

Lowther Hall

ANGLICAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

All about the girl

Attendance Policy (Students)

Date of last review:

2023

Review cycle:

3 yearly

Review and approval responsibility:

Executive

Category:

Child Safety

VRQA required:

Yes

Locations:

O:Drive, LowtherLink,
Website



STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, parents include a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a student enrolled at Lowther Hall including persons who have parental responsibility under the Family Law Act and any person with whom a student normally or regularly resides.

2. PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy sets out the expectations that Lowther Hall School has for the compulsory attendance of students at school. It identifies the individuals responsible for monitoring and following up daily attendance and outlines how current contact details for parents, guardians and caregivers are maintained.

While Lowther Hall has a very good overall student attendance record, it will adopt such strategies as it considers appropriate to ensure high levels of student attendance are maintained and to improve attendance in specific cases where there are concerns for a student's attendance record.

3. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to all students enrolled at Lowther Hall and their parents and caregivers.

4. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

Lowther Hall is required by law to maintain an attendance register in respect of the attendance at school of its enrolled students.

Full time attendance at school is compulsory for children from 6 – 17 years of age unless an exemption has been granted for a child, as governed by the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*.

It is the duty of the parents of a child enrolled at Lowther Hall to ensure that their child attends school at all times when Lowther Hall is open for the child's instruction. Parents must comply with this duty unless they have a reasonable excuse.

A reasonable excuse includes:

- the child is prevented from attending school because of illness, accident, an unforeseen event or an unavoidable cause or because of a requirement to comply with another law.
- the absence from school was because of the child's disobedience or refusal and the parent made every reasonable effort to intervene but was unsuccessful.
- the child is attending or observing a religious event or obligation as a result of a genuinely held belief of the child or a parent of the child.
- the parent has provided an explanation and the Principal of Lowther Hall accepts the explanation as a reasonable excuse.
- the child has been suspended or expelled.

5. MONITORING OF ATTENDANCE

5.1 Lowther Hall monitors the daily attendance of each student. Their attendance is noted in the attendance register at least twice per day.

5.1.1 It is the responsibility of the relevant Head of School in Senior School, Raymond House and Blinkbonnie House to oversee the recording of attendance in their area of the School.

5.1.2 In Blinkbonnie House and Raymond House recording student attendance is the responsibility of the classroom teacher (or, in their absence, whichever teacher has been assigned responsibility for the class) at the start and end of each day in the School's administration system; Synergetic.

In Blinkbonnie House and Raymond House it is the responsibility of the relevant Receptionist to follow up that all student attendance rolls have been completed.

5.1.3 In Senior School recording student attendance is the responsibility of the Home Group teacher (or, in their absence, whichever teacher has been assigned responsibility for the class) at the start of each day in the School's administration system; Synergetic. Recording attendance is also the responsibility of every teacher who is teaching a class in Lesson 1. At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of the teacher who is teaching a class in the final lesson of the day to record student attendance.

In Senior School it is the responsibility of the Senior School Receptionist to follow up that all student attendance rolls have been completed.

5.2 Lowther Hall identifies any absences of a student from school including classes and follows up any unexplained absences.

5.2.1 In the first instance, it is the responsibility to follow up immediately with parents any students who have been recorded as absent where an explanation has not been provided for this absence by a parent, caregiver or guardian.

5.2.2 Where an absence is unable to be accounted for the matter will be escalated to the Head of School or their delegate for immediate follow up.

5.2.3 Parents will be notified of any unsatisfactory attendance at school or class attendance of their child and will record information about any unsatisfactory attendance on her student file. Such notification is the responsibility of the Head of School.

5.2.4 Parents should be aware that School Attendance Officers appointed by the government have certain powers in relation to students who are not attending school including issuing School Attendance Notices in certain circumstances that may require parents to provide reasons as to why their child may not have complied with their obligation to attend school.

5.2.5 The School will maintain current contact details for parents via the consent2go platform and the integration of information collected through that platform, into the School's administration system; Synergetic. Parents, caregivers and guardians will be prompted to update and confirm their details at least twice per year and prior to any offsite excursion or camp. It is the responsibility of the parents, caregiver or guardian to ensure their details are correct.

6. ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

6.1 Lowther Hall requires its parents to provide an explanation of the reason for a student's absence from school or a school event on any day on which the school was open for instruction. In all cases where it is possible to advise the School of a proposed absence in advance, this should be done so that the Principal (or her delegate) may consider whether or not to excuse the absence.

The Principal (or her delegate) will make a written record of the reason (if any) given by a parent.

6.2 Students should **not** generally be absent from school for the purpose of **taking family holidays** during school terms. If an absence for that reason or for some other pre-planned reason is unavoidable, the following procedure will apply:

- The parent/s must at least one month in advance of the proposed period of absence, or as soon as practicable if one month's notice is not possible, write to the Principal outlining the proposed period of absence and the reason for the absence and requesting the Principal to consider whether the excuse for the proposed absence is reasonable
- The parent/s will be advised by the Principal in writing if she accepts the reason for the absence as a reasonable excuse or the parent/s may be requested to meet with the Principal for further discussions.
- In the event that the Principal accepts the reason for the absence as a reasonable excuse, she may impose a condition of approval for the absence that the student undertake an absence learning plan during the absence. In this case, the child's classroom teacher (Raymond House and Blinkbonnie House) or Year Level Coordinator (Senior School) will advise the parents of the absence learning plan that will have to be delivered and overseen by the parents in order to minimise the student falling behind in class.

A sample letter from the Principal is attached as **Appendix A**.

An absence learning plan is an outline of the broad areas to be covered during the student's absence and is **not** a detailed document or equivalent to an Individual Learning Plan. The material outlined in the absence learning plan will not be able to be individually taught to the student prior to her absence or upon her return.

If an absence learning plan is not undertaken by the student during the absence, the Principal may subsequently record that the absence was not excused because of the failure to complete the work set.

Where approval has not been sought in advance or in accordance with this policy and it was appropriate for such approval to have been sought in advance, or the conditions for approval have not been met, the absence will not be excused.

- 6.3 Where a student is absent from school in order to work in the entertainment industry, the appropriate form must be completed and submitted to the Principal for signing. Where the Principal deems that a student is not achieving the expected level of learning, permission for such absence will not be given. Further information for parents is provided on the Department of Education website at <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/exemption-school-attendance-and-enrolment/resources>. Please scroll down to refer to the document entitled *Information for Parents/Carers: Exempting Students from School Attendance for Employment in the Entertainment Industry*.

7. HOLDING A PLACE FOR A TERM OR LONGER

In the event that a family wishes to withdraw a student for a term or multiple terms (for example, due to a parent's secondment overseas) the family can apply to the Principal to hold the student's place. A holding fee of 25% of the tuition fee is the standard charge.

More information about holding a place due to extended student absence is included in **Appendix B**.

8. SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE TO ATTEND

- **General approach**
The School will offer support aiming to focus on positive and proactive solutions and the creation of a safe, supportive learning environment. In the event of prolonged or repeated absence, or where a student refuses to attend school, advice may be sought for the student from a health or mental health professional.
- **Meeting with Principal / Head of School**
A meeting with the student and parent/carers will be convened if a student's attendance is of concern to the school. The meeting will aim to develop improvement strategies to support the student and examine why non-attendance continues to be a problem and explain the possible consequences of repeated non-attendance.
- **Psychologist**
A meeting with the Psychologist may be arranged when student attendance issues are identified and it becomes apparent that a student may require ongoing intensive support in order to remain engaged in school. Appropriate professionals from other agencies may also be invited to attend with the permission of the parent.

9. CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-ATTENDANCE

- **Asked to leave**
If the situation is such that all efforts to encourage the student's attendance are exhausted and she cannot be supported further by the School, her enrolment may be cancelled, in the best interests of all concerned.
- **Report to Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFS)**
A failure of parents/carers to ensure a child attends school may result in a report to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFS) because the child's development may be deemed in jeopardy and require DFFS intervention.

10. PRIVACY

The School seeks to respect privacy of families and individuals in relation to absences, through the careful management of personal information. This is achieved through the Privacy Policy and associated procedures.

11. COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- The School will communicate processes for communicating student absences to parents at the commencement of each school year.
- The School will communicate the Student Attendance Policy to:
 - New families on enrolment.
 - All staff every 3 years through an update process.

12. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Attendance Register
- Camps, Excursions and Offsite Activities Policy
- Complaints Resolution Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Fees, Discounts and Scholarships Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Schedule of Fees and Charges – Terms of Payment
- Social Media Policy and Guidelines

Lowther Hall

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Dear Parent,

In 2014, the Victorian Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, announced amendments to the Education and Training reform Act 2006 that reflected the introduction of the Education and Training Reform Amendment (School Attendance) Act 2013. The legislative amendments to the enforcement of compulsory school attendance and enrolment came into effect on 1 January 2014 and the procedure to implement the legislation became effective from 1 March 2014. The amendments to the Act apply to all Victorian schools and focus on clarifying the role of parents in ensuring that their children attend school, as well as outlining the process that could be undertaken by a School if a child's attendance is very poor.

At Lowther Hall, student attendance is usually very good, with relatively low absenteeism. One area, however, where we do need to clarify procedures and expectations and ask for parent support is in the area of student absence during term time due to family travel. Given the generous school holiday periods at Lowther Hall – including a three week break in September and close to eight weeks over Christmas, it is our expectation that all girls are present for learning during term time. The learning program delivered by our teachers is rigorous and fast paced and is sequential – building on concepts as it moves forward and meaning that if something is missed it can be challenging to catch up. Trying to make up missed academic ground can place undue stress on children and adversely affect their wellbeing. Whilst it is certainly advantageous for girls to experience travel, we ask that it be confined to holiday periods.

Attached you will find a flyer, produced by the Victorian government which outlines various scenarios relating to absences and how to manage them. We wish to clarify the situation outlined in “Example 2” which again relates to term time absences due to holidays. If you are unable to avoid an absence during term time, the following procedure must be followed.

1. Write to the Principal (at least one month in advance) outlining the proposed absence and requesting permission for missing school.
2. You will be advised in writing if permission is granted or asked to come in for further discussion.
3. For absences less than 3 weeks the student should be supported by parents to access work via LowtherLink if available.
4. In the event of an absence greater than 3 weeks the classroom teacher (Kinder–Year 6) or Year Level Coordinator (Senior School) will advise you about the absence learning plan which parents will need to deliver and oversee in order to minimise the student falling behind. Please note, this plan will be an outline of the broad areas to be covered during the absence. This material will not be able to be individually taught to the student prior to departure or on return.

It is important to understand that an absence learning plan is not a detailed document and is not equivalent to an Individual Learning Plan which some parents may be familiar with.

Please take the time to read the scenarios. I thank you for supporting us with this important Government requirement.

Yours sincerely,



Elisabeth Rhodes
Principal

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EVERY DAY COUNTS

Scenarios

Recommended approaches to absence for parents

Example 1

Sarah is in Grade 5. Her grandmother died over the weekend and the funeral is on Wednesday.

What should happen

On Monday morning, Sarah takes a note, (written by her father), to her teacher. The note explains why Sarah will not be at school on Wednesday. After reading the note, the teacher asks Sarah if she is ok and if she would like to talk to the school counsellor. Sarah says she is ok. The teacher believes the note is authentic and informs the principal who approves the absence. The principal asks the teacher to follow up with Sarah and her family in a week or two to see if they need any additional support.

What shouldn't happen

Sarah arrives at school on Monday looking a bit pale. She is not able to concentrate and is uncommunicative when her teacher asks her what is wrong. On Wednesday she doesn't turn up to school and is marked as absent without an excuse.

Example 2

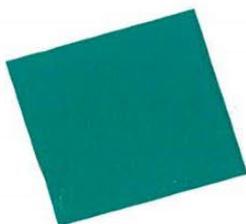
Tyson is a year 8 student. Next week he is going on a family holiday to Japan for two months.

What should happen

A couple of months ago, Tyson's mum approached the school to discuss the holiday. After the principal approved the absence, Tyson's teachers provided Tyson's mother with an absence learning plan to ensure that he doesn't drop behind while on holiday. Tyson's family adapts the trip to include time for Tyson to do some school work. When Tyson returns he feels confident about fitting back into his school, knowing he is up to date with his classmates.

What shouldn't happen

A couple of days before they go away, Tyson's mum tells his room teacher about the holiday. The teacher immediately informs the principal who requests a meeting to discuss if this is feasible for Tyson. There is no time to prepare an absence learning plan, and therefore the family may be financially penalised as numerous absences for which a reasonable excuse is not provided may lead to a fine.



Example 3

Michelle is in her first term as a prep. Her aunty has just arrived from Italy and is visiting for two weeks. Michelle's dad has said she can come to the airport to pick her up, even though it's a school day.

What should happen

Michelle's dad knows taking Michelle out of school is not a good idea, especially when it has taken Michelle a long time to settle in. Instead he picks up her Aunty from the airport by himself. Then they both pick up Michelle at the end of the school day together.

What shouldn't happen

Michelle's dad decides to take Michelle out of school for the day. Michelle enjoys seeing her aunty, but feels anxious about attending school tomorrow.

The principal requests a meeting with her dad to explain why this is not a reasonable excuse.

Example 4

Harrison is a year 11 student. He hasn't been to the dentist for a long time and his mum makes an appointment for a checkup on Tuesday morning. Harrison asks not to go back to school after the appointment because his friends have been teasing him. His Mum says that's fine. She knows he's been having a hard time at school.

What should happen

Harrison's mum makes the appointment time to after school. She tries to talk to him about why he doesn't like school. She makes an appointment with the principal to talk about her concerns. Together they come up with a plan to make school attendance easier for Harrison.

What shouldn't happen

Harrison's mum lets him take the rest of the day off. Harrison enjoys getting away from the teasing from his classmates and starts looking for more excuses to take days off and gets behind in his work.

Example 5

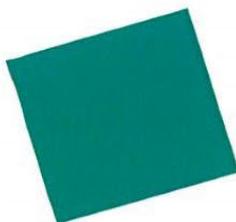
Ngello has been struggling with learning English since his family arrived in Australia. His teacher reminds the class that their book report is due the next day. Ngello asks his parents if he can stay home just for the day so he can finish the book and write the report.

What should happen

Ngello's parents ask him to do the best job he can, but refuse to let him stay home. They send a note to school with Ngello, letting the teacher know Ngello is struggling and asking for a meeting about his studies. The teacher organises a meeting with Ngello and his parents to work out alternative tasks and extra assistance.

What shouldn't happen

Ngello's parents allow him to stay home, and even provide him with a note trying to excuse him. Ngello finishes his book report. Unfortunately for him, the teacher is showing a movie version of the book on that day. The whole next week of lessons involve comparing and contrasting the movie and book, and Ngello feels even more isolated and is unable to complete the work.



APPENDIX B

EXTENDED STUDENT ABSENCE - HOLDING A PLACE

RATIONALE

The following applies to any student from Kindergarten to Year 12 who is currently enrolled at Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School and whose parent/s wish to have a place guaranteed for the student on their return to the School after an extended absence.

HOLDING FEE

- For the School to ensure that a place is available in the nominated term or year, it is a requirement that a Holding Fee is paid. The Holding Fee is 25% of the tuition component of the Annual Fees (as per the yearly fee schedule) and the Holding Fee is not refundable.
- Application to the Principal in writing is required if parents or guardians wish to remove a student from the School for an extended period of time and they should state in writing their commitment to pay the relevant Holding Fee should they wish to pursue this option.
- All signatories on the Form of Application and Entry are required to sign an application in writing to the Principal for payment of a Holding Fee.
- Accounts for the Holding Fee are issued from the School's Business Office.
- There are three payment options for Holding Fees: a) Annual b) 10 Monthly instalments or c) 4 instalments and these are payable on the date set out on the Account
- Only one of the abovementioned payment options can be nominated and is to be selected prior to the first fee payment becoming due and payable.
- If Holding Fees are not paid by the due date the School will cease to hold the place for the absent student/s.

SIBLING DISCOUNTS – HOLDING FEES

- A ten percent (10%) reduction on each Holding Fee applies for second and subsequent sisters for whom a place is being held and is applied to the younger student's fees.

OTHER INFORMATION

- The Principal reserves the right to reduce or waive Holding Fees and any such waivers are confirmed by the Principal in writing.