SPRINGVALE RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL

STUDENT HEALTH, SAFETY, WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT
Attendance Policy

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact [insert school contact details].

RATIONALE

It is recognised that absenteeism impacts on children's achievement levels and social development. Even a small number of absences within a year can mean that a child misses important social experiences and key learning opportunities that can continue to have an impact across their schooling life and beyond. Springvale Rise Primary School aims to create a safe and collaborative culture that promotes 100% school attendance, whereby students are motivated to attend school every day, and on time, to achieve their personal best.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled and attend Springvale Rise Primary School every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Springvale Rise Primary School has in place to
    - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
    - record, monitor and follow up student absences and unexplained late arrivals and early departures.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Springvale Rise Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's School Attendance Guidelines. It does not replace or change the obligations of Springvale Rise Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation 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 that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend Springvale Rise Primary School during normal school hours, from 9:00am to 3:30pm, every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Springvale Rise Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Springvale Rise Primary School for particular activities.

Both the school and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Springvale Rise Primary School believes that all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction. The school is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support 100% school attendance and building a culture whereby:

- Students are committed to attend school every day, arrive on time and be prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.
- Springvale Rise Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicate openly with the school and provide valid explanations for any absence.
- Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Springvale Rise Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.
- Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.
- Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Supporting and promoting attendance

Springvale Rise Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by providing:

- Daily Breakfast Club from 8:30am
- Incentives for and celebrations of strong attendance such as weekly, termly, and yearly awards
- Lunchtime Clubs
- Food support, including lunches and regular food relief for families through OneBox and a Community Pantry
- Attendance Plans, Behaviour Support Plans, Student Support Groups, Individual Education Plans, Social Skills Groups, Speech Therapy, Counselling, Welfare and Leadership Support
- A Before and After School Program through TheirCare, as well as a School Holiday Program

Recording attendance

Springvale Rise Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Springvale Rise Primary School's duty of care for all students.

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher/specialist teacher at the start of the school day by 9:10am and after lunch by 2:35pm using Compass.

If students are in attendance, at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

A CRT, or a teacher that does not have access to Compass, will mark a hard copy of the roll, and then, straight away, send the marked roll to the school office where the office staff will enter the grade's attendance information into Compass.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. Explanation of absence is only recorded for the single day of absence unless the parent states that the absence will be for multiple days. If a child will continue to be absent (for example they continue to be unwell) the parent must make contact with the school each day to inform the office of the reason for the absence.

Parents should notify Springvale Rise Primary School of absences, late arrivals and early departures:

- If it is a planned absence, on or before the day of the absence by:
  - Phoning the office or visiting the office in person
  - Advising the classroom teacher of the planned absence: the classroom teacher will direct parents to the office to inform them should parents tell them first, or the classroom teacher will email the office staff promptly
  - Sending in a note with the child: the classroom teacher will send all notes received to the office via the blue cash bag.
- If it is an unplanned absence, on the day of the absence by:
  - Phoning the school
  - Visiting the office in person
  - Entering the absence on the Parent Portal of Compass

Late arrivals:

Students who arrive after 9:10am, must enter the school through the school office with their parent and be entered on the Compass Kiosk by an office staff member. The student will receive a late pass which they will provide to their classroom teacher. A student who arrives to class without a late slip, will be redirected by the teacher to the office to receive a slip.

Early departure:

A student who needs to leave school prior to 3:30pm must be exited on the Compass Kiosk at the office by a parent. The parent will be required to sign their child out at the school office prior to collecting their child. Once a child had been signed out, the parent will be given an early departure slip to take to their child's grade whereby a teacher will release that child into the parent's care. Alternatively, the child will be called up to the office via loudspeaker.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Springvale Rise Primary School will notify the parents by an automated Compass generated SMS at 10:15am. **Parents are requested to contact the school as soon as possible to provide a reason for their child's absence via one of the options above.**

Springvale Rise Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence, late arrival, and early departure. The principal (or their delegate) will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Springvale Rise Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**approved absence**'.

