

Attendance Policy and Procedures

Zahra Grammar School



Attendance Policy

Prepared by	Zahra Grammar School Senior Staff
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Attendance Policy

Student Attendance

Rationale

Attendance at school is compulsory, five days a week. Apart from the legal requirements for attendance, it is important that students gain continuity in their education in order to move ahead as they should. Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Zahra Grammar School, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

Monitoring school attendance and punctuality identifies students at risk and allows early intervention to rectify the problems associated with late arrivals and regular absences. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as a part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences. The lateness and absence policy ensures both are being recorded and classroom teachers are communicating with parents to improve the education of all students.

Aim

The principal and teaching staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students. All teachers including support teachers are responsible for the well-being and welfare of the students under their care, this will ensure the safety and well-being of each child in their care. Therefore, it is vital for all teachers to take attendance of all students during the period of time that they are responsible for them in order to fulfil the requirements of the Child Protection Policy. All teaching staff are responsible for maintaining accurate records of student attendance in class registers/class rolls.

Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents

- Section 22 of the Education act (1990) establishes that parents of children of compulsory school age are legally responsible for their child's enrolment and regular attendance at school, or to register them with NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for home schooling

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- Parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly, on each day when the school is open for instruction
 - Parents must explain absences of their children from school promptly and within ten days of the absence occurring by providing relevant documentation such as a medical certificate or a written note explaining the child's absence.
 - The teachers contact their parents to receive written explanation of absence.
 - Parents must contact the school to request approval for exemption from attendance at school prior to planning for prolonged leave, such as overseas trips
 - Parents to provide updated contact details to the school office as soon as there is a change in contact details
 - Parents are to take necessary measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children

Roles and Responsibilities of Classroom Teachers

- Recording, monitoring and maintaining accurate attendance in Sentral on a daily basis.
- Providing clear information to students regarding attendance requirements.
- Monitor student attendance and frequently remind students of the need to bring a parent note when returning from absence or when leaving school to attend an appointment.
- Notifying the admin staff if they notice irregular attendance, frequent late arrival or absenteeism. Also inform admin staff if the student has a pattern of absence such as specific day of the week.
- Teachers are required to mark attendance of students on Sentral by 9.00am.
- Teachers must retain any written and electronic explanations from parents.
- Keep absence notes / medical certificates in the folder provided and hand this to the admin office at the end of the week on Friday's. The admin officer will scan and keep the records electronically in the individual student folders.
- If teachers receive verbal explanations from parents, they should update Sentral record using the approved codes.
- In the case of late arrival or early departure, advise students to bring late note from the admin office before they report to class

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- The teachers will advise the Admin Staff of any students that have been absent for more than two days.
 - Inform Principal or his delegate of ongoing absences for a student.
 - The Admin Staff will make a courtesy call to the parent to discuss the reason for absence.

Roles and Responsibilities of Admin Staff

- Keep student records in their respective file.
- Update Sentral when advised by parent/guardian about a student's absence and notify the class teachers.
- Enter late students into Sentral and provide students with a late slip which the student must give to their Class teacher on entering the classroom.
- Notify class teachers if a student leaves early. Ensure that information about students signing out early from school is accurately recorded in Sentral.
- Notifies the class teacher if a student has been admitted into sick bay during recess and lunch.
- As delegated by the principal, contact parent/guardian after 2 consecutive days of unexplained/unauthorised absence and follow up regularly if absence continues.
- If a student is **late to school** for more than 3 times in a term (without notes), Office Admin will then contact the parents. Office Admin Staff will provide a summary report that demonstrates the late arrivals of students on a fortnightly basis.
- The admin staff will contact the parents to obtain the reason behind **continued absences**. The response will be communicated to the respective class teacher via an email.
- Pass on messages and notes regarding students requiring long leave
- In the case of minor injury, the injury will be addressed promptly and the student will return to class. Sickbay is for short term assistance and acts as a first-aid station only.
- Keeps a register of enrolments that includes the following information for each student; name, age, address, name and contact number of parents/guardians, name of emergency contact, and contact number, date of enrolments and medical conditions. For students above the age of six, document previous school or pre-enrolment details
- Records date and destination of student leaving the school and notifying the Home School Liaison Officer at Community Services if the destination of the student of mandatory school age is unknown.

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- Retain the register of enrolment for a minimum period of five years preceding the current date.
 - Retain the register of daily attendance by the school for a period of seven years after the last entry was made.

