

Heritage College

Attendance and Absence Policy and Procedures



Document Control

Revision Number	Implementation Date	Review Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
New Policy	April 2022	April 2023	New Policy	Exec Leaders	School Council
001	Sept 2023	Sept 2024	Minor adjustments as per VRQA recommendations	Exec Leaders	School Council
002	Dec 2024	Dec 2024	Major changes regarding processes	Learning and Teaching	School Council



Table of Contents

Rationale	4
Aims	4
Acknowledgements	4
Definitions	5
Attendance Expectations	5
Roll Marking and Attendance Process	5
Maintaining Current Contact Details Procedures	5
Absences	6
Responsibilities of Students	6
Primary	6
1.1 Attendance	6
1.2 Absence	6
1.3 Late to School	7
1.4 Leaving school early	7
1.5 Satisfactory Completion of Courses	7
Secondary	7
1.1 Attendance	7
1.2 Absence	7
1.3 Late to School	8
1.4 Leaving school early	8
1.5 Satisfactory Completion of Courses	8
Responsibility of Parents/Guardians	8
2.1 Responsibilities	8
2.2 Absent	8
2.3 Late	9
2.4 Following up Absences	9
Types of Absences	10
Procedures for unplanned absences	10
Daily absences	10
Consecutive unplanned Absences	10
Procedures for planned Absences	11
Unexcused/Unexplained Absences	11
Extended Leave during the School Term	11
Family Holiday	11
Extended Medical/Illness	11
Responsibility of the College	12
3.1 Principal	12
3.2 Staff	12
3.3 Homeroom teachers	12
Attendance Concerns: Process of Escalation	13
4.1 Homeroom Teachers/Class Teacher Identify an attendance concern	13
4.2 Level Leader Meeting with Parents	14
4.3 Attendance improvement plans and return to school plans	14
4.4 Referral to school or community-based well-being professional	15
4.5 Referral to College Leadership (completed by Head of School)	15



4.6 College Leadership Meeting	16
Prep-10 Expectations	16
5.1 Requirements	16
VCE Expectations	17
6.1 Requirements	17
6.2 Types of Absences and Responses	17
6.3 Related Policies and Processes	17
6.3 Related Legislation	17
Appendix	18
Appendix 1: Email to be sent when homeroom teacher (HRT) identifies a student of concern	18
Appendix 2: 7-10 Attendance Notification sent from Level Leader	18
Appendix 3: 11-12 Attendance Notification sent from Level Leader	19
Appendix 4: Meeting with Parents when School Refusal Identified template	19
Appendix 5: Referral to Healthcare Professional (as provided by Parents)	22
Appendix 6: Referral to College Leadership	22
Appendix 7: College Leadership's Meeting Regarding Student's Absenteeism	23



Rationale

To fit within the expectations of school attendance prescribed by Victorian law - *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* - children and young people of compulsory school age (six to seventeen years) residing in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, have a shared enrolment with a specialist setting, have received an exemption from the Regional Director (Schools) or are enrolled in correspondence education.

Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of parents/guardians, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents, students, the school and the wider community. Students need to attend school regularly to gain maximum benefit from schooling to enable them to reach their full potential.

The Academic Attendance Policy is designed to ensure compliance with legal requirements of school attendance. The processes enacted by this policy provide a framework of monitoring and support for students and their families to enable maximum attendance at school and the benefits that provides.

To ensure active support for full student attendance and retention until the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent and respond to individual student circumstances when regular attendance is not consistent.

Student absence from assessments is dealt with consistently and fairly whilst always maintaining a high academic standard. Parents and students must understand that there may be academic consequences for absences from school, excursions and camps. The Policy also enables at-risk students to be identified due to extended absences.

Heritage College maintains attendance records, identifies and follows up on unexplained absences and develops procedures to support and maintain student attendance.

Aims

- To provide guidance for monitoring student attendance and absences to mitigate the impact on student learning and welfare.

Acknowledgements

Heritage College acknowledges the following:

- Education is a sequential process so absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning.
- Absenteeism can contribute significantly to student failure at school.
- There are many factors that can affect attendance including school, family and personal factors.
- Some students and families may need support to assist attendance at school.



Definitions

1. **Attendance** – When a student is present on campus (or virtually) for prearranged classes or educational activities.
2. **Absence** – When a student is not present on campus (or virtually) for prearranged classes or educational activities.
3. **Planned Absence** – An absence that has been organised in advance. Examples of planned absences include holidays, visits to family and sporting or other events.
4. **Unplanned Absence** – An absence that has not been organised in advance. Unplanned absences include illness, accidents, and family difficulties/trauma.
5. **Principal** – For the purpose of this policy the principal may refer to the Head of School or a designated replacement, usually a Level Leader
6. **Class/Homeroom teacher** – a teacher who is responsible for a particular roll class. Class teacher in the primary (e.g. Year 4 teacher) and Homeroom teacher in the secondary (e.g. Year 8b Homeroom teacher). These are distinct from classroom teachers who are responsible for a class in a particular subject area (e.g. Year 2 French or Year 9 English).
7. **VCE** – Victorian Certificate of Education.

Attendance Expectations

- Prep to Year 10 students are expected to maintain an 85% attendance rate. Failure to provide adequate reasons for absences will result in an escalation process
- VCE and VCE-VM students are required to maintain a 90% attendance rate. Failure to meet the requirements may result in not graduating VCE.

