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 Mildura Senior 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 at *Mildura Senior College (MSC).*

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of MSC, parents/carers 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 MSC 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 MSC, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment at MSC for particular activities.

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

MSC 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.

Parents/carers 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/carers will communicate with the relevant staff at MSC about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents/carers 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

MSC's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our College also promotes student attendance through our Engage Program and Breakfast Club, these programs are designed to support and encourage attendance.

Recording attendance

MSC must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:
- meet legislative requirements
- discharge MSC's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Every teacher has a legal responsibility to mark the roll of every class they are responsible for whether it is the normal timetabled class, an 'extra' or a 'replacement.' Roll marking is to be completed as soon as possible at the start of each lesson on Compass, using your notebook computer or desktop computer located in your classroom.

All rolls should be completed no later than:
1. 10:30am each day
2. 3:30pm each day

If a student is late to class please amend the Roll accordingly.

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

When taking an 'Extra' you may be required to print a class roll from Compass or one may be provided for you. This must be returned as soon as possible to the Attendance Officer (no later than 3:30pm).

- Attendance data is gathered using Compass and distributed to staff for reporting purposes. Attendance data is also imported to CASES21 at the end of each year to meet DET requirements. Sub School Leaders also rely on accurate attendance data when investigating a student's welfare and when communicating with parents. Refer to *Appendix A: Attendance Process Guidelines.*

Recording absences

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

All absences must be reported / verified in ONE of the following ways:
- Compass: Parent Portal (www.milsen.vic.edu.au)
- Compass Parent App (Compass School Manager)
- Email – attendance@milsen.vic.edu.au
- Phone the College's Attendance Officer 03 5021 2911 Option 1 (This is a 24-hour service. Please leave a message giving your student's name and the reason for the absence).
- Provide a medical certificate.
- Provide an appointment notification.
- Provide a signed and dated note with student's full name.

NOTE: If a student is absent for a SAC in a Year 12 subject parents/carers MUST notify the school immediately. A doctor's certificate is required to be eligible to re sit the SAC for a score at an alternative time.

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, MSC will notify parents by SMS/push notification message using Compass twice daily (11am & 3.50pm). MSC will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

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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.

MSC will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal or nominee 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 MSC 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 or nominee has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal or nominee 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
As Year 11 and 12 are particularly demanding in their workload, it is strongly recommended that families do not arrange holidays, trips or appointments during the school terms or the school day. This can cause undue stress on the student trying to catch up and keep up with the class work. All appointments should be made outside school hours.

Assessment tasks are held continually throughout the year and **must** be sat on the scheduled day.

All VCE, VET and VCAL subjects have a **compulsory** attendance requirement. **The minimum attendance rate is 90%.** Parents will be contacted for ongoing absences. Students with poor attendance are at risk of failing one or more subjects, which may lead to a possible exit from the college.

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, MSC 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 either Classroom Teacher, Sub School Leader or the Wellbeing Coordinator.

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, there are things we can do together to ensure they do not fall behind:

- Contact the College to find out your student's attendance rates or check parent portal to find out this information. Your student's attendance rate is also published for each subject on all reports.
- Speak with your student's Sub School Leader and teachers to find out what work your student needs to do to keep up.

- Get your student back to school as quickly as possible.
- Your student's Sub School Leader will contact you directly if your student's attendance level is too low.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If MSC 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/West Regional Office 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:
  - o the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - o measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  - o the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  - o no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

Resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Department polices and guidelines:
- School Attendance Guidelines
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library: Attendance

The following College policies are also relevant to this policy:
- 1.19 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- MSC Student Handbook
- 2.08 Attendance Information Guidelines
- Appendix A: Attendance Process Guidelines

Review and Evaluation

Ratified by:	SOP	Ratified date:	31.08.2020
Document Owner:	Assistant Principal - Student Achievement & Wellbeing	Reviewed date:	31.08.2023
S:\Admin\Policy Docs\Policy Register		Review Cycle:	3 – 4 years
Principal Approval:			

APPENDIX A

ATTENDANCE PROCESS GUIDELINES

Category	Who	Responsibilities
Tier 0	Classroom Teacher	• Use student profile tool to identify students with attendance issues that you teach at start of year • Every Class: Mark the roll on Compass accurately during class • If a student misses an assessment task or SAC email parent using the missed SAC Tab in Compass so it will be chronicled and provide resit date /time/place for Monday or Tuesday afternoon in your faculty • Student returning from an absence On return to class show concern and ask student where they were. Let them know what work they missed and ask if they have explained the absence to attendance officer.

Tier 1
 	
≥ 2 Days Absent
 	
Approx. 90-100%
	Pathways Teacher
	
	Notify
	
	Attendance Officer
		• Weekly
		• If student is absent for 2 or more days
		  Pathways teacher to call home to discuss the reasons for the absences and how they can support the student.
		• If absence is explained ask attendance officer to amend on Compass
		• If student misses ONLY pathways on a Tuesday phone home THAT DAY or WED morning. Explain why attendance at pathways is important.
		  If a parent or student are not responding to phone calls use the emergency contact number found in the attendance officer files. See SSL for assistance
		• Generate weekly absences and discuss in pathways and remind students to have Parent/guardian explain. Hand out fridge magnet.

	ES	90% Letter Generated and sent home
Tier 2 5-10 Days Absent 80-90%	Pathways Teacher	• Weekly: Generate Cohort Absences • SSL meets with student to access the real reason for absence. Provide support • Chronicle and monitor • Student made aware of future steps
	ES	• 80% letter generated and sent home
<80% Parent Meeting	SSL	• Parent/Student/ SSL meeting 80% • Develop an improvement Plan
Tier 3 10-15 Days Absent 70%	SSL Pathways Teacher	• Pathways teacher to monitor Plan • SSL arrange subsequent meeting if no change
Tier 4 15+ Days Absent less than 70%	SSL	• SSL arrange a student/parent meeting 70% • Re-evaluate the improvement/ intervention plan. Seek NGD assistance • Monitor Plan • Set up a meeting in 2 weeks time to follow up.
Tier5 20+ Days Absent less than 60%	AP / Principal / Regional Support	• Arrange Student/Parent Meeting with SSL and AP 60% • Parent meeting regarding future options and pathways • Inform Navigator if not contactable