Role and Responsibilities Head of Teaching and Learning and Wellbeing Coordinator

- Ensure that the Class teachers mark rolls.
- Monitor student late arrivals when notified that it is an issue.
- Contact parents of late arriving students upon receiving a summary report of late arrivals from the office Admin staff. This procedure takes place every term.
- Arrange meetings with parents to discuss student lateness to school
- If the students' attendance drops below 85% overall then parent meeting is organized to discuss the issue.

Role and Responsibilities Head of Policy & Compliance

- Monitor student attendance when notified that it is an issue.
- Attend meetings scheduled to discuss student attendance issues.
- Train teachers about the policy and procedure for roll marking and attend to any difficulties they may overcome.
- Students with unexplained/unacceptable patterns of attendance will be referred to the principal.
- For at risk students, below 90% attendance percentage in a Term, a letter is sent home outlining the attendance percentage.
- Send a letter generated from Sentral to parents listing all the absences If the child's rate of attendance has fallen below 90% overall in any Term

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

- Ensures School staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures.
- Ensures that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised.
- Ensures that teachers must know the procedures for marking the attendance in Sentral using the approved codes and following up absences.

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- Ensure attendance records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students. The information must include the following:
 - Students name, age and address.
 - Name and contact telephone of parent/guardian.
 - Collecting background information.
 - Information of previous school/pre-enrolment for a student older than 6 years.
 - Destination of student leaving the school and notifying the Home School Liaison Officer at DET if the destination of the student of mandatory school age is unknown.
 - Data on absence where a student is absent for 30 days, the principal should access the mandatory reporter's section of the Keep Them Safe website <http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/> to determine if whether a report is required.
 - Ensures all new teaching staff are trained and provided with student attendance policy
 - Support teachers and staff when dealing with parents regarding unsatisfactory student attendance.
 - Notifying relevant authorities if unsatisfactory attendance continues.
 - Providing clear information to parents and students regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
 - Under section 25 of the Education Act 1990, the principal has the authority to exercise the Minister's delegation; hence may grant exemption for attendance from school for students going overseas or due to illness that requires students to stay away from school
 - Principal may:
 - *Grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness (Attendance Register Code S)*
 - *Record up to 25 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the principal (Attendance Register Code L). Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the principal's discretion.*

This may be due to:

 - *Misadventure or unforeseen event*
 - *Participation in special events not related to the school*
 - *Domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member*
 - *Attendance at funerals*
 - *Recognized religious festivals or ceremonial occasions*

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- *Decline to accept an explanation for an absence as satisfactory. In this case, the parent must be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and be provided with a reason for this decision.*
 - *Request medical certificate or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged. Where principals have ongoing concerns. They may request the parents' consent to contact the medical practitioner. In the event where this request is denied, or the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can then record the absence as unjustified (Attendance Register Code A)*
 - *Delegate responsibility for the maintenance of attendance registers to teachers and other school personnel*

School Attendance Records Requirements

School attendance records must include:

- A register of Admission to be retained permanently
- Notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents, to be stored in student files.
- An attendance register (roll) to be retained for a period of seven years after the last entry was made. In case where a student has had an accident necessitating an incident report, all attendance records must be retained until the student reaches 24 years
- Records for certificates of exemption (i.e. request for absence forms) must be stored in student files.
- Records of medical certificates and/or parent not of student absence

Registering the attendance of students

- The Education Act (1990) (Section 24) requires that attendance registers be maintained in a form approved by the minister.
- Attendance Registers must be maintained on all days which the school is open for instruction. This includes excursions, sports carnivals and other similar events.
- The NSW Attendance Register Codes must only be used
- Student attendance must be registered at the start of each day.
- Staff members who are responsible for maintaining attendance registers must be fully acquainted with the procedures as set out in this policy.

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- Where there is a partial absence, the exact times of arrival or departure must be recorded in the system, with the relevant code.

Security of Attendance Registers

- Hard copies of attendance registers must be stored in a secure location within the school.
- Attendance registers must not be removed from the school premises, except for when an exceptional circumstance warrants this removal (i.e. fire or flood)
- At the conclusion of each school year, the principal must ensure that the attendance registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year

Roll Marking Procedures

- Each class teacher is to take attendance by 9:00am. Attendance is marked on Sentral.
- Students who come to school late (after 9:00am) are required go to the admin office and fill in the late slip prior to entering the classroom, in order for the teacher to indicate on the roll that the student is late. The teacher will discuss with parents where a student has been late more than three days per term.
- In case of early departure (any time before 3:15pm), parents must fill out an Early Leave Slip from the office stating the reason for the early leave. Upon reporting to the office, parents must wait in the office for their child. Under no circumstances must the parent(s) go directly to the student's classroom to collect the child. The office staff will deliver the early leave pass to the class teacher at the time of leaving. The class teacher will record in the attendance register and then pass this on to admin staff.
- In case of excursions, the teacher is to mark the roll in the morning before leaving the school to go to the excursion venue.
- In the event that the class teacher is absent, the Casual Teacher will mark the roll on a class list and sends it to the office during the first period. Admin staff will mark it on the class roll.