Approved absences may include, for example:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance.

If an absence is regularly provided as 'Illness/Medical' then a medical certificate may be required by the school.

If a student will be having an extended absences i.e. family holiday, the office should be notified by the parent/guardian prior to the absence commencing.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexplained absence**' or **'parent choice unauthorised'**.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused at the end of each month via a letter sent home by the office, which will require the parent to provide an explanation and their signature.

If no explanation is provided by the parent, the absence will remain as an '**unexplained absence'** on the student's Compass file and further follow up will be conducted by the school, as outlined below.

Managing absences, late arrivals, and early departures

Springvale Rise acknowledges absences, late arrivals and early departures are of significant concern, understanding that this can have a detrimental impact on a student's success at school. Absences of concern may include:

- An absence that remains unexplained
- A student being absent or late for consecutive days
- A pattern of absences, for example:
    - A student being absent every time it rains
    - A student being late every Monday morning
    - A student being absent 1-2 days per week
    - A student being late every time they stay with a particular parent
    - A student being absent towards the end of a fortnightly pay-cycle

Springvale Rise Primary School will take the following course of action to support students maintain acceptable attendance, noting that any absence can be detrimental to a student's learning and early intervention is imperative. This is also outlined in *Appendix 1: Flowchart for Managing Absences*.

Step 1	Parent is notified via Compass automated SMS at 10:15am of each day the student is absent (unexplained).
Step 2	If a parent does not contact the school by 12pm on the day of the absence, a phone call will be made to the parent by the classroom teacher or their delegate (ES/MEA/SSTL). If contact is made the teacher will email the admin team outlining the reason for the absence. The admin team will then update the roll on Compass. If contact is unable to be made, the attempted contact will be recorded on Compass by the teacher and both the Sub-School Team Leader (SSTL) and Wellbeing Leader will be notified in the communication chain. Further attempts to gain an explanation of the absence will include: - The classroom sending an email or text message to the parent - The classroom teacher speaking to the parent in person when the student returns to school - The classroom teacher or SSTL making further phone calls to the family - An Unexplained Absence Letter being sent home (routinely printed by the office monthly)

Step 3	If a student falls below 90% attendance (approximately 5 days per term) without reasonable explanation, either via consecutive absences or a pattern of absences, the classroom teacher will make a phone call to the student's parent or speak with them in person, to check in and discuss their concerns and see if the school can do anything to support the parent/child. The outcome of the conversation, including any supports required, will be recorded on Compass Chronicle by the Classroom teacher and both the SSTL and Wellbeing Leader and Assistant Principal will be notified in the communication chain. If contact can not be made, the classroom teacher will seek support from their SSTL to continue attempting contact.
Step 4	If the absences continue or the student falls below 85% the SSTL will organise an Attendance SSG Meeting during which the student's attendance data will be reviewed and an attendance plan will be developed. The attendance plan and meeting minutes will be uploaded on Compass by the SSTL and the classroom teacher, Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal will be notified in the communication chain. If contact can not be made, the SSTL will seek support from The Wellbeing Leader to continue attempting contact which may include a home visit.
Step 5	The SSTL will monitor the student's attendance every day and review the plan regularly with the parent, liaising with the Wellbeing Leader to provide additional support to the family. If the Attendance Plan is unsuccessful, the SSTL will inform both the Assistant Principal and Principal. A meeting, chaired by the Assistant Principal, will be organised to review the attendance plan, and discuss possible next steps if improvements are not made. Minutes from this meeting will be uploaded to Compass Chronicle and the classroom teacher, Wellbeing Leader and Principal will be notified in the communication chain. The Principal may decide on any further course of action including a letter sent home, a meeting chaired by the Principal and/or a referral to the School Attendance Officer.

Providing Additional Support

Springvale Rise Primary School understands that from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required. Springvale Rise Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Attendance Improvement Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff/Leadership team and/or community services
- seeking advice from the South East Regional Wellbeing and Engagement Officer.