Roll Marking and Attendance Process

1. Parents of enrolled children are required every start of the year to update all contact details for parents or guardians including email and phone contact information. Updates are also requested throughout the year through the excursion/incursion consent processes.
2. All enrolled students are expected to attend all of each school day.
3. Secondary rolls are marked at the beginning of the day (8:55 am in Homeroom) and at the commencement of each period.
4. Primary rolls are marked at the beginning of the day (8:55 am Officer Campus Primary / 9 am Narre Campus Primary) and the beginning of period 5 in the afternoon.
5. Attendance is recorded by teachers and all absences and lates are actioned by the front office staff on the SEQTA Learning Management System.

Maintaining Current Contact Details Procedures

1. At the beginning of the academic year, formal communications are dispatched to all families, urging them to meticulously review and update their contact details in the school's secure database system, Consent2Go. This proactive step is vital in establishing and maintaining a steadfast line of communication.
2. As the academic year approaches its midpoint, it is essential to disseminate a reminder, galvanising families to amend and refresh any altered details, thereby ensuring the continual accuracy and relevance of the school records.
3. To further streamline the process of maintaining up-to-date information, each excursion/incursion consent form, distributed throughout the year via Consent2Go, includes a section that allows families to continuously update their contact details as necessary. This initiative aims to foster seamless and dynamic communication between the school and families.



4. Vital messages are repeated in person at all parent information meetings in Term 1 especially.

Absences

Key principles of all absences

1. Teachers are not to be burdened with extra work due to student absences.
2. Teachers are not obliged to, but at their discretion may, provide extra work for the student during their absence.
3. Students who are absent during assessments are never to be advantaged for their absence and students who are present during assessments are never to be disadvantaged.
4. It is the student's responsibility to communicate with teachers regarding work that has been or will be missed and complete that work. Some extra time may be provided for this purpose, at the teacher's discretion.
5. Absent students will be assessed on all the material covered by the rest of the class.
6. Where authorised absences take place during major assessments the College will endeavour to accurately reflect the student's academic learning in reports.
7. Absences may be considered at the discretion of the Head of School in consultation with the student's teachers.
8. Student attendance will be reviewed every 4 Weeks by the Tier 2 committee.
9. In the case of prolonged absences, the Head of School, School Coordinator and/or Level Leader will, after consulting with the teacher, attendance records and the student, decide upon a strategy to be employed in consultation with the student, the family and the teachers involved. Strategies include:
 - SEQTA Direct or telephone contact with parents
 - Counselling sessions for parents and/or students
 - School attendance as a prerequisite to extra-curricular activities
 - Tier 2 / 3 support

Responsibilities of Students

Primary

1.1 Attendance

The Student Attendance Policy states that students are expected to:

- attend school on all designated school days.
- attend their scheduled classes.
- attend and be punctual for all classes, activities and programs.

This includes school excursions, camps, chapels, assemblies, sports, special events, organised speakers, and any activity deemed by the school to be part of the curriculum.

Students must, where possible, give their classroom teacher advance notice of ensuing absence due to an alternate College activity (e.g. Representative Sport) and they are responsible for catching up on missed work.

1.2 Absence

Students should ensure their parents contact the school to explain any absences. An explanatory email must be provided to absences@heritagecollege.vic.edu.au



1.3 Late to School

- Prior to 9:05am - If a student arrives late to school, but before the conclusion of morning homeroom, the student will be admitted directly to homeroom and marked as late.
- After 9:05am - If a student arrives after the conclusion of morning homeroom, the parent and student must report to the office and sign in. At the office, the student will be given a late pass. This must be shown to the teacher upon arrival at class.
- Arriving late and no contact from home - If a student arrives after 8:55am with no contact from the parents/guardians, the office will contact the parents/guardians to check the lateness and remind the parents/guardians of the procedure. If the parents cannot be contacted by the school a message will be left for the parents to call back. The student is then permitted to go to class. An explanatory email must still be provided to absences@heritagecollege.vic.edu.au

1.4 Leaving school early

Students are to remain on the school grounds unless a parent/guardian attends campus to sign them out early. After signing their child/ren out, the parent will wait in the reception area, until the student comes to meet them in the reception.

1.5 Satisfactory Completion of Courses

Students must attend a minimum amount of all scheduled course hours to satisfy the attendance requirements and therefore satisfactorily complete their studies. Prep-Year 10 students require a minimum attendance of 85%.

To satisfy the College's legal responsibilities regarding student attendance staff will monitor student attendance in the morning and afternoon Homeroom.

Secondary

1.1 Attendance

The Student Attendance Policy states that students are expected to:

- attend school on all designated school days
- attending their scheduled classes.
- attend and be punctual for all classes, activities and programs.

This includes school excursions, camps, chapels, assemblies, sport, organised speakers, and any activity deemed by the school to be part of the curriculum.

Students must, where possible, give their homeroom/subject teacher advance notice of ensuing absence due to a College activity and they are responsible for catching up on missed work.

1.2 Absence

Students should ensure their parents contact the school to explain any absences. An explanatory email must still be provided to absences@heritagecollege.vic.edu.au

For Unit 1-4 students a medical certificate is required if students miss a SAC while absent.



