

STU005 – STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

POLICY CONTEXT

Willunga Waldorf School is a co-educational and inclusive school. The school's mission is to provide Steiner education from early childhood to year 12, based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. This education is driven by a deep understanding and respect for the developing and unfolding human being.

COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Under the *Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)* (the Act), a child of compulsory school age (6-16 years of age) must be enrolled full-time at either a government or non-government school.

A young person between the ages of 16 and 17 must go to school or be in an approved learning program¹ until they turn 17 unless they achieve their SACE qualification or are in full-time employment.

Parents have a legal responsibility under the Act to ensure their children attend school regularly. If a child or young person does not attend, without a 'prescribed reason' for their non-attendance or an approved exemption, their parents may be guilty of an offence.

Willunga Waldorf School has a legal obligation and moral duty to ensure it complies with all requirements regarding student attendance and record keeping in accordance with the Act.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this attendance policy is to:

- Reflect the intent of the *Education and Children's Services Act 2019* and the associated *Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020* (the Regulations)
- Guide the actions of all staff working with children and young people and their parents on matters relating to school attendance and participation
- Inform the development of associated guidelines and procedures for promoting, monitoring and reporting on attendance
- Reinforce parents' obligations to ensure all children and young people are enrolled and attend school on every day that instruction is provided for the child at the school or approved learning program.
- Support the rhythms of our classrooms.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Willunga Waldorf School staff, including volunteers and sub-contractors (such as Private Music Instructors), collectively referred to as "staff" throughout this document
- Parents of children and young people enrolled at Willunga Waldorf School

¹ Approved learning programs are run by Vocational Education and Training (VET), TAFE, or a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

- All children and young people of compulsory school age enrolled at Willunga Waldorf School

This policy does not apply where:

- A child or young person is exempt from attendance at school under *the Education and Children's Services Act 2019* (this does not include students who have been granted a short-term exemption).
- A child or young person is subject to a legal condition imposed by the South Australia Police (SAPOL), a court or an officer exercising a statutory authority that requires they be exempt from attendance.

PUNCTUALITY

We encourage punctuality in both students and staff for the following reasons:

- To maintain the healthy rhythm and flow of the lessons in the school day;
- For students to demonstrate a healthy respect for teachers, fellow students, content and study;
- For teachers to demonstrate a healthy respect for fellow teachers, students, content and study;
- The modelling of punctual and responsible teachers will encourage students to develop self-responsibility in this area.
- The school has a common law Duty of Care responsibility.

RECORD KEEPING

Attendance records are legal documents. They must demonstrate that a comprehensive record of absences and attendances is being maintained, both for the current year and to meet legislative requirements for information retention. Where a student in Classes 1 to 12 has an attendance rate below 80%, their attendance will be reviewed to identify any factors that may be contributing to their level of attendance. The school will engage with the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine whether additional support or intervention is required. Where appropriate for students in classes 8 to 12, discussions may include strategies to improve attendance, additional academic or wellbeing support, and consideration of whether repeating the academic year is in the student's best educational interests.

Under the Act and the Regulations, the School has a legal requirement to:

- Maintain accurate student attendance and enrolment records that show reasons for absences and dates of cessation of enrolment.
- Provide these records to the Education Standards Board (ESB) when it visits the school and/or as part of the regular review of registration process.
- Publish average student attendance rate as part of the School Performance Information reporting requirements stipulated by the Australian government.
- Report student attendance data to the Australian government through SchoolsHUB.

TEMPORARY EXEMPTIONS

The Head of School has the authority to approve temporary exemptions to attendance for up to 12 months for the reason of Family Travel / Holiday. If more than one month and for reasons other than Family Travel / Holiday, the application requires approval by the Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA). Please refer to Appendix A of this policy for further information regarding exemptions, including how to apply and permanent exemptions.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/Legal Guardians

Enrolled students are required to attend every day of the school calendar subject to absence for illness or injury. Students are expected to arrive at school no earlier than 8.30am and no later than 8.50am. The school day commences at 8.55am.

