

## **PRINCIPALS UPDATE: February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023**

Dear all,

Welcome back to the 2023 school year and my first Principals Update. I hope you all had a wonderful time over Christmas and New and if you were able to have holidays that they were refreshing and relaxing.

Well, we are all now back at school and I must say the staggered start means that each year is supported smoothly on their return. With Year 11 and 12 starting on Tuesday we were able to have them into their senior studies promptly. Then Year 7 had their own day on Wednesday and commenced O week. Finally on Thursday Years 8, 9 and 10 had their first day.

This week Years 11 and 12 have been making subject changes or dropping units as required. Next week Years 9,10 and any remaining Year 11 can change an elective. There will be no changes in core classes for Years 9 and 10 ... only electives. I have been surprised at how few changes there have been this week and I reflect that this probably relates to how well students thought through their choices last year.

I have attached a document that has come from the Department that relates to school attendance. It is so important that our students attend school every day and promptly. With eleven weeks of holidays for students in a calendar year there is plenty of time to plan for that overseas trip. Please do not book holidays in school time. Of course I understand an emergency for example with the health of an overseas family member but holidays should be taken in the notified term breaks.

Regarding COVID, it is still in our community. We distributed RAT packs to all students at their first assembly. If your child did not get a pack please ask them to come and see me. Also if your child does contract COVID please let the school know and we will as in the past notify parents of that year group.

This coming Monday we will be starting the first of our parent forums for years 11 and 12. Each Stage has a forum and myself, the Stage Deputy and Stage Head Teacher as well as the Year Advisers are in attendance to discuss the upcoming year and answer any questions in the chat. I have sent a separate email to all Year 11 and 12 parents with the Zoom link.

Good news the build is progressing as it should and I am excited to think that we may be moving into 'G Block' for the start of term 3, this year. Already the landscaping has started and we are planning the move back to our new accommodation. To be honest the facilities we are getting are stunning and our students will be thrilled with the spaces.

Finally can I welcome new parents to our school. As existing families know I almost always send an informal email to parents on Friday as well as our more formal newsletter that goes to parents via email once a month.

Hoping for a wonderful 2023 and please remember if you have any concerns, ring the school and our fabulous office staff will forward you to the most appropriate person to solve the issue.

Best wishes  
Susan



# Compulsory school attendance

## Information for parents

Education for your child is important and regular attendance at school is essential for your child to achieve their educational best and increase their career and life options. NSW public schools work in partnership with parents to encourage and support regular attendance of children and young people. When your child attends school every day, learning becomes easier and your child will build and maintain friendships with other children.

### What are my Legal responsibilities?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age of 17 years. The Education Act 1990 requires that parents ensure their children of compulsory school age are enrolled at, and regularly attend school, or, are registered with the NSW Education and Standards Authority for home schooling.

Once enrolled, children are required to attend school each day it is open for students.

### The Importance of arriving on time

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students do not miss out on important learning activities scheduled early in the day
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Give students time to greet their friends before class
- Reduces classroom disruption

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained by parents.

### What if my child has to be away from school?

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral)

Following an absence from school you must ensure that within 7 days you provide your child's school with a verbal or written explanation for the absence. However, if the school has not received an explanation from you within 2 days, the school may contact you to discuss the absence.

Principals may decline to accept an explanation that you have provided if they do not believe the absence is in the best interest of your child. In these circumstances your child's absence would be recorded as unjustified. When this happens the principal will discuss their decision with you and the reasons why.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when frequent or long term absences are explained as being due to illness. Principals may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to collaboratively develop a health care plan to support your child. If the request is denied, the principal can record the absences as unjustified.

## Travel

Families are encouraged to travel during school holidays. If travel during school term is necessary, discuss this with your child's school principal. An Application for Extended Leave may need to be completed. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year.

In some circumstances students may be eligible to enrol in distance education for travel periods over 50 school days. This should be discussed with your child's school principal.

## My child won't go to school what should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school's learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The principal may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

## What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?

It is important to understand that the Department of Education may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- Compulsory Schooling Conferences

You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan (known as Undertakings) to support your child's attendance at school.

- Application to the Children's Court – Compulsory Schooling Order

If your child's attendance at school remains unsatisfactory the Department may apply to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The Children's Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- Prosecution in the Local Court

School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child's full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

## What age can my child leave school?

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10 or its equivalent. After Year 10, and up until they reach 17 years of age, there are a range of flexible options for students to complete their schooling.

## Working in Partnership

The NSW Department of Education recognises that working collaboratively with students and their families is the best way to support the regular attendance of students at school.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.

# Days missed = years lost

A day here and there doesn't seem like much, but...



## More information

Further Information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:

### Policy, information and brochures:

Please visit the Department of Education's Policy Library AND The Department's Attendance Matters Website

### The school leaving age:

Please visit the Department of Education's Wellbeing and Learning website

### Do you need an interpreter?

Interpreting services are available on request, including for the hearing impaired. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **131 450**. You will not be charged for this service.