1.3 Late to School

- Prior to 9:05am - If a student arrives late to school, but prior to the conclusion of morning homeroom, the student will be admitted directly to homeroom and marked as late. A demerit will be issued if a student is repeatedly late without a parental note explaining the student's lateness.
- After 9:05am - If a student arrives after the conclusion of morning homeroom the student must report to the office and sign in. At the office, they will be given a late pass. This must be shown to the teacher upon arrival at class.
- Arriving late and no contact from home - If a student arrives after 8:55 am with no contact from the parents/guardians the office will contact the parents/guardians to check the lateness and remind the parents/guardians of the procedure. If the parents cannot be contacted by the school a message will be left for the parents to call back. The student is then permitted to go to class. An explanatory email must still be provided to absences@heritagecollege.vic.edu.au

1.4 Leaving school early

Students are to remain on the school grounds unless written approval is provided by a parent/guardian to leave early. The homeroom teacher countersigns the note and students must then present this note at the front office when they sign out.

1.5 Satisfactory Completion of Courses

Students must attend a minimum amount of all scheduled course hours to satisfy the attendance requirements and therefore satisfactorily complete their studies. At Year 11 and Year 12, a minimum attendance of 90% is required for satisfactory completion of the VCE.

Prep-10 students require a minimum attendance of 85%.

To satisfy the College's legal responsibilities regarding student attendance staff will monitor student attendance in every class, as well as morning and afternoon Homeroom.

Responsibility of Parents/Guardians

2.1 Responsibilities

In order to support their children to maximise their education at Heritage College and to also support the school we ask parents/guardians to ensure their daughter/son:

- attends school on all designated school days
- arrives on time
- attends and is punctual for all classes, activities and programs. This includes major school events (Swimming, Athletics, Cross Country), school excursions, camps, chapels, assemblies, sport, organised speakers, and any activity deemed by the school to be part of the curriculum. It is a condition of a student's enrolment that they attend such events.

2.2 Absent

When your daughter/son is absent, or expected to be absent Parents/Guardians are required:

- notify the front office staff at absences@heritagecollege.vic.edu.au or phone 9796 0100 by 9:30 am with the child's name, year level and reason for absence.
- Medical certificates may be requested for ongoing absences.
- It is a requirement that all absences are resolved by families.



If the Parent/Guardian does not contact the College the student will be marked as Unexplained Absence and the Parent/Guardian will receive an automated text outlining their son or daughter's absence for the day.

2.3 Late

If your daughter/son arrives after the conclusion of morning homeroom to be permitted to attend class you must have explained the lateness in writing, in person or by phone on, or before, arrival.

2.4 Following up Absences

1. The main focus of attendance improvement strategies should be to support improved attendance or a return to a mainstream school setting.
2. The follow-up of absences is recommended as an early intervention approach that may identify underlying issues affecting attendance.
3. The nature of the follow-up will be dependent upon the following:
 - a. Number of days absent (and whether they are consecutive)
 - b. Reasons given for the absences
 - c. The time of year
 - d. The age of the student
 - e. Whether the parent(s) have been consenting to the absences
 - f. The impact the absence has had on the student
 - g. Whether learning has taken place outside of school
4. Follow-up actions may include:
 - a. Emails being sent,
 - b. Calls being made,
 - c. Meetings being arranged,
 - d. Pastoral care visit to the student's home is being arranged,
 - e. Student's details being provided to the Level Leader
 - f. Student's details are being passed onto DHHS/police personnel if the student's welfare is in question.
5. Identifying risks of student disengagement from education needs to happen early so that actions can be taken to reduce or avoid these risks. To effectively address these risks, it's crucial to collaborate with key adults in the student's life, such as family members, and also engage with relevant community agencies and services where appropriate.
6. When identifying risks, the Child Information Sharing Scheme and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme can be used to request and share information with authorised organisations. This scheme is used to promote the well-being or safety of children or to assess or manage family violence risk. Authorised organisations include Victorian government and non-government schools, Child FIRST, Child Protection, Victoria Police, Youth Justice, community health and family violence services.



Types of Absences

Procedures for unplanned absences

1. Unplanned absences are those that occur with little or no warning or notice. Preparation cannot usually be made for these.
2. Unplanned absences usually occur on a single-day basis but sometimes extend into longer-term or consecutive absences.

Daily absences

1. Students who have an unplanned absence (such as due to illness) will be flagged when marked absent on the roll or in advance by parents/guardians contacting the College regarding an absence.
2. Parents/guardians may inform the Administration staff of an absence via SMS, email or in person.
3. Parents/guardians may also inform the teacher of an absence. In this case, it is the responsibility of the teacher to inform the Administration staff as soon as practicable.
4. Class rolls are checked at the conclusion of the day by Administration staff for updated absences.
5. At 10am each morning the following SMS is sent to parents/guardians when their child is marked absent on the roll
6. All absences are automatically recorded on SEQTA. Any accompanying documentation (such as medical certificates) is scanned and added to the student's file.
7. In situations when students are absent for a part day (for example, the afternoon only) the investigation of their whereabouts is conducted by their teacher and/or Head of School. Calls are made directly to parents from reception to verify student location.

