



MACKAY NORTH STATE HIGH SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale:

All schools in Queensland are committed to providing safe and supportive learning environments for all students which address their educational needs.

Each parent / caregiver of a child who is enrolled at Mackay North State High School must ensure that the child attends school on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.

The issue of absenteeism is complex and covers a range of behaviours, including chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy. It is widely recognised that attendance problems are best managed by early identification and intervention.

There is a correlation between attendance and academic performance. [Research](#) shows that poor school attendance is associated with:

- lower academic achievement including literacy and numeracy
- early school leaving
- leaving school with fewer qualifications
- reduced opportunities for students to learn and access educational resources, further limiting achievement
- further absenteeism in higher year levels
- increased alcohol, tobacco, and substance use in adolescents.

School community beliefs about the importance of attending school:

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school. Mackay North State High School:

- is committed to promoting the key messages of Every Day Counts (*Appendix One*)
- believes all children should be enrolled at school and attend school all day, every school day
- monitors, communicates and implements strategies to improve regular school attendance
- believes truanting can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices
- believes attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.

School responsibilities

Mackay North SHS aims to work in partnership with parents and students to maximise student attendance. Through the systems we have in place we aim to:

- identify absences quickly;
- follow-up absences promptly;
- send clear messages to students and parents that attendance is vital.

Student responsibilities

Students are required to:

- make a determined effort to attend school every day
- provide the school with a reasonable explanation from a parent / guardian when an absence is unavoidable
- catch up on any classwork that has been missed due to an unavoidable absence

Parent responsibilities

Parents are ultimately responsible for ensuring their children attend school, and our aim is to work with parents and the local community to implement the best strategies to suit the needs of students and the context of the community.

Parents may be prosecuted for their children's poor attendance; however, this is a last resort.

Implementation and strategies

A five-step approach is used to address absenteeism in a school.

1. Develop a positive school culture

Students are more likely to attend and achieve at school if they feel accepted, valued, respected and included. We promote positive relationships between and amongst students, staff, and parents.

At MNSHS we use the following strategies to develop a positive school culture:

- ✓ Attendance reward schemes:
 - Attendance is promoted at Year Level assemblies and incentives are given for Homegroups who have improved overall attendance and / or achieved a high percentage attendance rate
 - all students achieving a 95 – 100% attendance rate at the end of each term are recognised by Homegroup teachers and Year Level Coordinators
- ✓ Resilience programs and anti-bullying strategies are delivered by student services staff (Guidance Officers, Social Worker, School Based Youth Health Nurse, Chaplain, Youth Support Coordinator, School Based Police Officer) that develop social and emotional skills
- ✓ The Community Education Counsellor works closely with Indigenous students and their families to encourage and promote attendance
- ✓ Positive relationships with parents through ongoing communication from Homegroup Teachers and Year Level Coordinators.

2. Communicate high expectations of attendance

Staff, parents and the community can all play a role in helping schools to improve student attendance.

Discussion of attendance is important when a student first enrolls at a school. The move from primary to high school is a crucial transition during which attendance patterns are established for the future.

Expectations of student attendance at MNSHS are conveyed through:

- Newsletter items
- Website documents
- Enrolment packages and interviews

All students are expected to set a goal to achieve a 95% attendance rate. Students are regularly made aware of their current attendance rate by their Homegroup teachers using One School Dashboard. Students who have an attendance rate below 85% are specifically targeted by Homegroup Teachers and Year Level Coordinators for early intervention.

3. Record and follow-up student absences

Timely follow-up is a key preventative strategy in reducing absenteeism. It makes it harder for students to miss school without being detected. It also enables parents who may not be aware that their children are absent to take action.

