



Palmerston District Primary School School-Based Attendance Procedures



Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the school community understands the important legal obligations of parents of children of compulsory education age and the requirement for them to be enrolled in a registered school and attend school on a full-time basis. The procedure also contains important information about processes in place to support, monitor and maintain student attendance.

Scope

This procedure applies to all students and parents/carers of Palmerston District Primary School and should be read in conjunction with the [ACT Education Directorate Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance Policy](#) and the [ACT Public School Attendance and Roll Marking Procedures](#) and the [Non-Compliance Procedures](#). This procedure does not replace or change the obligations of Palmerston District Primary School, parents/carers and Education Support Office under relevant legislation such as the [Education Act 2004](#).

Compulsory School Attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things at school every day and there are no safe number of days for missing school.

In the ACT compulsory education requires that all children from age six are legally required to be enrolled at and attending school until they turn 17 or achieve their year 12 Senior Secondary Certificate.

Students are expected to attend school during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an exemption from school enrolment or attendance for the student;
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Palmerston District Primary School; and/or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Palmerston District Primary School for particular classes/activities; or
- the parents can provide a reasonable excuse for their child not attending e.g. sick or holiday.

For more information refer to the [ACT Education website](#).

Supporting and promoting attendance

It is important that our school community has a shared understanding of the importance of attending school and protecting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people through the reporting and monitoring of absences.

Palmerston District Primary School is committed to:

- promoting positive attendance and setting clear expectations;
- recording daily attendance in the School Administration System (SAS), the official student enrolment and attendance register
- ensuring children remain enrolled and attend school all day, every school day;

- closely monitoring, communicating and implementing strategies to improve regular school attendance;
- working proactively to identify individual students and groups of students who are vulnerable and whose attendance is low;
- working together with students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports; and
- ensuring that the school community understand that attendance at school everyone's responsibility.

Late arrivals and early leavers

Students are expected to be at school from 9am each morning in time for the daily roll call.

If a student arrives at school from 9:15am onwards, they need to sign in at the front office to receive a late note. Parents are expected to provide a reason for their child's late arrival. If a valid reason is not provided, their late arrival (absence) will be recorded as 'absent-unexplained'.

Medical and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours where possible, however if a student needs to leave early, the parent/carer is required to provide an explanation as soon as practical, and the student must be signed out through the front office. Students who do not sign out, will have their absence recorded as 'unexplained'.

Any student who leaves the school grounds during the recess and lunch break without an explanation, will have their absence recorded as 'unexplained'.

What circumstances/explanations are considered a reasonable excuse?

There are a limited number of reasons which are considered reasonable excuses for an absence. The two most common reasons for student absences are 'sick' and 'leave'. 'Sick' is usually due to an illness and 'leave' may be required due to a serious illness of an immediate family member, family holiday or attendance at a funeral. The principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence and can request a medical certificate or statutory declaration in addition to an explanation where required.

Principals will generally accept the following reasons, as reasonable excuses:

- illness or medical issues, including recovery from major injury or medical condition;
- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate;
- bereavement or attending a funeral of a relative or friend of the student;
- religious or cultural observation;
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance and the principal supports the leave;
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings;
- participation in sanctioned debates, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school; and/or
- participation in interstate, national, or international academic or sporting event or equivalent.

What are unexplained absences?

An unexplained absence is an absence where the student's parent/carer has failed to provide a *reasonable excuse*.

You will be notified by the school if an absence is unexplained and given the opportunity to provide a reasonable excuse within 10 school days of the first absence. If you fail to provide an explanation it

will remain on the school's record as an unexplained absence and count towards your child's attendance record.

If you provide an excuse that is not considered to be a reasonable excuse, then the absence will be treated as unauthorised and this absence becomes an explained absence.

What are unauthorised absences?

In some circumstances, even though a reason has been provided, the absence may be recorded as *unauthorised* because the reason does not count as a valid reason as per the [ACT Education Directorate's Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance policy](#) and the ACT Public School [Attendance and Roll Marking procedures](#).