Consecutive unplanned Absences

1. If parents/guardians have notified Administration staff that a prolonged absence is expected (either via, SMS, email, direct message or in person) the absence is updated in SEQTA.
2. If the absence is longer than expected, classroom teacher/homeroom teachers should contact home for a welfare check and to determine a return date if possible. Relevant information is to be passed back to Administration staff so that SEQTA can be updated accordingly.
3. All contacts with parents/guardians regarding absences are recorded on SEQTA.
4. If the reason for the absence is serious it should be shared with the staff for wellbeing/chaplaincy support, being mindful of student privacy and confidentiality. NOTE: the details of personal circumstances should only be shared with relevant staff, and only with parental permission.



Procedures for planned Absences

1. Planned absences from school will be categorised as consecutive or non-consecutive absences. Consecutive absences include anything more than 3 days absent in a row. Non-consecutive absences may be repeated, but not consecutively, such as a sporting event a number of times throughout the term.
2. The parent/guardian must complete the [Application for Extended Leave form](#) for planned absences of more than 5 days (one school week).
3. Completed forms are passed to the relevant Head of School, discussed with the leadership team or Academic Committee as required, and either approved or not approved.
4. The above form must be submitted to the Office at least 4 term weeks prior to the date of the absence.
5. If the application is approved, parents/guardians are notified, the details of the absence are shared with staff and the absence is recorded in SEQTA.
6. If the absence is not approved parents/guardians are notified, and the reasons explained. There is no appeals process to this decision.
7. If the application is approved the absence is recorded as an approved absence. If the application is not approved the absence is recorded as an unapproved absence.
8. In both cases, copies of the completed application form are attached to a note in SEQTA.

Unexcused/Unexplained Absences

1. According to legislation more than five (5) unexplained absences within a 12-month period is considered an offence and may lead to prosecution of parents/guardians.
2. Efforts will be made by both office staff and teachers to contact the parents of students with unexcused/unexplained absences to determine the reasons.
3. After 1-2 weeks the names of students with unexcused/unexplained absences are passed to the Head of School for follow-up.

Extended Leave during the School Term

Family Holiday

Heritage College discourages parents/guardians from organising family holidays during the school term. Contact with your son/daughter's Level Leader and classroom teacher should be made if parents/guardians are arranging holidays during the school term. Teachers are under no obligation to provide or correct work for students on family holidays during the normal school term.

Students/parents who request permission for planned time away from school (including during excursions and camps) must be provided with a copy of this policy and made aware that absence will be recorded and long absences from school may negatively impact the student's grades.

Extended Medical/Illness

Parents/Guardians are required to make contact with their son/daughter's homeroom/classroom teacher if they are going to be away for more than three days due to medical or illness.

Teachers will provide work for a student who is absent for an extended time due to medical/illness if parents/guardians believe this is appropriate.

In circumstances where depression or psychological distress are the reasons for the absence (such as being a victim of bullying), the College's Welfare personnel should be notified.



Responsibility of the College

3.1 Principal

- The Principal, as the Head of the College, has legal responsibilities in regard to monitoring student attendance as well as ensuring student safety, and monitoring satisfactory attendance and satisfactory completion.
- Circumstances may require that the Principal, in consultation with the Head of School and the appropriate Level Leader, consider the student's ongoing enrolment at Heritage College.
- The Principal is responsible for the implementation of these procedures and to ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of its application and that staff implement its requirements.

3.2 Staff

- To satisfy the College's legal responsibilities regarding student attendance staff are required to monitor student attendance in every class.
- Teachers are responsible for keeping accurate and timely attendance records for their individual classes.
- Teachers are to note late arrivals and early departures and check this against the daily student absence record.
- Teachers are not expected to provide work for students during an unexcused absence.
- Teachers will provide work for a student who is absent for an extended time due to medical/illness if parents/guardians believe this is appropriate.

