 2007 and education and training reform (school attendance) regulations 2013.
* to discharge the school’s duty of care for all students.

**Scope**

This policy applies to all students at Belgrave South Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training’s [School Attendance Guidelines](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance). It does not replace or change the obligations of Belgrave South Primary School, 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* 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 Belgrave South Primary School 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 Belgrave South Primary School, or
* the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Belgrave South Primary School for particular activities.

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

Belgrave South Primary School 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.

Belgrave South Primary School 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 Belgrave South Primary School 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**

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| **1. Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance:** * Articulate high expectations to all members of the school community
* Regularly communicating with parents about expectations for attendance
* Promoting awareness that absence result in lost learning time and opportunities
* Modelling punctuality across the whole school
* Adopting consistent, rigorous procedures to monitor and record student absence
* Following up student absences promptly and consistently
* Implementing data driven attendance improvement strategies
* Creating safe, supportive learning environments where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning
* Providing early identification of, and supportive intervention for students at risk of non-attendance
* Linking with local community groups and agencies to maximize program and individual support
* Providing a staged response to student absence and support students return to school
* Regular discussions on student attendance in staff meetings
* Implementation of effective transition programs including transitions within the school
* Individual Learning Plan (when appropriate) including attendance and punctuality and attendance goals
* Structures and activities encouraging parents/carers’ involvement in the life of the school
* Collaboration with other schools, community groups and agencies.
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**2. Creating safe, supportive learning environments where all students experience success through active participation and engagement in purposeful learning by:**

* Focusing on prevention and early intervention by creating a positive school culture
* Developing collaborative and empowering relationships between teachers, students and parents
* Implementing effective and supportive transition programs, including student transitions between different learning areas and levels within the school
* Developing class and group structures and environments that enable opportunities for increased connectedness to individual teachers and peers
* Immediately following up any problems identified by students and parents in a transparent manner.

**3. Strategies to Improve a Student’s attendance may include where appropriate:**

**Addressing individual student needs:**

* Identifying early warning signs (e.g. frequent lateness, leaving school early, missing lessons)
* Early identification of risk factors
* Working in partnership with the significant adults in the students’ lives
* Working in partnership with community agencies and services
* Special consideration may need to be given to procedures for students and families from particular backgrounds or particular living circumstances (Aboriginal students, students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds including students with refugee backgrounds, students in out-of-home-care and overseas students
* Attendance improvement strategies and interventions consistent with other supports and frameworks in place for the student and family.
* **NOTE:** While cultural and other circumstances of students and families should be acknowledged and sensitively considered, they should not compromise the expectations for the student’s full attendance at school.

**4. Engaging with the family:**

* Conducting effective school-to home and home-to school communications
* Addressing and celebrating cultural diversity in relation to attendance strategies
* Providing volunteer opportunities to enable parents and students to contribute
* Involving families with homework and other curriculum related activities
* Involving families as participants in decision making
* Coordinating resources and services from the community for families, students and the school
* Providing opportunities where possible to enhance parenting knowledge and skills.

**Meetings with parents:**

* Convening a meeting when the student’s attendance is of concern to the school
* At first meeting establishing a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving attendance
* Identifying the reasons for the absences
* Exploring any factors preventing attendance or participation
* Requesting the parent engages with alternative strategies to improve attendance
* Development of improvement strategies to support the student
* Focusing on positive and proactive solutions
* Explaining the possible consequences of repeated non-attendance, including referral to a School Attendance Officer.
* Meetings with parents of students with attendance issues should feel supportive rather than disciplinary, with a focus on positive and proactive solutions.
* Appropriate supports (e.g. interpreters, advocates) should be provided where appropriate to facilitate the involvement of parents.
* Consideration should be given to cultural and language differences and translated material or an interpreter be provided if required.

**Attendance Student Support Group:**

* Convened by the Principal when student attendance issues are identified and it becomes apparent that a student may require ongoing intensive support in order to remain engaged in school
* Existing Student Support Groups (for an individual student) should also be used for attendance issues
* Attended by the parent of the student, a parent’ advocate (if required), a teacher, the Principal or their nominee (to act as chairperson), the student (where appropriate), relevant school based welfare staff, and appropriate supports
* Appropriate professionals from other agencies may also be invited to attend with the permission of the parent.

**Supporting students to return to school after absences through:**

* Setting individual student goals and data driven improvement plans through Attendance Improvement Plan
* Positive and flexible support and follow-up with students on their return to school, including the use of a Return to School Plan
* Both plans should be developed with the student, parent and any support workers
* Formal procedures for supporting the learning of a student absent for a long period

Belgrave South Primary School’s *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

**Recording attendance**

Belgrave South Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

* meet legislative requirements
* discharge Belgrave South Primary School’s duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher at start of the school day and after lunch] using Compass.

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 Belgrave South Primary School of absences by:

* Adding a note in Compass or contacting reception if it is an unplanned absence or by entering on Compass or informing the classroom 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, Belgrave South Primary School will notify parents by the SMS/push notification message. Belgrave South Primary School 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.

Belgrave South Primary School 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 Belgrave South Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child’s absence the absence will be marked as ‘**excused absence**’.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as ‘**unexcused 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 ‘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, Belgrave South Primary School 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 an Individual Education Plan
* implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
* arranging for assistance from relevant staff. [Classroom teacher, student mentor, Chaplain student wellbeing 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**

If Belgrave South Primary School 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 Eastern 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](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/guidance)
* The Department’s Policy and Advisory Library: [Attendance](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy)
* [School intranet](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/sites/i/pages/production.aspx%22%20%5Cl%20%22/app/content/1953/support_and_service)

**Review cycle and evaluation**

This policy was last updated on July 2020 and is scheduled for review in July 2023.