

Attendance

The *Education Act 1990* (the Act) requires all children of compulsory school age to be enrolled in and attend school or be registered for home schooling.

Schools must keep a register of the enrolment and daily attendance of all children at the school.

Compulsory school age in NSW

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children are **either**:

- enrolled at and attend a government school
- enrolled at and attend a registered non-government school
- registered for home schooling.

Manual requirements

Schools must refer to the requirements for enrolment and attendance provided in the relevant sector manual:

- [government schools](#)
- [individual non-government schools](#)
- [systemic non-government schools](#).

Enrolment policies

Each school or system has an enrolment policy.

Government schools implement the Department of Education policy and may develop localised procedures.

The enrolment policy for non-government schools must outline any prerequisites for continuing enrolment and may include conditions for enrolment.

Enrolment register

Schools are responsible for obtaining, recording and maintaining current and accurate information about each student enrolled at the school. This includes details about the student, their parents, where students were previously enrolled (if relevant) and their post-school destination if they leave the school.

Each manual identifies the specific information and details that schools are required to maintain in their enrolment register.

Attendance policies

Schools are required to have and implement policies and procedures to accurately record, monitor and follow-up unexplained student absences.

The purpose of monitoring attendance is to ensure the safety and welfare of students.

A school's processes for monitoring and recording attendance should contain sufficient procedural detail to ensure that all staff at the school understand their role, responsibilities and obligations for recording, monitoring and following-up absences.

Such details may include:

- **Who** will monitor attendance; record absences; update data; contact parents; follow up absences?
- **What** will be used to monitor and record attendance (paper or electronic system); will be recorded; criteria will be used when approving leave; intervention strategies will be used to address unsatisfactory attendance?
- **When** will attendance be taken; will parents be contacted if absence noted; will follow-up take place; will records be updated?
- **Where** will attendance be recorded; will reasons for absences and other records be stored; are archives to be maintained?
- **How** will the accuracy and integrity of the data be assured; will security of the data be maintained?

Attendance register

Schools must monitor and record daily student attendance. This may be done by either noting attendance or absences. Schools must record reasons for each absence and maintain evidence to substantiate the reason provided for an absence.

When recording absences in attendance registers, schools must use the common codes approved by the Minister. The codes and further information about recording attendance is available on the websites of the NSW Department of Education, Association of Independent Schools of NSW and Catholic Schools NSW.

Record keeping

Non-government schools are required to retain records for specific periods:

- The register of enrolments must be retained for a minimum period of 5 years before archiving.
- The register of daily attendance must be retained for a period of 7 years after the last entry was made before archiving.

Legal documents

The registers must be available at any time if requested by a NESA Inspector. They are legal documents that may also be subpoenaed by a Court.

Staff responsible for maintaining an attendance register need to know how to access student attendance records, and if necessary, produce a report, for a specified timeframe.

Delegation to grant or cancel an exemption from enrolment or attendance

The Act allows for the Minister to grant an exemption from enrolment or an exemption from attendance in certain circumstances.

The Minister delegates this authority to the Principal of a school.

Parents are required to apply in advance for an exemption. Any application will be dealt with in accordance with the school's policies and procedures for exercising the Minister's delegation under section 25 of the Act.

Some examples are provided below.

Exemption from enrolment may be granted:

- due to age (if a child turns 6 on or after 1 October)
- for health, learning/social needs or disability (where there will be an individual program supported by medical specialists for not more than 6 months after a child turns 6)
- for an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Exemption from attendance may be granted:

- due to employment in the entertainment industry
- for participation in elite arts or sporting events
- for health issues where sick leave is not appropriate or there are directions under the *Public Health Act 2010*.

Schools may seek advice from their relevant sector policy and/or representative about what may be granted as a type of exemption and the certificate to be issued.

Leave for travel

An exemption from attendance under the Minister's delegation cannot be granted for the purpose of travel.

However, a Principal may grant leave for students travelling or other reasons the Principal considers as an acceptable reason for leave.

The school's attendance policy should indicate its position regarding approving leave for travel. If relevant, the school must have procedures for applying for and approving an application for leave.