Student Absences

1. The parents who use the school bus service are advised to contact the bus driver the night before or before the morning run if their child will not be using the service that day and the reason for their absence. Parent has to also notify the school admin if the child is absent.
2. The admin staff will follow up any unexplained absence. Class teachers will notify admin staff of student who has unexplained absence for two consecutive days. In cases of two or more consecutive days of absences, admin will contact parents to receive an explanation. All phone calls are to be recorded in the Zahra Grammar School Absence Action Sheet/Parents Communication Log. Admin staff will call twice to establish contact with parents and if he/she cannot get through a letter will be posted home.
3. If, following contact via letter, the parents/carers' explanation is deemed satisfactory, the accurate cause of absence must be recorded and entered into the attendance register. If there has been no response or satisfactory explanation provided within 10 school days of the initial absence, the absence should be recorded as an unexplained absence in attendance register and must also be noted in the student's file.

Management of Repeated Late Arrivals

Regular punctuality is expected of all students. Late arrival can disrupt classroom routines and impact learning.

Where a pattern of lateness is identified, the following process will apply:

Step 1 - Monitoring and Initial Written Contact

- Where a student is late more than three times in a term, Admin staff will monitor the pattern of lateness and inform the Head of Teaching and Learning.
- A written notification will be sent to the parent/carer outlining the number of late arrivals and reminding families of school start times.
- A copy of this correspondence will be placed in the student's file.

Step 2 - Parent Meeting

- If the pattern of lateness persists, a meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer, Head of Teaching and Learning and Wellbeing Coordinator to identify any contributing factors and agree on strategies to support regular and punctual attendance.

Step 3 - Ongoing Concerns and Escalation

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- If repeated lateness continues without reasonable explanation, the matter will be escalated to the Head of Policy and Compliance. A formal meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer and relevant school staff.
 - Where concerns remain unresolved, the school may consider further action in accordance with the Attendance Policy and Conditions of Enrolment.

Monitoring and Intervention of Unsatisfactory Attendance

- It is possible that due to an unsatisfactory record of attendance or frequent lateness, the student will not meet the course outcomes. This could affect a student's eligibility to complete the year successfully and be promoted to the following year level. It is, therefore, important that students cultivate habits of good attendance from the start of the year.
- The school recognises, however, that for a variety of sound reasons – such as illness, dental appointments, family emergencies etc. – that students may be late or not attend school every day. In such cases, the student must bring a letter to excuse their lateness or the next day explaining the absence. The letter must be from the student's parent/guardian and signed and a medical certificate. All lateness and absences are recorded in the school rolls and are documented in student reports.
- Early intervention for students at risk of developing irregular patterns of attendance is crucial in order for these patterns to be reversed.

Indicators of students at risk of developing these patterns include the following:

- frequent lateness
- leaving school early
- missing lessons
- being the victim of bullying and harassment
- learning difficulties
- many days absent, either through illness, unexplained reasons or family commitments
- unresolved issues with school personnel (staff or students)

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- social or emotional issues
 - difficulties at times of transition
 - health issues experienced by the student and/or family members

Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:

- student and parent interviews
 - reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program
 - development of a school-based attendance improvement plan
 - referral to the school counsellor or outside agencies
 - support from school based personnel.
 - documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern.
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- Attendance meetings with parents/carers and students should be convened following initial contact with the parents/carers, when a student's attendance pattern is of concern to the school. The purpose of these meetings is to review strategies initiated to support the student's attendance has not been resolved. The meeting should establish a shared understanding of accountability and strategies for improving the attendance of the student. Ideally, the student should be involved in the process of problem identification and improvement goal setting.
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- For ongoing intensive support of students, a student support group should be convened by the principal/or hos delegate and attended by relevant teachers, parents/carers and the student. Professionals from other agencies may also attend as appropriate with the permission of the parents/carers. The purposes of this meeting are to ensure that the parents/carers are aware of the absences and fully appreciate the educational implications for the student, identify the reasons for the student's absences and develop a Student Attendance Improvement Plan and/or an Individual Learning Plan. When the School feels that they have exhausted all strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, the regional office should be contacted to provide additional advice and support.

