

ATTENDANCE Policy

Ratification Date: RNS Board 01/09/2021	Next Review: 2023 or after an event or changes to the minimum standards as advised by the VRQA	Availability: <table><tr><td>Web</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>Office</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>On Request</td><td>X</td></tr></table>	Web	X	Office	X	On Request	X	Actions:
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PURPOSE:

River Nile School believes that students need to attend school regularly in order to gain maximum benefit from their schooling. Regular attendance enables students to access a comprehensive education, enabling them to reach their full potential. RNS is committed to provide active support for full student attendance. As a Specialist Reengagement school, it is understood that regular attendance can be a challenge for some RNS students but also that encouraging regular attendance is vital for personal development. The reengagement coordinator works with students/families to assist.

Note that RNS students are scheduled into classes full time each day so there are no ‘free classes’ requiring supervision and the roll marking reflects.

AIMS:

- To ensure students are in attendance as required; are punctual to all classes and other school activities; in order to receive and benefit from a continuous educational program.
- To provide a process by which student attendance/absence is monitored and improved.
- To provide clear guidelines and expectations regarding student attendance and the successful completion of programs.
- To support staff in monitoring and following up all absences.
- To provide organisational structures which support the early detection and identification of causes of student non- attendance
- To develop in the RNS community a culture that values all educational activities.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Punctuality and Lateness

Students are required to be punctual to all classes. The importance of regular attendance at school is promoted and all unexplained absences are followed up each day.

2. Attendance Recording Procedures

Attendance is recorded twice per day using the Compass Student management system. Contact is made daily with students/parents where there is an absence for unknown reason.

Absences are stored on Compass and where deemed unsatisfactory a meeting with the family ensues. The Administration Coordinator is responsible for this.

3. Attendance Rules and Absences

Students should attend 100% of school days or have a valid reason for non- attendance such as illness or

another approved reason. Parents/guardians are notified by phone or SMS if their student is absent without explanation daily

i) Types of non-attendance

Parent Approved Absences: Absence due to illness /family issue/bereavement must be verified by a note/telephone call from parent/guardian or by a doctor's certificate. External Suspensions will also be recorded as parent approved absences. Parents/carers may also approve absences via Compass. In this case the absence will be noted as an approved absence.

RNS Approved Absences:

Students may miss scheduled classes due to participation in a variety of school approved activities or due to internal suspension. A RNS approved activity may be defined as:

- Sport
- Camps and excursions
- Music lessons or performance
- Specialist numeracy/literacy support
- Speech Therapy
- Student Wellbeing/welfare support
- Work experience or work placement
- Other approved activities arranged by teaching staff

An absence due to participation in a RNS approved activity must be verified prior to the activity by completing appropriate permission forms. The principal class member will grant final approval for any student to participate in a RNS activity where there is a need to clarify their participation.

The student is permitted to participate in the activity so long as the class work set during the absence is completed to the satisfaction of the classroom teacher, and that there are no other concerns regarding work completion/attendance. Students, after an absence, may need to seek information from their class teachers on what needs to be done to catch up on missed lessons.

Unapproved Absences:

Unexplained absences that cannot be authorised by any official means will lead to disciplinary action and be recorded as unapproved. Parents/Carers/Student contacted by Reception via either an SMS or a phone call.

ii) Consequences for Absences:

VCAL Classes: Where a student is absent for more than 10 single sessions of a timetabled Unit, they may be deemed to have not satisfactorily met the course requirements of that subject and may have an N recorded for that subject unit. This is regardless of whether the absence is approved or unapproved. As previously stated, *approved absence* includes: illness and medical reasons, family reasons or other explained absences, and unapproved absence consists of unexplained absences, truancy or reason that is not health/religious/cultural related. The class teacher will monitor each student's attendance and refer any student who falls into this category to the Principal to resolve the issue as in attachment 2.

Responsibilities of Staff in relation to Attendance

Outlined in more detail in *Attachment 1: Staff Responsibilities in relation to Attendance* staff mark a roll twice a day using Compass.

Expectations of Parents by the River Nile School

Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and are only absent if they are ill or if absolutely necessary. Parents are required to provide official notification to RNS if their child is absent.

Notification to RNS of an absence by parents

- i. This is normally done by a written note once the student returns to school, or by a telephone call on the same day of the absence. Parents are asked to telephone the school prior to 8.30am if their student is going to be absent from the school on that day.
- ii. An absence note or Medical Certificate is required within 3 schools days of the absence. Absence notes should be provided to the attendance office and the teachers should regularly prompt students to bring notes as required.
- iii. Where a telephone call has occurred between the parent and the office staff, and a valid reason for absence is provided at that stage, this may be recorded as an approved absence on that day only.

Parent Access to Attendance Data

Parents may request a copy of their child's attendance record at any stage. This can be done through a request to the Office.

Resolution of Issues related to Non-attendance

Outlined in more detail in *Attachment 2: Processes for responding to unsatisfactorily explained student absences*

References

Student Engagement Policy Guidelines - School Policy and Advisory Guide <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/pages/attendance.aspx>

The legislative bases affecting student attendance are as follows:

- In accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.
- Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction.