When Parents/Legal Guardians enrol their child at Willunga Waldorf School, they accept responsibility for:

- Supporting their child in attending school full-time and enabling them to arrive on time each day.
- Providing information that will assist staff in supporting the child during learning (e.g. medical conditions, family issues etc.)
- Advising the School via the approved channels² when their child is absent for ill health or family reasons. Written notification is required for absences of three (3) or more days. For students in classes 11 and 12, a medical certificate may be required to account for their absence.
- Applying for an exemption whenever there is a planned extended absence such as a family holiday (see Temporary Exemptions above).
- Ensuring their child is signed in at the Front Office if they arrive later than 8.55am and provide notification via the approved channels to explain the reason. Please see our *Sign In / Out Procedure* for more details.
- Providing written notification of reason for early departure of students, in accordance with our *Sign In / Out Procedure*.
- Working with the school to improve punctuality and attendance if required.
- Ensure their child or young person attends all school camps and excursions as these form an integral part of the School's curriculum and are compulsory.

Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend all time-tabled lessons, work experience, excursions and camps.
- Be punctual in arriving at school and lessons and return promptly to class at the end of recess and lunch.
- Remain on school grounds throughout the school day.
- Seek support from class teachers/guardians if they have any concerns that might affect their attendance.

² Refer to annual *Parent Information Handbook* for details.

Staff

All staff are committed to providing a safe, engaging and dynamic learning environment that encourages consistent student attendance. All staff have a legal obligation to follow Mandatory Notification policies and procedures where necessary.

In addition, teachers accept responsibility for:

- Maintaining accurate student attendance records, recording absences in accordance with legislative requirements.
- Working with the Front Office staff on the third day of a student's absence to ensure appropriate follow up with the family as to reason why.
- Working with the Front Office staff to ensure appropriate follow up on all unexplained absences.
- Coordinating the collection of work for students who are unable to attend school for acceptable reasons and for whom work is requested.
- Advising the Head of School and the relevant Faculty Leader of frequent or prolonged absences.
- Where required, working with their Faculty Leader, Learning Support and the Head of School to develop and implement strategies or interventions to improve attendance, correctly documenting these in the student's file.

Head of School

The Head of School accepts responsibility for:

- Ensuring that student attendance and absentee data is accurately monitored, recorded and securely kept.
- Ensuring that appropriate follow up is completed by teachers and the responsible Front Office staff for all unexplained or prolonged student absences.
- Ensuring that any interventions (e.g. home visits, phone calls etc.) are documented correctly and kept as part of the student's file.
- Ensuring that any court orders that impact the school's parent notification for non-attendance procedures are complied with.
- Supporting Faculty Leaders as required to work with teachers and families to develop individual Student Attendance Improvement Plans and determine underlying causes of frequent absenteeism and/or late arrival.
- Ensuring accurate reporting of student attendance data in accordance with the *Australian Education Act 2013* and the *Australian Education regulations 2023*.
- Reporting to the Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) if attendance issues are not resolved.

Front Office Staff (School Office Supervisor and Receptionists)

The Front Office staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining accurate student attendance and absentee records on a day-to-day basis.
- Notifying parents/legal guardians if a student is marked absent without explanation, complying with any court orders as required.
- Supporting the School's reporting requirements by regularly providing student attendance data to the Head of School and Business Manager.

UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES

When it becomes clear that a student has not arrived at school as expected or left the school premises without parental consent and without signing out at the Front Office, staff must do everything possible to locate the missing student and return them to the school grounds as quickly as possible.

Front Office staff immediately:

1. Advise the Head of School and
2. Contact parents at Head of School's direction

Under direction from the Head of School the following may also be done:

- Speak to teachers that have taken classes leading up to student absence
- Call the student's mobile where applicable, generally HS students only
- Speak to other students to ascertain the student's possible whereabouts
- Notify the police

Front Office staff must keep the parents informed regularly with progress made and actions taken.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

The *Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)* outlines requirements relating to persistent absenteeism. The Act states that it is a requirement for principals of government and non-government schools, and heads of approved learning programs, to notify the Chief Executive of the Department for Education if a child is failing to attend school or participate in an approved learning program, without reasonable excuse, for 10 or more days in a school term.

When a child has 10 or more days absent from school without reasonable excuse, Willunga Waldorf School may, in some instances, access the Department for Education's Student Support Services which offers a truancy social work service. This support service will be accessed after the school has attempted reasonable strategies to address the student's non-attendance and engage the family. Alternatively, Willunga Waldorf School may request SA Police (SAPOL) involvement for a wellbeing check or address check only when all other possible courses of action have been taken.

NON-COMPLIANCE / BREACHES

For Willunga Waldorf School

Potential consequences of non-compliance of the student exemption process include:

- Loss of registration as a school;
- Breach of the Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA); and/or
- The School may be at risk in the event that an attendance roll is required as evidence in a court of law.