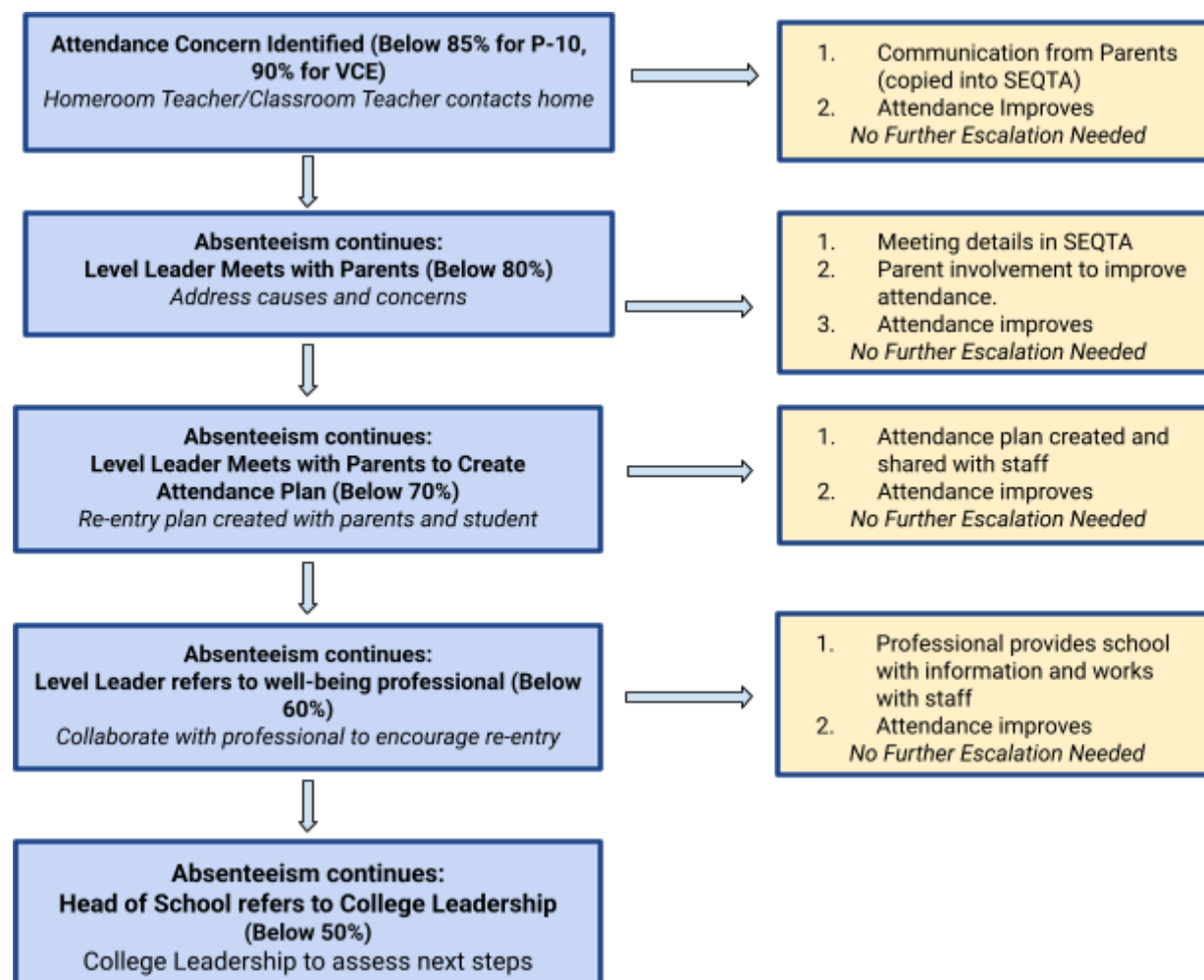
3.3 Homeroom teachers

- To satisfy the College's legal responsibilities regarding student attendance Homeroom/classroom teachers are required to mark the electronic roll during morning Homeroom. The number of days absent from school and attendance at, or absence from, major school events will be indicated at the beginning of the Semester Reports.
- Homeroom teachers have more of a welfare focus in regard to attendance and may conduct some follow-up actions relating to the student within their homeroom.
- Where students are not attending school due to school refusal or truancy the Level Leader/Head of School), and other appropriate staff as support, will work with parents/guardians to assist in developing strategies to encourage the students to attend school. This may involve the offer of a referral to an outside agency



Attendance Concerns: Process of Escalation

Overview of Escalation



4.1 Homeroom Teachers/Class Teacher Identify an attendance concern

1. Homeroom Teachers/Class Teachers should regularly monitor student attendance to identify any patterns of absenteeism or tardiness among their students.
2. When a concern is identified, refer to the provided email template titled "Appendix 1: Email to be sent when homeroom teacher/class teacher identifies a student of concern" for guidance.
 - a. Personalise the email by including specific details about the student's attendance issue, such as dates of absences or tardiness.
 - b. Address the email to the student's family members, guardians, or primary contacts.
 - c. Clearly explain the attendance concerns and emphasise the importance of regular attendance for academic success.
 - d. Offer support and collaboration to address the issue effectively.



3. Keep records of the email sent in SEQTA
 - a. If the parent responds:
 - i. Copy their response into SEQTA
 - ii. Collaborate with other school staff, such as counsellors or administrators, if additional support is needed to address the student's attendance concerns.

4.2 Level Leader Meeting with Parents

1. Attendance meetings with parents and students should be convened following initial parental contact when a student's attendance is of concern to the school. The purpose of the meeting is to develop attendance improvement strategies to support the student and to examine why non-attendance continues to be a problem.
2. At the first meeting, the Level Leader should focus on:
 - a. establishing a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving attendance,
 - b. ensuring parents are aware of the absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student,
 - c. identifying the reasons for the absences,
 - d. exploring any factors preventing attendance or participation,
 - e. requesting parents engage with alternative strategies to improve attendance,
 - f. identifying appropriate attendance improvement strategies,
 - g. documenting which improvement strategy has been selected, with clear discussion about how it will be monitored and when it will be reviewed,
 - h. explaining the possible consequences of repeated non-attendance, including referral to Level Leader/Head of School.
3. Meetings with parents of students with attendance issues should feel supportive rather than disciplinary, with a focus on positive and proactive solutions.
4. Leaders need to ensure that appropriate support is provided at the meetings (e.g. interpreters, advocates, well-being personnel, etc.) in order to facilitate the involvement of parents.

