



BENTON JUNIOR COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY



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 Benton Junior College has in place to support, monitor and maintain student attendance and record, monitor and follow up student absences.

Aims

Students of school age (6 to 17 years) that reside 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 exemption from the Regional Director or are enrolled in correspondence education. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education's School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

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.

Benton Junior College has an expectation that all students will attend school on time, all day on each day that the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with the school community to encourage and support full school attendance. While we acknowledge that there are times such as illness when students need to be absent from school, we strongly encourage regular attendance.

Benton Junior College will identify individual students who are vulnerable and who's attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and parents/guardians to improve their attendance through a range of interventions.

Parents/guardians of Benton Junior College will communicate with relevant staff about any issues affecting their child's attendance and will work in partnership with the student's classroom teacher and/or members of the school leadership team to address any concerns.

Parents/guardians 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.

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

Students of Benton Junior College are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Implementation

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, Benton Junior College will notify parents by SMS at 9:45am. Benton Junior 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.

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

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexcused 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
- where there is a plan in place with the parent to address causes impacting the student's attendance and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays (5 days or more) where the parent notifies the school in advance (minimum of two weeks prior to departing) - see Appendix I for more information
- regular absences for approved circumstances including elite sport or performances - see Appendix I for more information

Recording Attendance

Teachers are expected to:

- Accurately mark student attendance via Compass at 9:00am (beginning of the day) and 1:35pm (after lunch) each day. This ensures that Benton Junior College meets legislative requirements and discharges our duty of care for all students.

Recording Absences (where there is no exemption in place)

Parents are expected to:

- Provide an explanation for their child's absence via Compass (prior to the commencement of the school day on the day of absence)

OR

- Provide an explanation for their child's absence via a phone call to the Benton Junior College office on 5973 9100 (prior to the commencement of the school day on the day of absence)

Recording late arrival/early departure

Parents are expected to:

- Provide an explanation for your child's late arrival and sign your child in at the office via the Compass Kiosk if your child arrives later than 9:05am
- Provide an explanation for your child's early departure and sign your child out at the office via the Compass Kiosk (the administration staff will call to the class for your child)

Teachers are expected to:

- Ensure all students that arrive late to class present a Late Pass.
- Ensure that any student who arrives late to class without a Late Pass is sent to the office to sign in

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 a significant period time, staff at Benton Junior College will enact the Attendance Response to Intervention and will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance.

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.

Managing late arrivals/early departures and supporting student engagement

When late arrivals/early departures are of concern due to their nature in frequency, Benton Junior College will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Benton Junior 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 East Victoria Region for further action.

If, after multiple attempts to contact and support the student and parents/guardian, 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 (of this policy)

- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Reminders in our school newsletters
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Date created	February 2023
Date ratified by College Council	February 2023
Date to review policy	February 2026

Appendix I

Information regarding extended absences	
Family Holidays	<p>It is vital that holidays are planned during the school holidays and not during the school term. Any holidays (5 days or more) during the school term must be approved by the Principal in advance. All holiday approval requests must be made in writing to the Principal (a minimum of two weeks prior to departing) via email to benton.jr.co@education.vic.gov.au</p> <p>Once approval has been granted, the classroom teacher will provide a Student Absence Learning Plan for the student to complete and share with the teacher upon their return.</p>
Regular Absence (elite sport, performances)	<p>A regular absence occurring due to participating in elite sports or performing arts opportunities must be requested to the Principal via email to benton.jr.co@education.vic.gov.au</p> <p>Once approval has been granted, the classroom teacher may provide a Student Absence Learning Plan for the student to complete and share with the teacher upon their return.</p>