ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance policies and procedures are an integral part of the school’s student welfare policies. The aims of this policy are:

* To ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring student attendance levels in terms of both whole day absences and partial absences;

* To ensure that communication between the school and parents/guardians is effective in informing parents about any attendance problems and parents/guardians responsibilities ensuring student attendance.

* To ensure that there are effective sanctions applied to students who are involved in either whole day truancy or partial truancy.

* To ensure that the management of student attendance is seen in the broader context of student welfare support and is considered in conjunction with other student welfare issues such as curriculum, leadership and general matters of the student welfare and discipline policy for the school.

The Year structure at Macksville High School is designed so that issues of student welfare including attendance are managed by the welfare team with consideration for the special needs of students while maintaining co-ordination to ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with the aims stated above.

MONITORING AND MANAGING ATTENDANCE

A variety of measures are used to monitor student attendance and detect whole day or partial truancy.
a) DETECTING FRACTIONAL TRUANCY

# Production of the daily absentee sheet is a matter of priority and will be provided to teachers as soon as possible each morning. The absentee sheet will list all students not at morning roll call, students who have arrived late (up to the end of period 1), students who have been granted early leave requests and students on an excursion.

# Each class teacher is responsible for marking a roll in each lesson and submitting an absent Report to the Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

# Reports of fractional truancy made by teachers other than the classroom teacher of the student should be made in RICS and directed to the Deputy Principal.

# Unexplained late arrivals to school will be referred to the Deputy Principal and may be considered as truancy.

# The Deputy Principal will operate a system of lesson by lesson checks on the attendance of persistent truants. Students will be issued with a monitoring card.

b) WHOLE DAY TRUANCY

Students may be detected as truanting for complete days by several means.

# Letters mailed to parents for unexplained absences through the OASIS system. Any absence with no explanation within 2 days will require a letter to be sent to parents asking for an explanation.

# Reports of student absences from other students, parents or teachers.

# Random phone calls made by Year Advisers or the Deputy Principal to check on students listed as absent on the daily absentee sheet.

# Through awareness generated from the publishing of the list of students whose attendance is below 85% (as a guide) and the subsequent checking that follows.

SANCTIONS FOR TRUANCY

Students who truant from a class will be subject to a range of sanctions at the discretion of the Deputy Principal. These include:

# Parents are to be informed of all instances of fractional truancy either by phone call or letter.

# Lunch time detentions.
Placement on Level 2 and subsequent strategies for persistent disobedience through repeated truancy. Suspension or in-school isolation for repeated truancy is a measure which should only be used as a strategy of last resort but may be required in some cases. Students on these strategies will be placed on a monitoring card as shown in Welfare & Discipline Policy.

If a student is over seventeen years of age a formal warning to proceed with local expulsion may be issued by the Principal in line with D.E.T. policy.

All instances of identified truancy are to be recorded on the OASIS attendance record of the student.

Students on monitoring cards will be added to the list distributed to each staff room via the fractional truancy sheet.

Students who are persistently late with no explanation may be given detentions and their parents will be informed by phone or letter.

c) LOW LEVELS OF GENERAL ATTENDANCE

While it is acknowledged that students may have a high level of absences for legitimate reasons a poor level of attendance may be a strong indicator of the need for welfare support provided by the stage teams and using the welfare support services of the school and outside agencies. A student’s failure to meet a reasonable level of attendance should be seen in the first instance as a welfare matter.

Twice each term a list of students whose attendance is below 85% (as a guide), will be generated. The list will be sent to each Year Advisers for consideration by the Welfare team. Students who are identified as causing concern will be interviewed and parents may be required to come in to the school for an interview to establish the reasons for the low level of attendance.

Students under 17 with low levels of attendance may be referred to the H.S.L.O.

ROLE OF THE CLASSROOM TEACHER

The classroom teacher is the key link in identifying and managing fractional truancy. The teacher is responsible for marking a role each lesson. Any student who is absent from class without a legitimate reason must be interviewed upon their return to class by the classroom teacher. If the classroom teacher has identified that truancy has taken place then the Deputy Principal must be informed.
One of the most effective weapons against truancy is the quick and frequent use of letters to parents when a student has failed to meet some course outcomes where truancy has been a contributing cause. Teachers need to be vigilant in completing these letters under guidance of Head Teachers.

**REPORTING OF ATTENDANCE LEVELS**

Each semester report will include details of total days absent.

**PASS OUTS**

Pass Outs are issued by the Deputy Principal or delegate. Students can be granted early leave passes only after submitting a note from a parent or guardian. Any students on a monitoring card are not allowed Pass Outs.

**POSITIVE STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE GOOD ATTENDANCE**

The primary aim of the attendance policy is to enhance student welfare and to this effect the following range of positive strategies should be used in managing a student attendance problem.

- providing rewards for good or improved attendance;
- referrals to school counsellors should be encouraged;
- use of work experience programs as an incentive to continue attending;
- use of student and teacher mentors;
- effective implementation of harassment policies;
- programs which improve assertiveness skills of students;
- effective drug education policies.

**THE ROLE OF THE HOME SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER**

While the school retains the major responsibility for maintaining the regular attendance of all students, the Home School Liaison Officer, working in a team, provides a supportive, non-coercive resource for students, parents and schools to encourage the full participation of all students in schooling. Specialist officers within the team work with Aboriginal students and students of non-English speaking background. The teams are also supported by officers from the Department of Community Services.
Support provided by Home School Liaison Officers includes:-

- a) conducting periodic checks on Attendance Registers and other attendance and enrolment information;
- b) providing advice to the Principal and teachers on legislation, policy and procedures relating to attendance;
- c) liaison with the Principal and teachers on attendance problems and other matters that may require direct contact with the home;
- d) working on cases of non-attendance referred by a school to the Home School Liaison Program;
- e) liaison with students and parents on attendance issues;
- f) making home visits where necessary;
- g) providing assistance to schools in identification of school-based factors contributing to non-attendance;
- h) assisting the school in the development of a school attendance policy;
- i) working with Department of Community Services officers where family and welfare issues are present;
- j) working with uniformed Police Officers in addressing attendance issues.

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