

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Student Absences from School

This leaflet contains information for parents/caregivers about the requirements and processes involved when a student is absent from Newcastle School.

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Ph: 02 4943 3479

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Newcastle Senior School
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Compulsory School Attendance

Information for parents

Education for your child is important and regular attendance at school is essential for your child to achieve their educational best and increase their career and life options. NSW public schools work in partnership with parents to encourage and support regular attendance of children and young people. When your child attends school every day, learning becomes easier and your child will build and maintain friendships with other children.

What are my legal responsibilities?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory for all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age. The *Education Act 1990* requires that parents ensure their children of compulsory school age are enrolled at, and regularly attend school, or, are registered with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards for homeschooling.

Once enrolled, children are required to attend school each day it is open for students.

The importance of arriving on time

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that students do not miss out on important learning activities scheduled early in the day
- Helps students learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- Give students time to greet their friends before class
- Reduces classroom disruption

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained by parents.

What if my child has to be away from school?

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- being sick, or having an infectious disease
- having an unavoidable medical appointment
- being required to attend a recognised religious holiday
- exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral)

Following an absence from school you must ensure that within 7 days you provide your child's school with a verbal or written explanation for the absence. However, if the school has not received an explanation from you within 2 days, the school may contact you to discuss the absence.

Principals may decline to accept an explanation that you have provided if they do not believe the absence is in the best interest of your child. In these circumstances your child's absence would be recorded as unjustified. When this happens the principal will discuss their decision with you and the reasons why.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when frequent or long term absences are explained as being due to illness. Principals may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to collaboratively develop a health care plan to support your child. If the request is denied, the principal can record the absences as unjustified.

Travel

Families are encouraged to travel during school holidays. If travel during school term is necessary, discuss this with your child's school principal. An *Application for Extended Leave* may need to be completed. Absences relating to travel will be marked as leave on the roll and therefore contribute to your child's total absences for the year.

In some circumstances students may be eligible to enrol in distance education for travel periods over 50 school days. This should be discussed with your child's school principal.





If a student misses as little as 8 days in a school term, by the end of primary school they'll have missed over a year of school.

My child won't go to school. What should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school's learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The principal may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?

It is important to understand that the Department of Education and Communities may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- Compulsory Schooling Conferences

You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan (known as Undertakings) to support your child's attendance at school.

- Application to the Children's Court – Compulsory Schooling Order

If your child's attendance at school remains unsatisfactory the Department

may apply to the Children's Court for a *Compulsory Schooling Order*. The Children's Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- Prosecution in the Local Court

School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child's full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

What age can my child leave school?

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10 or its equivalent. After Year 10, and up until they reach 17 years of age, there are a range of flexible options for students to [complete their schooling](#).

Working in Partnership

The Department of Education and Communities recognises that working collaboratively with students and their families is the best way to support the regular attendance of students at school.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.

Further information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:

Policy, information and brochures:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/goto/school/a-z/attendance.php>

The school leaving age:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/leaving-school/index.php>

Do you need an interpreter?

Interpreting services are available on request, including for the hearing impaired. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 131 450. You will not be charged for this service.

For further advice and questions contact your educational services team

T 131 536

Learning and Engagement

Student Engagement & Interagency Partnerships

T 9244 5129

www.dec.nsw.gov.au

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NSW Department of Education and Communities

School Attendance Requirements

Regular attendance at Newcastle School is important and essential to assist students' to maximise their potential. Newcastle School, in partnership with parents and carers, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students.

Under the Education Act (1990), parents and caregivers are required to:

- ensure that children attend school every day that instruction is provided;
- provide an explanation for absences (including late arrivals) promptly and within seven school days of the unexplained absence occurring; and
- take measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

Newcastle School has a duty of care, and will contact parents and caregivers about unexplained absences as follows:

- giving students an Absentee Slip to take home (usually on the first day the student attends school following the absence);
- sending home an Compulsory School Attendance Notice no later than five days after a students' return to school.
- telephoning home to discuss attendance concerns.

Please contact the school if you are concerned about your child's attendance at school. School staff will work with you to address any issues and attempt to improve unsatisfactory attendance.

Telephone Advice

Newcastle School welcomes parents calling to advise staff of their child's absence. This information is recorded and passed on to the class teacher. On the basis of the information provided an appropriate notation will be made on the class roll. The phone register becomes part of the official school attendance documentation and is kept on file for two years.

Absence Types

The following absent types are generally used for recording absences at Newcastle School.

