

# Regular School Attendance

Information for parents and carers of children in, or about to enter, Kindergarten



Did you know? If students miss as little as eight days in a school term, by the end of primary school they will have missed a year of education.

## Why must I send my child to school?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between six and fifteen years of age. Once enrolled children are required to attend school each day it is open for instruction.

Principals are legally responsible for maintaining accurate records of student attendance. When reasons for absences are provided to the school by parents, principals are accountable for their decision to record a student's absence as justified. Principals may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence and will record that absence as unjustified.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to illness are frequent or prolonged. It is the responsibility of parents or carers to make sure that their children attend

school each day that the school is open for instruction or other activity. It is important to understand that parents (including carers) may be prosecuted if children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unjustified absences from school.

## Must I send my child every day?

**YES.** While education is not compulsory until your child turns six, we require you to send your child on every school day as a condition of enrolment. This is for a number of reasons. First, the learning in kindergarten is essential preparation for your child's whole educational career. This is a time where your child's teacher can focus carefully on your child's learning needs for the future. Kindergarten also provides a chance to sort out any difficulties or problems as they arise. Secondly, having a good routine and being punctual are important skills for your child to develop.

A small number of absences may be justified if your child:

- has to go to a special religious ceremony
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (e.g. a funeral)
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.

Head lice infestations can be a common occurrence, particularly in primary schools. Parents should check their child's hair regularly for head lice and undertake treatment where eggs or lice are identified. Information on how schools can support parents to manage head lice infestations can be accessed from the student health section of the Department's website at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/student-support/student-health/conditions/headlice/index.php>. Advice from NSW Health indicates that there is no need for students to be sent home or excluded from school

because of head lice. Head lice, is not a valid reason for prolonged absences from school.

## Why is regular attendance at school important?

Regular school attendance will help your child to succeed in later life.

Attending school every day makes learning easier for your child and helps build and maintain friendships with other children.

If your child misses learning the basic skills in the early years of school, they may develop learning problems in later years.

## What should I do if our family is going on holiday in school time?

Families should try to arrange holidays during school vacations.

If your family holiday is during school time, inform the school principal in advance and request leave and/or an exemption from school.

Depending on the circumstances and duration of leave, you may ask the school to provide tasks that can be completed while your child is absent.

## Must my child attend all activities, including daily fitness and sport?

**YES.** Sport and other fun activities help the healthy physical development of children. As a normal school activity, students must attend.

## Do not keep your child away from school for the following

- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Minding other children
- For routine check ups or care such as hair cuts
- Minor family events.

Medical and other health appointments for your child with specialists such as dentists or doctors should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

## What should I do if my child has to stay away from school?

It is important to let the school know when your child will be away and the reason for your child's absence.

All absences must be explained to the school at which the child is enrolled. The principal of the school has the right to question parents' or carers' requests for their child to be absent from school, or an explanation given for a child's absence from school.

## My child won't go to school. What should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. The principal may seek support from a home school liaison officer or Aboriginal student liaison officer, regional officers who support school attendance initiatives. These officers can work with you and the school to discuss the issues and provide support.

## Who are home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers?

Home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers have been specially trained to help you with your child's attendance.

They work with school communities to encourage all students to maintain regular patterns of attendance.

For further information about the Home School Liaison Program you should contact the program manager at your local Department of Education and Training regional office. Contact numbers can be found at the website address: [www.det.nsw.edu.au/contactus/index.htm](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/contactus/index.htm) or by telephoning 131 536.

## Do you have problems with getting your child to school, for some of the following reasons?

- Won't get out of bed
- Won't go to bed
- Can't find their clothes, books, homework, school bag ...
- School lunches not ready
- Dawdles over breakfast
- Homework not done
- Watching television late at night or when they should be getting ready for school
- Mum planning a day out
- Test / presentation at school
- Child or sibling birthday
- Child screams and won't let you go.

## Here are some suggestions which are based on 'setting regular routines'

- Have a set time to be out of bed
- Have a set time to go to bed
- Have uniform and school bag ready the night before
- Make lunches the night before
- Have a set time for starting/ending breakfast. A routine is important.
- Set time for daily homework activities
- Turn the television on for a set time and only if appropriate
- Be firm, children must go to school
- Provide lots of positive encouragement
- Be firm, a birthday is not a holiday
- Time arrival at school to coincide with bell time and leave quickly. If arranged with the teacher beforehand, place your child's hand into that of a teacher and then leave.