4.3 Attendance improvement plans and return to school plans

1. An Attendance Improvement Plan may be introduced to assist in the re-engagement of students with attendance issues.
2. To assist in the reintegration of a student after a prolonged absence, a Return to School Plan may be required. This may also be used following other strategies if these strategies have not had the desired outcome.
3. Attendance improvement plans and Return to School Plans may be appropriate for students who are:
 - a. involved in the youth justice system,
 - b. experiencing, or who have experienced a period of homelessness,
 - c. experiencing mental or physical illnesses (Return to School Plans are vital if they have experienced prolonged absence from school).
4. Ideally, both these plans should be developed with the student and the parent and any support workers, and include information such as:
 - a. the work the student has missed and needs to complete,
 - b. the student's class timetable, including bell times,
 - c. school term dates, student-free days and non-school periods,
 - d. smart goals to improve the student's attendance, including an attendance target,



- e. nominated staff that can support the student if they need assistance,
 - f. the process to be followed if the student is absent,
 - g. contact details for the student's parents.
5. If it has been difficult to engage with the parent of a student, a School Attendance Improvement Plan or a Return to School Plan can be developed directly with the student. Any support services the student may be accessing or may have been referred to (such as a youth worker or psychologist) should be consulted and the plan should outline key responsibilities and parties to be involved.

4.4 Referral to school or community-based well-being professional

1. When exploring attendance concerns, any behavioural, health or social issues (such as anxiety, depression or bullying) need to be identified for the student.
2. Responding to the well-being needs of individual students is not the responsibility of the College alone. Other government and community-based agencies can provide specialist support to children and families around a range of individual and family needs.
3. Engaging services or making referrals to services could be employed as a strategy to improve attendance, and to address emotional and social needs in order to improve attendance.

4.5 Referral to College Leadership (completed by Head of School)

1. Referring a student attendance matter to College Leadership may be appropriate where the Head of School determines that:
 - a. Intervention strategies have been unable to secure parental engagement and improvement in school attendance (or engagement in another educational program) and,
 - b. Requiring the parent to respond to the notice will convey the seriousness of the matter and is likely to elicit an improvement in attendance.
2. Head of School should be certain they have evidence to demonstrate the parent has not been meeting their responsibilities under the Act. This will be important in the event the School Attendance Notice leads to an Infringement Notice being sent to the parent and the parent wishes to appeal the decision or elect to have the matter heard in court.
3. The procedure for issuing the School Attendance Notice, which entails requiring parental response and outlining subsequent steps if the parent fails to comply, is well-defined by the provisions in the Education and Training Reform Act.
4. To make a referral to a College Leadership the Head of School needs to establish that:
 - a. The student has been a high level of absenteeism and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences,
 - b. Measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances,
 - c. A parent responsible for the absences can be identified (a single person to be the addressee of the School Attendance Notice).
5. These minimum requirements to be met before sending a School Attendance Notice are set out in the Act. In addition to the minimum requirements, before making a referral the Head of School should:
 - a. Be satisfied that the reasons for the failure to comply with attendance requirements have been explored, including any social, cultural, linguistic, economic, geographic, or learning difficulties,



- b. Ensure that if a Student Support Group has been established for the student, or another support mechanism exists for the student, that group has been consulted about the particular attendance issue or that mechanism utilised before making a referral to a College Leadership
 - c. Consider the particular circumstances of the student and family in deciding to make a referral, including likely consequences if the parent does not respond adequately to a School Attendance Notice,
 - d. Have attempted to contact the parent in question by telephone to advise of the situation and confirm their awareness of the seriousness of the issue.
6. If the Head of School decides to refer the matter, they should complete and forward the [referral form](#) to the College Leadership. If there are any concerns about disclosing private information in the referral form, they can contact the College Reception for advice.
7. The Head of School should contact the parents to inform them that attendance concerns are being referred to College Leadership. A template of this contact, can be found in Appendix 6

4.6 College Leadership Meeting

1. During this meeting, some of these issues may be discussed:
 - a. Determining whether additional support measures have been exhausted and if further intervention is warranted.
 - b. Reviewing the effectiveness of previous interventions and assessing their impact on the student's attendance.
 - c. Considering the possibility of implementing disciplinary measures if other interventions have not yielded improvement.
 - d. Evaluating whether alternative educational arrangements or external support services need to be explored further.
 - e. Discussing the potential consequences of continued unresolved absenteeism with the student and their family.
 - f. Assessing the feasibility and implications of de-registering the student due to continued unresolved absenteeism.
 - g. Exploring alternative educational options or support services outside of the current school system.
2. Communicate with the parents the decisions made in the meeting. Appendix 7 can be used as a guide.
3. College Leadership may wish to call a final meeting with the student and parents

Prep-10 Expectations

5.1 Requirements

1. Students are expected to maintain an attendance record of at least 85% to fulfil course requirements. Falling below this benchmark may have repercussions on their academic progress, potentially affecting their report grades. In instances where the attendance falls short, the attendance concerns process will be followed.
2. It is important to note that excessive approved absences, as defined by the Executive Leadership team, can also impact the 85% attendance requirement.
3. Furthermore, students are advised against arranging scheduled work placements during timetabled class time, as any absences may impede the authentication of work completed. Failure to meet the minimum attendance requirement for a subject may result in an unsatisfactory outcome on the report.
4. Additionally, consistent lateness will prompt a meeting with parents/guardians to address the matter proactively.



VCE Expectations

6.1 Requirements

1. A student must achieve a 90% attendance record to satisfy the course requirements. Students who do not meet the 90% attendance, may be awarded an 'N' result for the unit. This is due to teachers being unable to authenticate the student's learning, due to insufficient attendance (in accordance with VCAA VCE policy). If this occurs the student will be interviewed by the VCE Coordinator. The details will be discussed with the Academic Committee and a recommendation as to the most appropriate course of action will be made.
2. Excessive approved absences may also count against the 90% attendance requirement. The definition of 'excessive' will be determined by the Executive Leadership team.
3. Students should not arrange scheduled work placement during timetabled class time. Any absences may lead to an inability to authenticate work. Failure to attend a minimum of 90% of lessons for a subject may result in an unsatisfactory result.
4. Consistent lateness will result in a meeting with parents/guardians.