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:

- There is an approved exemption from school attendance or attendance and enrolment for the student, or
- The student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities.

For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. The school will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.

- The Family Law Act 1975 section 61(c), which provides that each of the parents of a child under 18 has parental responsibility for the child
- The Community Services Act 1970 section 74(c), which also specifies that parents of school age children must send them to school unless there is a reasonable excuse.

EVALUATION:

This policy will be formally reviewed by Nile River School every three (3) years.

The River Nile School Inc.

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Teachers

- I. To accurately and consistently mark the roll at the start of each morning and afternoon class via Compass.
- II. To follow up consistent lateness
- III. To promote importance of attendance and punctuality

VET Attendance

Selected students attend VET classes on Tuesdays. Depending on the VET these classes are held either onsite or offsite as per the VET Agreement between the RTO and RNS.

The VET Instructor marks the roll and this is uploaded onto the VET Portal and RNS Learning Support staff then upload this record onto Compass and RNS follows up absences in the usual way as if it is an RNS class.

Principal delegated to Administration Coordinator

- I. To ensure that accountability requirements are being complied to by staff responsible for student attendance
- II. To be informed and act upon serious attendance issues referred by teachers
- III. Analyse attendance data to determine which students have not satisfactorily met attendance requirements.
- IV. To collect copies of teachers class attendance rolls on a semester basis for auditing purposes.
- V. To record any internal or external suspensions electronically
- VI. To be responsible of ensuring that attendance processes are being implemented and reviewed
- VII. To be responsible for determining and communicating when students have not met attendance requirements for the satisfactory completion of a class/Unit
- VIII. To initiate strategies to enhance student attendance and promote school attendance in the school community, promoting the departments 'Every Day Counts' campaign.
- IX. Working with parents to solve problems related to attendance.
- X. To support all staff members in any issue relating to roll marking and attendance

The following steps can be seen as progressive and need to continue only where preceding action has not resolved the attendance problem.

1) General Student Absences

Contact with parents/guardians

Where a satisfactory explanation is not provided within five school days of an absence, parents or guardians should be contacted by the attendance officer. Telephone or informal personal contact may be sufficient to resolve the situation.

Arranging a meeting

If the reason for a student's absence remains unresolved after an initial attempt at contact, or in the case where a student's attendance falls below 80%, the school should convene a meeting with the parents/guardians and student (if appropriate). The invitation to attend the meeting should be documented on Compass as a means of indicating its importance. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- I. ensure that the parents/guardians are aware of the absence and fully appreciate its implication
- II. examine the reasons for non-attendance
- III. identify whether further assistance will be needed to re-establish attendance

The outcome of the meeting should lead to informal arrangements to improve the student's attendance.

Return to School Plan (or Attendance Improvement Plan) to support attendance

If communication with parents/guardians has not been possible or a meeting does not sufficiently resolve the attendance problem, a return to school plan needs to be developed to support the student's attendance.

Normally this will involve a formal meeting convened by the principal or nominee and attended by the parents/guardians, student (if appropriate) and a relevant teacher.

The school may also seek support from regional student service support staff and community or other government agencies. The return to school plan should result in the establishment of an ongoing attendance support process to develop and monitor an appropriate program of assistance and support for the student, drawing upon any special skills and resources needed, for example from external support personnel. The plan could involve such action as:

- Modification of the curriculum
- Increased supervision of the student
- Personal support and counselling for the student
- Referral to other support agencies

It is important that wherever possible, the plan is developed in consultation with the parents/ guardians and the student to ensure their active cooperation. The plan should be documented to confirm arrangements to assist the student. Where the action taken through the return to school plan does not lead to a resumption of satisfactory attendance, the principal should determine if it is necessary to convene an attendance conference in the interest of the education of the student, and make a referral to the Regional Attendance Officer if required

The attendance conference

The purpose of the attendance conference is to:

- I. Review strategies initiated to support the attendance of the student
- II. Examine why resolution of the non-attendance has not been possible
- III. Make recommendations to the school and parents guardians on further action.

The attendance conference has no disciplinary connotations but rather aims at effectively retaining the student at school.

The attendance conference should be convened by the principal or nominee. Participants should include:

- i. principal or nominee
- ii. parents/guardians
- iii. the student (if appropriate)
- iv. parent advocate (if required by the parent)
- v. appropriate staff member
- vi. consultants as required

3) Attendance of students in special circumstances

Clarification of guardianship

Where a student is a ward of the state or where someone other than the parent has guardianship, the Principal should ascertain who has the legal responsibility for the student when considering action to be taken in relation to attendance problems.

Students who live independently

Students who live independently are generally able to give consent to formalities normally approved by parents or guardians. Attendance concerns should also be negotiated directly with the student. This circumstance does not prevent the principal seeking assistance through the Department of Health and Human Services or other community agencies where he/she feels that the educational well-being of the student aged less than seventeen years is in jeopardy through attendance irregularities.