Recording absences:

- Rolls are marked on ID Attend each morning during Home Group
- Rolls for each subject class are marked on ID Attend by the classroom teacher every lesson in a timely manner so that truancy can be detected immediately
- Classroom teachers are to report suspected truancy to the Year Level Coordinator as soon as possible

Reporting and explaining absences:

- Student absences from school can be explained by a parent or guardian in the following formats:
 - Phone call to the office
 - Note or a letter to Homegroup Teacher
 - Email to Homegroup Teacher or office
 - Sending a reply to school generated SMS
- On receipt of the explanation for an absence:
 - Office staff are to enter the explanation on ID Attend
 - Homegroup Teachers are to send notes to the office or if they have received the explanation themselves recording this in an email or on One School and sending this to the office
 - ID Attend will be rolled into One School each day by office staff so that the One School data is up to date

Following up absences:

- Parents will be notified via SMS (ID Attend) if their child is absent from school or late to school after period one
- Homegroup Teachers are responsible for reviewing and analysing attendance data for students in their Homegroup each week. Initial parent / guardian contact for attendance is made by the Homegroup teacher when there is a concern about a student's attendance. (This could include when a student has had numerous days away from school or when their overall attendance is dropping / is below 85%).
- Year Level Coordinators meet weekly with a Deputy Principal or Senior / Junior Schooling Head of Department to discuss student attendance and are the next point of contact for ongoing issues with student attendance
- Teachers, staff and parents can refer attendance concerns to Year Level Coordinators
- All communication regarding attendance is recorded through Record of Contact on One School

4. Monitor student non-attendance

The Executive Team, Heads of Department and Student Services members will work with Year Level Coordinators to monitor students who show patterns of non-attendance. With the members of these teams, Year Level Coordinators are required to:

- Investigate trends in data (eg. days of the week with the highest level of absenteeism)
- Review attendance data for the previous term to identify students with poor attendance and monitor these students
- Discuss attendance data with staff and Homegroup teachers so that trends and students at risk can be identified
- Consider the reasons for attendance patterns
- Schedule fun events and activities on days that have traditionally poor attendance
- Focus on improving attendance during the last week of term, when there is often a significant increase in absences. Ensure that learning continues up to and including the last day of school.
- Discourage families from taking holidays during school terms
- Distribute weekly reports to all school staff on the attendance rates for all year levels and classes

Data is comprehensively analysed weekly using the performance dashboard on One School. Students are categorised into one of the following categories according to their attendance rate:

- <85%: RED
- 85 – 90%: ORANGE
- 90 – 95%: LIGHT GREEN
- 95 – 100%: DARK GREEN

Any student who has an attendance rate of less than 85% will be monitored closely by both Homegroup Teacher and Year Level Coordinators. A phone call will be made to parents of these students regularly to discuss patterns in their attendance, any improvements they may have shown from week to week, and to gain information as to why they may be absent from school.

Teachers are provided with a guide to call / email parents regarding student attendance.

5. Provide intervention and support

When a student has been identified as high risk and the usual measures do not provide and improvement in attendance, school staff need to work more closely with these students and their families to help identify the reasons for poor attendance, promote the benefits of attending school, identify attendance and achievement goals, and develop a realistic plan for improving attendance.

These families will be offered support from both within the school (Guidance Officers, Social Worker, School Based Youth Health Nurse, Chaplain, Youth Support Coordinator, Community Education Counsellor, school-based Police Officer) and external support (Psychologist). In these cases, Mackay North SHS will work together with support staff to address any attendance or welfare concerns. Home visits may be made in some circumstances by a Police Officer or Youth Support Coordinator.

Where there is no reasonable excuse for the child's non-attendance, the department may refer parents to the Queensland Police Service for prosecution, in accordance with [Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance](#). Prosecution is a last resort and will only be utilised once all reasonable strategies have been exhausted, or if the family refuses to cooperate.

The Enforcement of Attendance process is initiated in One School by a Deputy Principal after identification and consultation with the Year Level Coordinator and a Student Services team member.

Some related resources

[Every Day Counts](#)

Departmental Policies and Procedures:

[Managing Student Absences and Enforcing Enrolment and Attendance](#).

[Roll Marking in State Schools](#)

Vignette resources:

[Attendance: it all adds up](#)

[Attending every day](#)