Extended Absence

If an absence is anticipated, then a note should be produced **before** the absence and presented to the classroom teacher. This could occur, for example, when a medical appointment has been made. In such circumstances where a child will be known to be absent for more than 2 school days, an Extended Absence Form' available from the office must be filled out. Extended absence will only be approved by the principal for a maximum of two weeks within the year, with student's subject to a class test on return. Parents are advised to collect school work from teachers for the duration of absence.

To obtain approval for extended absence, parents need to arrange a meeting with the principal/or his delegate who will then provide a permission form (see attachment) to be completed by the parent and explain the conditions of leave. Upon completion, the form must be submitted to the school for approval by the principal. A copy of this approval will be sent to the parent(s).

The attendance Code 'L' must be used to indicate student leave of absence.

Parents must be mindful of the following Conditions for leave:

- Granting approval for leave is only at the discretion of the principal, who has the authority to exercise the Minister's delegation under Section 25 of the Education Act
- Leave will be granted only for extenuating circumstances. Request for family holidays will not be approved. The student's general attendance pattern will also be considered before approval for any leave is granted.
- Extended leave may be granted for up to 2 weeks within one academic year.
- Students must be encouraged to complete work during their absence, as guided by the class teacher. It is strongly recommended that during their absence, students remain in an approved learning program as designed by their teacher.

Parents should be aware that leave exceeding 2 school weeks (10 school days) within the one academic year may adversely affect the child's progress and their performance. It is therefore expected that parents try to organize overseas trips around the school holiday period so that minimum disruption to their child's education is made.

Supporting Regular Attendance of Students at School

Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Problems of non-attendance are usually resolved by the principal, the school coordinator and school staff in consultation with parents and students.

At Zahra Grammar School if a student is showing unsatisfactory attendance (either partial or whole day) or absences are not justified or explained, the class teacher or school admin staff will make the initial contact via phone with the parent(s). If the student continues to show unsatisfactory attendance or absences are unjustified/unexplained, then the admin staff will send the parent(s) an unsatisfactory attendance letter (see attached). A copy of the letter will be placed in the student's file. In the event that the unsatisfactory attendance is continuing additional school-based intervention strategies may also be implemented, such as:

- Student and parent interviews
- Reviewing the appropriateness of students' educational programs
- Development of a school-based attendance improvement plan
- Referral to the external counseling agencies

Where there is still no improvement after the above strategies have been implemented, then the school may undertake legal action when, despite all reasonable measures have been undertaken to support them, parents do not fulfil their obligation under the Education Act (1990). Section 22 of the Education Act (1990) states that, parents may be guilty of an offence if they do not enroll a child of a compulsory school age in school and ensure that they attend regularly. Legal proceedings may be appropriate when parents fail to:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly; or
- Enroll their children at a recognised school or register their children with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESAs) for home schooling

Preventative measures the class teacher can follow to encourage positive attendance include:

- Supporting the regular attendance of students by providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community through offering equal opportunities and high-quality education
- Make parents and students feel welcome at school
- Clarify school standards

Exemption from Attending School

Source of Obligation

The NSW Education Minister has delegated the power to principals of non-government schools, to grant and cancel a certificate of exemption from being enrolled and attending school in certain prescribed circumstances.

The NSW Registration Manual (3.8) requires the Principal of the Zahra Grammar School to have in place and implement policies and procedures for exercising the Minister's delegation and to maintain records of the exercise of the above delegation including copies of all certificates issued under the delegation.

Exemption from School Procedures

Zahra Grammar School has developed policies and procedures for exercising the Minister's delegation of power with respect to certificates of exemption, in accordance with the Exemption from School – Procedures published by the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Compulsory School Age in NSW

A child of compulsory school age must attend school.
In NSW "compulsory school age" includes all children between the ages of six years and the minimum school leaving age of 17 years.

Exemptions from Attending School

Under Section 25 of the Education Act 1990, the Minister may grant a Certificate of Exemption. This power is delegated, subject to these Procedures, to: The Secretary, Department of Education and Communities, Deputy Secretary, Education and Communities with the responsibility for Schools, Executive Director (Schools), Director (Schools) and Principals provided certain conditions are met.

https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/school-attendance-policy/exempt_gui.pdf

A child of compulsory school age may only be absent from school, without a reasonable excuse, if they are granted a certificate of exemption from attending school.