6.2 Types of Absences and Responses

Reason for Absence	Parental Notification Required	Documentary Evidence Required	Principal Approval Required	Follow up Process	
				Documentary evidence recorded	Form completed
Illness/Health	✓	✓ *Required for VCE only		✓	
Accident/Injury	✓	✓		✓	
Serious personal/family circumstances	✓	✓ *Required for VCE only		✓	
Medical Appointment	✓	✓		✓	
Religious/Cultural Observance	✓	✓ * Required for VCE only	✓	✓	
Bereavement	✓	✓ * Required for VCE only		✓	
Family Holiday	✓	✓ * Required for VCE only	✓	✓	✓
Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other	✓	✓ * Required for VCE only	✓	✓	✓

6.3 Related Policies and Processes

- VCE Handbook (current year)

6.3 Related Legislation

- Education and Training Reform Act (2006)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017)





Appendix

Appendix 1: Email to be sent when homeroom teacher (HRT) identifies a student of concern

Dear *(insert parent name here)*,

It has come to my attention that *(insert student's name here)* has been increasingly missing from class and I wanted to check in to ensure they were managing ok. Their current attendance rate is *(insert attendance rate here)* and we have a policy to make contact with parents when a student falls below *(insert %)* of attendance to enquire if there are any areas of concern that the College could help support.

Please let me know if there is anything I, or the school, can do to support *(insert student's name)* in increasing their attendance.

You can contact me on (insert contact email/phone number),

Kind Regards,
(insert HRT name here).

Appendix 2: 7-10 Attendance Notification sent from Level Leader

Dear *(insert parent's name here)*,

We are aware that there may be a variety of reasons for your child (insert name of student here)'s absences; it is still an expectation of Heritage College for students to have an attendance rate of above 85%.

Heritage College recognises that regular attendance and arriving at school on time are vital to a student's success in school. To take full advantage of the educational programming offered by the teachers and staff at Heritage College, children must arrive on time daily.

With this in mind, we have a record that your child's attendance has fallen below 85% and currently sits at *(insert % here)*. Since daily attendance is important in a child's education and because a good education can help your child reach their full potential, this is a problem that requires immediate attention.

In addition, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requires parents / Guardians of children between the ages of six and seventeen to have their child enrolled in and regular attendance in a public or private school during the regular school day. It is an offence for a parent to fail to comply with the duty set out in the Act.

Due to the importance of this, we felt it relevant to send this letter home to indicate the expectations of the College.

Please discuss this with your child and respond with the possible explanation or reason for your child's absence to the Homeroom teacher.



Appendix 3: 11-12 Attendance Notification sent from Level Leader

Dear (insert parent's name here),

We are aware that there may be a variety of reasons for your child (insert name of student here)'s absences; it is still an expectation of Heritage College for students to have an attendance rate of above 90%.

Heritage College recognises that regular attendance and arriving at school on time are vital to a student's success in school. To take full advantage of the educational programming offered by the teachers and staff at Heritage College, children must arrive on time daily.

With this in mind, we have a record that your child's attendance has fallen below 95% and currently sits at (insert % here). Since daily attendance is important in a child's education and because a good education can help your child reach their full potential, this is a problem that requires immediate attention.

In addition, the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requires parents / Guardians of children between the ages of six and seventeen to have their child enrolled in and regular attendance in a public or private school during the regular school day. It is an Offence for a parent to fail to comply with the duty set out in the Act.

Due to the importance of this, we felt it relevant to send this letter home to indicate the expectations of the College.

Please discuss this with your child and respond with the possible explanation or reason for your child's absence to the Homeroom teacher.

Appendix 4: Meeting with Parents when School Refusal Identified template

Student of concern: (insert student's name here)

Present:

- LL
- Wellbeing Officer
- Parents
- Student

1. Identification of problem (insert 1 of 5 options as outlined above).
 - a. Complete the parent questionnaire if required (attachment 1).
 - b. Request letters from professionals involved for information to support students (attachment 2).
2. Create plan around attendance
 - a. Plan for home – (provide parent-based strategies as outlined in Attachment 3)
 - b. Discuss 'menu' with students and schedule time with wellbeing staff to create this (Attachment 4).
 - c. Schedule follow-up appointments with wellbeing staff members for ongoing support.
3. Schedule follow-up plan
 - a. Set a date for the next meeting with all involved for review of the plan (insert date here).
 - b. YLC to email all teachers involved with a plan of support for students.
 - c. Wellbeing worker to email 'menu' to all teachers involved to encourage reinforcement of coping strategies.



Attachment 1: Parents Questionnaire

1. What do you see as the problem for your child?
2. Why do you think your child is not attending school?
3. How important is it for you to be involved in dealing with your child’s attendance problems?
4. What things do you feel you as a parent can do to help your child with a school attendance plan? 5. Who ought to be most responsible for your child’s attendance at school?

Attachment 2: Sample School Attendance Plan

Create a plan of attendance with clear goals as well as a minimum expectation so the student has the opportunity to build on their Stretch Zone while also knowing they are safe.

