

## 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 staff and parents the key practices and procedures Bannockburn 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 Bannockburn College.

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 Bannockburn College, 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* (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 Bannockburn College 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 Bannockburn College, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Bannockburn College for particular activities.

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

Bannockburn College believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with our college community to encourage and support full school attendance.

The College 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 to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Bannockburn College parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the College and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Bannockburn College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the College 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**

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

Our College also promotes student attendance by:

- connected relationships between the student and the Homegroup teacher
- dedicated timetabled time for each class with their Homegroup teacher in Homegroup sessions every day
- a range of Engagement programs: to support students who require this, led by the College Well-being team
- Parent Club run Breakfast Club
- Learning for Life subject across the college to develop social and emotional skills
- Participation in inter school sports
- Participation in extra-curricular activities, particularly linking with the Golden Plains Shire
- Subject selection from Year 9 where students select the majority of their subjects
- Camps offered at every year level from Year 3 up
- A range of excursions offered to students across the college
- A strong and developing House system across the college

### **Recording attendance**

Bannockburn College must record attendance several times each day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Bannockburn College's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher, using Compass, at the start of each session (or double session) for Year 7-12 classes, and at the start of session 1 and session 5 for Prep to Year 6 classes.

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

Students in Years 11 and 12 and those studying a VCE subject in Year 10, are expected to attend 90% of their scheduled classes. Refer to Later Years Policy Handbook for further details.

## Recording absences

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

Parents should notify Bannockburn College of the absence and reason by:

- using Compass to mark their child's absence and select the reason, or
- contact the College Office, by phone or in person,

If a student is absent on a particular day and the College has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Bannockburn College will notify parents by SMS push notification at 10am. Bannockburn College will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond. Emergency contacts may be contacted where cannot be made with parents.

Bannockburn College 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 Bannockburn College considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as **Approved absence**.

If the College determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as **Unapproved 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 reasons: medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- Family reasons:
  - bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
  - cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
  - family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an **Unapproved absence** and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been approved.

## 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, Bannockburn College 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 support from relevant student well-being staff, relevant Team or House Leader and Homegroup teacher
- engaging external supports such as Regional Navigator Program

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.

The **Later Years Policy Handbook** outlines the process for the management of Later Years students who fall below the 90% attendance threshold and the specific regulations in place for students who are absent for an assessment task at these levels.

### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Bannockburn College 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 Ballarat – Central Highlands, 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:
  - 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](#)
- School Policy and Advisory Guide: [Attendance](#)
- [Bannockburn College Website](#)
- [Later Years Policy Handbook](#)

### **Review cycle and evaluation**

This policy was last ratified by College Council consultation on **May 2020** and is scheduled for review in **May 2023**.