In general, the following absences may be determined as unauthorised absences: repeated poor excuses such as running late, too tired, slept in and absences due to truancy.

Where explanations are provided that don't provide adequate information, the principal can use their discretion and may treat the explanation as 'explained/ unauthorised' e.g. 'My child was away from school on Friday 10 May' or 'My child has an appointment to attend'. These examples do not provide enough information to determine if the explanation is a 'reasonable excuse'.

Planned absences

Parents are encouraged to holiday or travel during the official school holidays. If travel outside of the school holiday period is necessary and it will be greater than five school days (e.g. overseas/interstate holiday), parents must apply in writing to the principal for approval beforehand. If you do not apply for leave, or the school does not believe it to be in the best interests of your child, the absence from school may be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence'.

Contact us for attendance support

Should you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance, please call the school office and ask to speak to your child's teacher, the Student Wellbeing Team or the relevant Deputy Principal or Principal. Palmerston District Primary School provides a range of support programs and strategies to address attendance concerns including support for students returning from an extended period of leave.

Responsibilities

Our school responsibilities include:

- promoting attendance and maintaining up to date school-based attendance procedures;
- maintaining an attendance register in SAS and marking attendance rolls each school day and keeping a record of the reason given for each absence;
- advising parents/carers of any unexplained absences on the same day, or as soon as practicable;
- encouraging open communication with students, parents and families about issues affecting a student's attendance and working in partnership with families to address any concerns about a student's education, engagement, health and wellbeing and discussing barriers to attendance early;
- taking action where there are more than three consecutive days, or more than seven unexplained non-consecutive days absent to seek a reasonable excuse from the parents/carers;
- determining if an explanation provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent/carer meeting their responsibilities under the Act;

- identifying any attendance concerns and working with the student and parent/carer to understand and address any attendance barriers and provide support strategies and programs;
- referring to Student Engagement for access to support if a student's attendance remains a concern; and
- effectively monitoring overseas student attendance and implementing a documented intervention strategy where an overseas student's attendance is at risk of failing to meet the minimum student visa requirement (attendance of a minimum 80% of the scheduled course contact hours during each study period).

Parent/carer responsibilities include:

- ensuring your child/ren attend school on time every day when instruction is offered including excursions, sports carnivals camps and special events;
- ensuring you and your child follow the school attendance procedures for late arrival and early departure i.e. signing in and out of front office;
- notifying the school as soon as practicable if your child will be late or will be leaving early;
- notifying the school in advance of any upcoming absences or letting the school know early in the morning if your child won't be attending so their absence can be recorded correctly.
- replying to the school's SMS, email the front office at E: plmp_info@ed.act.edu.au; call on (02) 6142 1440 or alternatively, send a written note with your child on their return to school or visit the school;
- ensuring absence explanations include:
 - your child's name;
 - the date of the absence(s)
 - the reason (s)
- making sure explanations are provided in advance or on the day or as soon as practical or within 10 days of the first day of absence;
- ensuring your contact details are up to date so that the school can send you the absence notifications;
- communicating openly with the school and working in partnership to address any concerns about your child's education, engagement, health and wellbeing and discussing barriers to attendance early;
- scheduling family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours where possible;
- putting in writing a request to the principal for planned extended absences of five or more days during term time (e.g. an overseas holiday);
- seeking a full-time or part-time Exemption Certificate if your child is unable to meet the attendance requirements of the Act due to individual circumstances;
- seeking an Approval Statement where your young person has completed year 10 and wishes to participate in workplace related training and/or employment alternatives; and
- complying with any attendance notifications (letters), Information and Compliances Notice instructions.

Related Resources

- [ACT Education Compulsory Education: Student Enrolment and Attendance Policy](#)
- [Attendance at ACT Public Schools Procedure](#)
- [Non-Compliance Procedure](#)
- [Enrolment in ACT Public Schools Preschool to Year 12 Procedure](#)