	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Goal	<i>Arrive on time. Stay in library until 11.00am. Do worksheets.</i>	<i>Arrive on time, 15 mins in class, and until 11:00am in library, doing worksheets.</i>	<i>Arrive on time, 30 mins in class. In library until 11:00am doing worksheets.</i>	<i>Arrive on time, 40 mins in class. Stay until after recess.</i>	<i>Arrive on time, 60 mins in class and stay for recess.</i>
Minimum	<i>Stay in library until 11.00am.</i>	<i>Stay in library until 11:00am.</i>	<i>10 mins in class, in library until 11:00am.</i>	<i>20 mins in class, stay for recess.</i>	<i>30 mins in class and stay for recess.</i>



Attachment 3: Parent Based Strategies

Dealing with school refusal can be challenging and draining for parents/guardians. It is recommended this process where possible involves two parental figures, whether they be parents, guardians, a grandparent or other close family members. This ensures a supportive network that can offer diverse perspectives and resources for the student's return to school plan, while also providing support for the primary caregivers.

1. Establishing and monitoring evening rituals
2. Modifying parent commands for brevity (short message), consistency (same message that is not changing), solidarity (2 parents working together)
3. Consequences for non-attendance (loss of screen time, earlier to bed, etc.)
4. Reduce child reassurance-seeking behaviour
5. Change the person who takes the student to school
6. Red apple – Green apple (illusion of choice)
7. Parents talk away from students, agree on an approach, and then together meet with the child
8. Parents need to be more calm than the child (reduce parent anxiety).
9. Consequences (agreed to beforehand) vs punishment
10. Pick your battles
11. Tag team parenting
12. Behaviour contracts
13. Screen time - no screens after 10 pm.

Attachment 4: Wellbeing Staff Resources

Plans must aim to provide structure to student's return to school

- Written down, detailed arrival time, who, where, and what to expect
- Child chooses starting point, but need to move forward
- Use of back-up plans, reset 'goalposts'
- Distribute to all involved with the student
- Often graded for a staged return to school

Create a list of options (like a menu) the student can choose from as a way of managing distress while at school.

Example below:

When I'm feeling anxious I can:

- Practise my breathing techniques
- Ask to get a drink of water
- Get some fresh air
- Focus on muscle relaxation techniques
- Do some mindful drawing
- Use my fiddle toy/grounding rock
- Have something to eat
- Ask a friend to distract me
- Write in my worry journal
- Ask to see a wellbeing worker



Appendix 5: Referral to Healthcare Professional (as provided by Parents)

Letter to Professional(s) Involved - Sent from Level Leader

Date:

Dear Mrs, Ms, Mr, Dr (insert professional's name here),

Heritage College has a duty of care to all students whilst they are on school grounds.

In every instance the school strives to offer the best possible tailored care, regardless of the student's condition (e.g. epilepsy, asthma, anxiety, eating disorder).

Heritage College does not discriminate in any way but we require specific medical and psychological information in order to care for each and every student.

In keeping with this, all students with medical and psychological needs require information to be provided. We require all the following information to manage (insert student's name here) whilst they are in our care.

This return to school plan is strictly confidential.

We are seeking from you:

- Diagnosis for (insert student's name here)
- Formulation
- Medications
- A copy of the safety plan if required
- The preferred method of contacting you if (insert name of student here) is very unwell
- Preference for case conference - in person, telephone, zoom. (please circle one)

This return to school plan is only to be discussed with the following people at school: (list names of LL, HOS, DOS, L&T, WB, HRT) Please return this document to (insert wellbeing / LL contact name) at your earliest convenience.

Signed

(insert name here).

Appendix 6: Referral to College Leadership

Subject: Important: Referral to College Leadership Regarding [Student Name]'s Attendance

Dear [Parent/Guardian],

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to inform you that the issue of continued absenteeism for [Student Name] has been referred to College Leadership for further review and intervention.

Your child's attendance is crucial for their academic progress, and we take this matter seriously. College Leadership may contact you for more information or request your attendance to discuss strategies for improving [Student Name]'s attendance.

Please be assured that our goal is to work collaboratively with you to support [Student Name]'s success. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at [Your Contact Information].



Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Head of School]
[School Name]

Appendix 7: College Leadership's Meeting Regarding Student's Absenteeism

RE: Meeting with College Leadership Regarding [Student Name]'s Attendance

Dear [Parent/Guardian Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to inform you about an important meeting that recently took place with College Leadership regarding your child, [Student Name]'s, attendance at Heritage College.

During the meeting, which was attended by [List of College Leadership Members], we discussed [Student Name]'s attendance patterns and the impact it may be having on their academic progress. I want to assure you that the purpose of this meeting was to collaboratively address any concerns and explore solutions to support [Student Name]'s success.

After a thorough review of the attendance records and consideration of various factors, including [any specific issues discussed during the meeting], the College Leadership team has developed a plan of action to address the attendance concerns. [Optionally, include details of the plan or interventions agreed upon during the meeting.]

As partners in your child's education, we believe that open communication between home and school is essential. We are committed to working together with you to ensure that [Student Name] receives the support and resources needed to overcome any challenges they may be facing with attendance.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the outcomes of the meeting further, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Your Contact Information].

Thank you for your continued cooperation and support in this matter. Together, we can help [Student Name] achieve their full potential.

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
Principal
Heritage College