Reasons for granting exemptions from being enrolled in and/or attending school include:

- exceptional domestic circumstances (including the health of a child where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate)
- the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under Public Health Legislation

For more reasons and further detail refer to the [Exemption from School – Procedures](#).

Who Can Grant an Exemption?

The Minister has delegated to the Principal the power to grant a certificate of exemption for a maximum total of 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student. A full school day is six hours.

The Principal must ensure that exemptions granted for part-day absences do not accumulate to over 100 days in a 12-month period.

In other circumstances a certificate of exemption may be granted by the Minister for Education or their delegate.

Test for Granting Certificates of Exemption

The Principal may grant a certificate of exemption if they are satisfied that conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable that such a certificate be granted.

Maintenance of Attendance Register

The Zahra Grammar School keeps a register of the daily attendance of all students at the Zahra Grammar School Office.

Exemptions for Zahra Grammar School-based programs must be indicated in the attendance register with the code M.

Conditions of Granting Certificates

Certificates of exemptions granted by the Principal must:

- include the specific conditions that apply to the exemption
- state that the exemption may be cancelled if these conditions are not met or

cease to apply

- specify the dates for which the exemption has been granted

The original certificate of exemption must be provided to parents/guardians, and a copy must be attached to the student's record.

Records of the exercise of the exemption delegation, including copies of all certificates of exemption issued under the delegation, are retained by the Zahra Grammar School and stored in the school Admin office.

Certificates of exemption issued by the Principal may be cancelled by the Principal.

Implementation

The Principal and the appointed delegate are responsible for the effective implementation of exemption from attending school policy.

Attached Documents:


Attachment 1: Copy of absentee note/late/early passes

Attachment 2: Letter to parent requesting an explanation for reason of absence

Attachment 3: Extended absentee note

Attachment 4: Zahra Grammar School absence action sheet

Attachment 1

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ABSENTEE NOTE</u></p> <p>Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms _____,</p>
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Your child _____ of Year _____
was absent from school on the following
dates _____
Please provide
reason _____



EARLY DISMISSAL NOTE

Given Name: _____ Surname: _____
Year: _____

Reason: _____

Signature: _____ Time: _____
Date: _____



LATE NOTE

Given Name: _____ Surname: _____
Year: _____

Reason: _____

Signature: _____ Time: _____
Date: _____

Attachment 2



Zahra Grammar School
44-48 Westmoreland Road
Minto, 2566
Email: principal@zahragrammar.com.au

<Date>

Dear <PARENT'S (OR GUARDIAN'S) NAME>,

Zahra Grammar School is committed to ensuring that all of our students get the most out of their education, and wants to support our students to maintain regular attendance. Students who attend school regularly learn more and achieve better results.

As parents, you have an important role in ensuring that your child attends school whenever it is open, unless there is a good reason for his/her absence. Acceptable reasons for absence include sickness or serious family circumstances.

<STUDENT NAME> was absent on <DATE>. This letter is sent to make you aware of this absence. All absences are counted as unexplained until the school receives a written explanation or a phone call explaining the reason for their absence. If an explanation is not received within ten days, the absence will permanently be added to the student's file as unexplained.

If you have any questions, please call the admin office on 02 8712 1683 so that we may work together to ensure <STUDENT NAME>'s educational success.

Sincerely,

Dr Gulzar Khan

Principal

Attachment 3



Zahra Grammar School
44-48 Westmoreland Road
Minto, 2566
Email: principal@zahragrammar.com.au

Dear Parents,

Extended Leave may be granted if pre-approved in writing before the child is absent. Parents need to accept that significant learning may be missed. Also, they must assume the responsibility for time lost by their child. Classroom work that is missed during this time will need to be made up by the student upon his/her return.

Extended weekends and pleasure trips should be carefully examined to determine if they are interfering with your child's progress in school. Parents and students are expected to speak with their teachers to create a plan which will minimize the academic impact of their absence. The teacher may at their discretion hand out work to complete during the student's absence.

So teachers are aware of an upcoming absence, please send the form below to your child's teacher as soon as your plans are made so this can get approved in advance of the absence.

Thank you,
Dr Gulzar Khan

Principal

Request for absence on school days
Today's Date _____

Student's _____

Name(s)

Year _____

Our family would like to have our children miss school on the following dates:

Reason for absence:

Parent's Signature: _____

Principal approval: _____

Zahra Grammar School Absence Action Sheet/Parents Communication Log

Course of Action Following observed/ reported absence (s)

Date	Call Details	1 st call	2 nd call	Letter Sent