For Parents

- If a child or young person does not attend, without a 'prescribed reason' for their non-attendance or an approved exemption, their parents may be guilty of an



offence. All staff are Mandated Notifiers and are required, by law, to notify the Child Abuse Report Line (CARL) if they are concerned that a child or young person is at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. Persistent absenteeism of a child or young person at school may raise concerns that warrant a report to CARL. Following such a report, the Department for Child Protection may investigate the child or young person's parents.

- It is a condition of enrolment that parents/legal guardians and caregivers comply with school policies. Parents refusing to work with the School to improve their child's attendance may have their child's enrolment terminated.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Exemptions

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND DOCUMENTS

Related School Policies, Procedures and Guidelines	• STU001 Child Safe Environment Policy • STU002 Mandatory Notification Policy and Procedures • STU013 Student Sign In / Out Procedure • STU018 Attendance Procedure • GOV007 Enrolment Policy • CU004 Home Education Policy • EM003 Emergency Procedures
Related Legislation and Regulatory Requirements	• Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA) • Education and Children's Services Regulations 2020 • Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 (SA) • Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 (to be repealed by Sch 2 cl 47 of Children and Young People (Safety and Support) Act 2025)
Cross-Sector Guidelines	National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

VARIATION AND REVIEW

The School reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time. Unless altered earlier, this policy will be reviewed every three (3) years.

Responsible Person	Head of School
Policy Approver	Head of School
Version	2.0 (replaces all previous versions)
Publication Date	2016 (version 1.0)
Last Review Date	Aug 2025 – Sep 2026
Next Review Date	Sep 2029
Revision Record	Aug 2025-Sep 2026: Comprehensive review and update of policy to ensure alignment with current legislative requirements and to clarify parents' legal responsibility regarding children's school attendance.

APPENDIX A – EXEMPTIONS

TEMPORARY EXEMPTIONS

Parents/legal guardians are asked to provide reasonable notice with requests of absence. This includes:

- At least 4 weeks notification is required for periods exceeding five (5) consecutive days due to Family Travel / Holiday to allow teachers to cater for the student's needs and for the school to complete its attendance record keeping obligations. The structure of Main Lesson is in blocks, and the teacher may need to work out a particular scenario for the student depending on the timing of the leave.
- One (1) full term's notification is required if the proposed period of absence is four (4) weeks or longer. Parents are asked to discuss absences of this nature in advance with the school so we can ensure there is minimal impact on the student.

How to Apply

Use Form A – *Application for Temporary Exemption from School Enrolment / Attendance and Education Enrolment / Participation – Principal Approved* to request a temporary exemption for:

- Up to twelve (12) months of family travel/holiday;
- Up to one (1) month for ongoing medical reasons; or
- Up to one (1) month to transition to Home Education.

Use Form B – *Application for Temporary Exemption from School Enrolment / Attendance and Education Enrolment / Participation* to request a temporary exemption for:

- Absence exceeding one (1) due to ongoing medical reasons
- Overseas student exchange
- More than twelve (12) months of family travel / holiday
- Elite sports commitments
- Full time employment (15+ only)
- Full-time non-school education

Use Form C – *Application for Exemption from School Enrolment/Attendance and Education Enrolment/Participation – Disability/Behaviour/Medical – Part-Time School Attendance* to request a temporary exemption from full-time attendance due to disability, behaviour or medical reasons.

All forms are available upon request from the Front Office.

PERMANENT EXEMPTIONS

Students under 15 cannot be given a permanent exemption unless there are strong recommendations from the school and the education department.

Students aged 16 do not need an exemption if they can provide evidence to the School

that they are:

- Attending TAFE or other courses.
- Doing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Students aged 15 and 16 who are taking up full-time employment can apply for a permanent exemption from school. To qualify:

- Students under 16 must be working more than 30 hours per week.
- 16 years olds must be working more than 25 hours per week.

Evidence (such as letters from employers or training organisations) must be submitted with the application for exemption from school.

How to Apply

The 'Exemption from School Application Form ED175' Form B or Form C must be completed. All forms must be signed by all parties, and supporting evidence must be attached as required.

Application and Approval Process

The School is required to ensure that the appropriate Application Form is fully completed and supporting evidence is obtained from the students' parents/guardians. The Application Form and supporting evidence are to be emailed to the Chief Executive of the AISSA. If approved, a confirmation letter will be mailed to the School and the parents/guardians of the exempt student. The letter will confirm the start and end date and conditions of the exemption. If required, the AISSA will contact the School to request additional information to support the exemption.

All forms are available upon request from the Front Office.