Referral to School Attendance Officer

If the Principal of Springvale Rise Primary School decides that the school has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to the Department of Education and Training School Attendance Officer for further action.

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

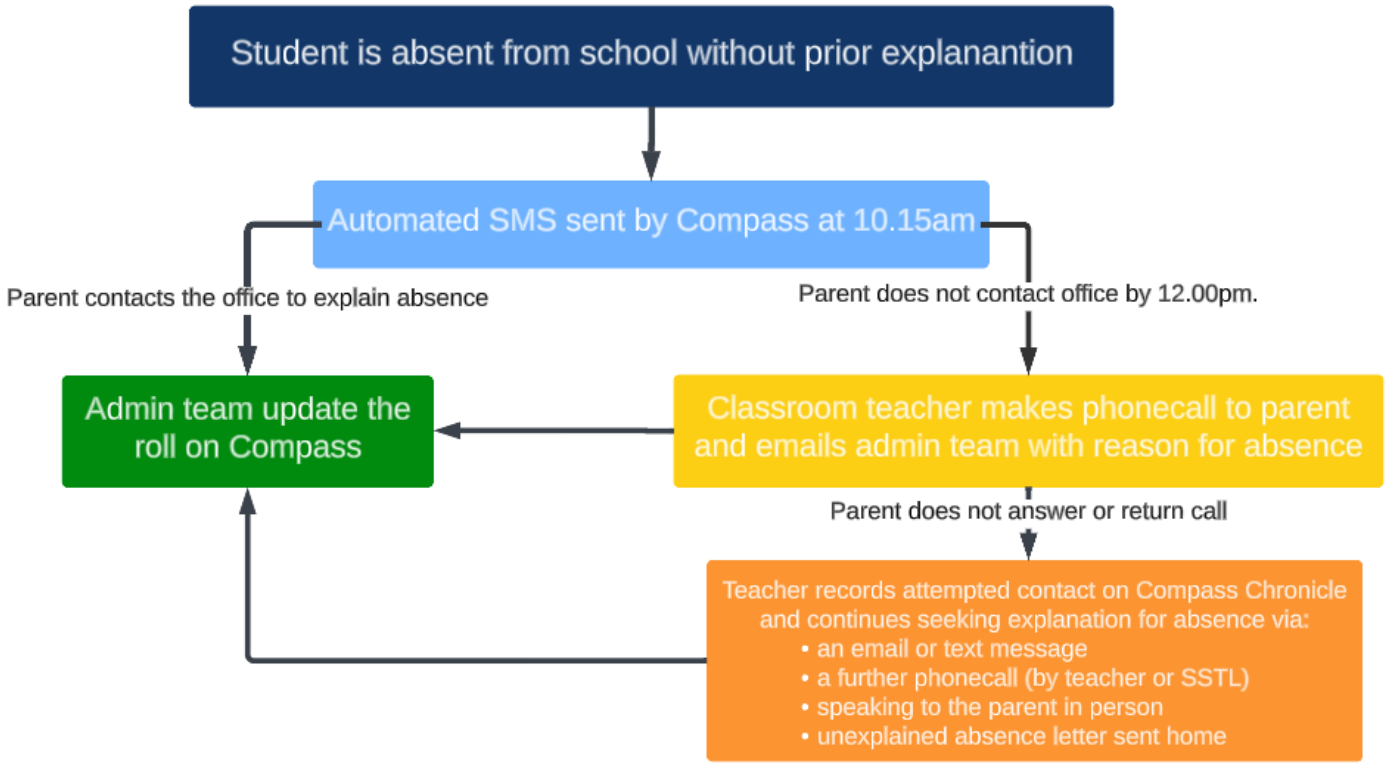
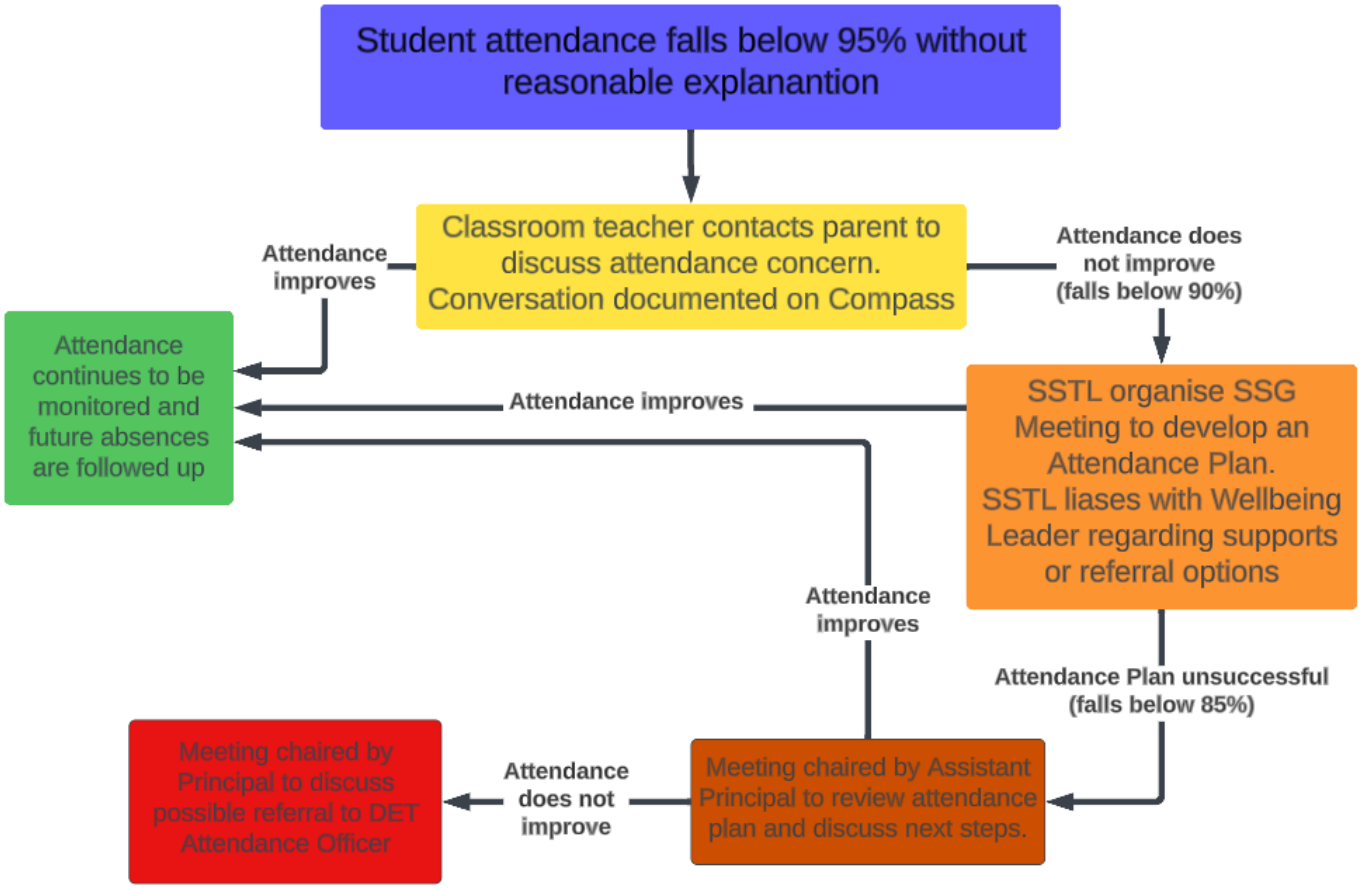
- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): Attendance

SPRINGVALE RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	October 2024
Consultation	Staff Consultation: November 2024 Opportunity Provided via website.
Approved by	Debbie Cottier, Principal
Next scheduled review date	October 2028

APPENDIX 1: FLOWCHART FOR MANAGING ABSENCES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