Sick	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: - a medical certificate is provided or - the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.
Leave	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. 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 travel in Australia and overseas that cannot be arranged outside school times recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
Suspended	The student was suspended from school
Unexplained or Unjustified	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal
Exempt	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued

Part Day Absences

Any Part Day attendances, for example arriving at school late, or leaving the school early to attend an appointment is managed by the Office Staff.

Parents and carers are requested to report to the Office to complete a "late arrival/early leaver slip. Adjustments will be made to each student's attendance record accordingly.

Examples of Notes to Explain Absences

<p>Tom was away Friday</p> <p><i>M. L.</i></p>	<p>Note is unacceptable as student's full name is missing, there are no dates and no valid reason for absence</p>
<p>25/4/2011</p> <p>Please excuse Tom Williams from school on Friday 23/4/2011. He was sick.</p> <p><i>M. L.</i></p>	<p>Note is acceptable as it has full student name, dates and a valid reason for the absence</p>
<p>Tom has been home this week as it was cold and raining</p> <p><i>M. L.</i></p>	<p>Note is unacceptable as student's full name is missing, there is no date</p>
<p>Dear Teacher,</p> <p>20/4/2011</p> <p>Tom Williams has been away from the 23/4 to the 26/4 2011 due to family matters.</p> <p>Thankyou</p> <p><i>M. L.</i></p>	<p>Note is valid but the reason for the absence may be questionable. Please speak to your Principal</p>

Absentee Notice 1 – Compulsory School Attendance

NEWCASTLE SCHOOL



Dear Parent

Regular attendance at school is essential if student's name is to achieve his/her educational best, social and psychological potential, and increase his/her career and life options.

The school is required to record explanations for any absences as a way of ensuring that students are absent from school only when they are sick or have another acceptable reason for missing school.

If you are able to explain any absences within seven days of their occurrence we will adjust our records.

Student's name was absent from school on dates and no explanation has been received. If you have concerns that our records are incorrect please contact the school immediately.

Please assist us by completing the details below and return it to school as soon as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the school on telephone to discuss your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely
PRINCIPAL
Date:

Please detach and return to your child's class teacher.

Please provide an explanation for the absence/s by returning this section or telephoning the school.

Name of Student _____ Year/Class _____

Date/s of absence _____

Reason for absence

Parent name: _____ Signed _____ Date: _____

Absentee Notice 2 – Compulsory School Attendance (final request)



NEWCASTLE SCHOOL

Dear Parent

Student's name, was absent from school on dates and no satisfactory explanation has been received.

The *Education Act 1990* requires you to ensure your child attends school each day that instruction is provided unless they are prevented from doing so by sickness or other acceptable reason and for you to provide an explanation for any absence.

The Act requires you to explain your child's absences within seven days of their occurrence. Failure to do so will result in an unjustified absence being recorded.

Please provide an explanation in the space below and return this form to the school as soon as possible.

If you have concerns that our records are incorrect please contact the school immediately. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the school on school telephone number to discuss your child's attendance.

Yours sincerely

PRINCIPAL

Date:

Please detach and return to your child's class teacher

Please provide an explanation for the absence/s by returning this section or telephoning the school.

Name of Student _____ Year/Class _____

Date/s of absence _____

Reason for absence

Parent name: _____ Signed _____ Date: _____

Pro forma Notes – for your convenience

NEWCASTLE SCHOOL ABSENTEE NOTE

Email: Newcastle-s.school@det.nsw.edu.au

This note should be completed by parents or carers to inform when a child is absent for one whole or more school days.

Name of Student: _____ Class: _____

Date of absence/s: _____

Reason for absence: the reason for the absence must be shown below. (Please circle the appropriate reason and give details).

Note if you prefer, you may telephone the school and explain your child's absence.

Sickness (please give reason eg flu) _____

Other (please give reason eg family, appt) _____

Signature of Parent/Carer _____ Date _____

NEWCASTLE SCHOOL ABSENTEE NOTE

Email: Newcastle-s.school@det.nsw.edu.au

This note should be completed by parents or carers to inform when a child is absent for one whole or more school days.

Name of Student: _____ Class: _____

Date of absence/s: _____

Reason for absence: the reason for the absence must be shown below. (Please circle the appropriate reason and give details).

Note if you prefer, you may telephone the school and explain your child's absence.

Sickness (please give reason eg flu) _____

Other (please give reason eg family, appt) _____

Signature of Parent/Carer _____ Date _____