Warracknabeal Secondary College
Student Attendance Policy

Rationale:
Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don’t fall behind in their development, both socially and academically. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. School participation is important as it 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 which set them up for further learning and participation in their community. When students do not attend daily, they do not have the opportunity to be taught and learn these things; which is why, every day counts.

Aims:
- To reduce the number of days absent of students to below the state average
- The have a clear process for recording absences and following up attendance concerns
- To minimise the negative impact of absences on learning outcomes

Implementation:
Reasons for Absence:
Absences are categorised into approved and not approved absences.
- Approved absences:
  - medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not appropriate
  - bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student
  - school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and the parent is in no way enabling or encouraging the student to stay home
  - cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
  - family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance (one week) and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.
  - Work experience (including harvest work) for students 15 years or older where the parent notifies the school in advance (one week) and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, student and parent.
  - Participation in authorised excursions, sporting teams, performances, instrumental music and extra curricula activities approved by the college
- Unapproved absences:
  - approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with this school policy
  - the student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities (including occasional refusal and truancy)
  - the conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed)
  - the parent has provided no explanation for the absences

Process for following up absences:
- When a student is absent from school for any reason, it is the parent’s responsibility to notify the school with the reason for the absence (in person, via phone, email or written note) by 12pm of that day.
- If the absence is for cultural observance, family holiday, work experience or for persistent school refusal, the parent must contact the school to discuss an appropriate plan in order for these absences to be approved
- If there has not been any communication, on the following day of an absence, a staff member will contact the parent to follow up and obtain a reason for the absence
- If there is an unapproved absence (or no contact can be obtained within 10 days or it falls within an unapproved category), parents will be sent written notification that they may not have met their obligations under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- If unapproved absences accumulate, this could lead to a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer and failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice. Schools are obliged to share attendance records with Centrelink and DHHS; a report may be made if the failure to attend school is believed to be parent negligence.

**Harvest Leave**
- The school recognises the importance of an agricultural pathway for many of our students
- Student involvement during harvest often benefits the student, family and community
- However, missing school negatively impacts the student’s ability to keep up with the rigour of the educational program. As a result, a Student Absence Learning Plan must be completed for the absence to be approved
- If the student is 15 years or older, the work may be attributed to work placement which is useful in order to complete their VCAL and at times VET requirements.

**Supporting students who are absent for extended periods of time**
- Student Absence Learning Plans (family holiday, extended work experience, harvest leave, etc.)
  - If students are absent for a long period of time, the student, parent and teachers need to plan a learning program to minimise the negative impact of that absence
  - Notice of at least one week is required to ensure a plan can be developed and agreed to before the absence is approved
  - The plan will take into consideration all subjects being studied and work will be supplied to cover the essential learning for the duration of the absence
  - Some events that cannot be replicated (orientation week, exams, step-up program) should be prioritised, if possible, ahead of these other activities
  - If the Absence Learning Plan is not satisfactorily completed, it will be treated like any other non-completed work and lunchtimes and after school sessions may be required for the work to be completed.
- School Refusal Plan
  - A student refusing to attend school (due to no fault of the parent) is a reasonable excuse and is considered an approved absence
  - However, the parent is required to assist in developing and supporting a plan for reengaging the student back in education. This may include:
    - Work being sent home to complete (Student Absence Learning Plan)
    - Wellbeing support put in place (including the establishment of a student support group)
    - Modified timetable/curriculum (including an Individual Education Plan)
    - Psychological assessment
    - Transfer to Satellite VCAL
Senior School Absences:
At VCE, students are required to attend a minimum of 85% of classes. If a student is in breach of this minimum attendance without appropriate explanation, it will be grounds for a student receiving an ‘N’ in one or more units. There may be exceptions to this attendance policy - eg. illness, personal or family factors. Please inform the Senior School Coordinator if any ongoing problems exist.

Attendance for SAC’s - VCE
Students who do not attend a scheduled School Assessed Coursework (SAC), which would be undertaken in class, must be able to provide documentary evidence for this absence. Students must also complete an application to reschedule assessment tasks. This document can be obtained from the senior school coordinator. This written evidence should be a medical certificate or other appropriate note and given to the co-ordinator. A phone call to the college must be made prior to 8.55am on the day of absence. If the co-ordinator and subject teacher deem the absence legitimate, the subject teacher will set a task at an alternate time. Students must attend at the nominated time to receive a grade for the SAC. If the absence is not approved, the student will not receive an assessment mark for the SAC and a No Assessment (N/A) will be recorded. The student will still be permitted to complete the task within a new time in order that the Outcome for the Unit can be awarded, however students will only receive an S or N assessment and a SAC mark will not be awarded. Students must submit a School Assessed Task (SAT) by the due date, no extensions of time can be given. If students are facing difficulty in meeting a due date for a SAT they must see the co-ordinator well before the final deadline.

Resources:

Evaluation: This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s three-year review cycle.

Ratified by School Council  Date: 17/10/16
Signed:  Principal:

School Council President: