

# Fountain Gate Secondary College

## Attendance Policy



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the General Office on 8762 6839 or email [fountain.gate.sc@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:fountain.gate.sc@education.vic.gov.au)

### 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 Fountain Gate Secondary College has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up on student absences.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Fountain Gate Secondary College.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education **School Attendance Guidelines**. It does not replace or change the obligations of Fountain Gate Secondary 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. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age.

At Fountain Gate Secondary College, we believe that 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.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day. Please see **Appendix A – School Attendance Guidelines Responsibilities** for Student, Parent, Teacher, Year Level Teams, Attendance Team and Leadership, Responsibilities for Attendance.

Fountain Gate Secondary College 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. **Appendix B – Staged Response.**

Students are committed to attending school every day, **on time, every 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.

Fountain Gate Secondary College parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attends school **on time, every time** when instruction is offered, communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence. **Appendix C – Punctuality.**

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Fountain Gate Secondary College about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school 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.

This policy provides the framework for a whole-school approach to the engagement of students in their learning and school life.

It is to be read in conjunction with the colleges:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Staff Handbook

## **SUPPORTING AND PROMOTING ATTENDANCE**

At Fountain Gate Secondary College, we promote 100% attendance.

Our school also promotes attendance by:

- creating a safe and positive learning environment
  - promoting student activities and lunchtime clubs in the Student Calendar which is updated each term
  - regularly communicating with students, and parents about the expectations for attendance
  - having a dedicated Attendance Improvement Team involving members of the Principal, Year Level Teams, ES and Wellbeing Teams that work closely with the Department of Education's Wellbeing and Engagement Officers
  - focussing on prevention and early intervention by using our school-wide Positive Behaviour Framework.
- Appendix D - Rewards**
- regular communication about the importance of attendance through meetings, newsletters, assemblies, and the Gateway Program
  - having access to attendance-focused programs such as RISE and Operation NewStart.

## **RECORDING ATTENDANCE**

At Fountain Gate Secondary College teachers must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

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

**Appendix B – Staged Response** For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. Parents should notify Fountain Gate Secondary College of absences by contacting the attendance lines for each year level.

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, Fountain Gate Secondary College will notify parents by SMS/telephone. Fountain Gate Secondary 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.

If contact cannot be made with the parent, the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, within three days of absence.

Fountain Gate Secondary College will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable explanation** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Fountain Gate Secondary College considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable explanation** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**explained absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as an '**unexplained 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 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.

Student attendance is recorded every lesson and this data is transferred to CASES as full or .5 days.

To ensure that subject teachers are able to authenticate work submitted for each outcome, VCE students at Fountain Gate Secondary College are required to attend at least 90% of classes. Failure to meet this attendance requirement may result in a student receiving a Non-Satisfactory (N) result for the unit. **Appendix G - VCE Attendance.**

## **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, Fountain Gate Secondary College will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- sending home attendance letters – **Appendix E – communication**
- completing home visits

- arranging for assistance from relevant external providers e.g. student wellbeing staff, SSSO etc
- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan **Appendix F – Supports**
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period **Appendix F – Supports**

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional support and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, we will endeavour to provide this support when it is required. **Appendix B – Staged Response**, outlines the flow of tiered support given at Fountain Gate Secondary College to manage non-attendance.

## REFERRAL TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SCHOOL’S ATTENDANCE OFFICER

If Fountain Gate Secondary 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 South Eastern Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact 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.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available on our college’s website
- Included in new staff induction processes
- Included in the staff handbook
- Discussed at parent information nights and sessions
- Discussed with students in class, assemblies, and student support groups (SSG)
- Reminders in our college’s community newsletter
- Hard copies available from the school administration upon request

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy developed by	Christine Muir – Acting Assistant Principal, August 2023
Consultation	School Council Principal Team Leadership Team Student Leaders Dana Halm-Forshner - DE Attendance Project Partner
Approved by	Jo Cucchiara – Principal, August 2023 School Council – November 2023
Next scheduled review date	2026