



Ms Sarah Redden
Senate Education and Employment References Committee
A/g Committee Secretary
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
via email: eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Redden

Re: Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

Thank you for your letter dated 27 June 2023, requesting for information regarding school refusal and related matters.

We have reviewed the questions on notice and our response is included in this letter (Attachment A). This includes currently available information. The following documents are attached with this letter.

- CECG Attendance Policy
- Student Attendance Plan

At an overall level, much of the information requested around student refusal and the impact on academic attainment as well as the impact on employment opportunities is unavailable.

It is also worth noting, that while the impact of educational attainments could possibly be measured over a period of 1 – 2 years, the impact on employment opportunities will need to be assessed during a longer time, for which there is very limited data. Further, we believe the definition of 'School Refusal' will be quite challenging to monitor quantitatively at a school-level and will be best assessed in a qualitative manner.

Given the nature of the inquiry and the lack of availability of data, if this information is sought it would need to be obtained through a direct survey of principals or schools and would be a significant research endeavour.

Please contact my office through Tiffany Wallace – Executive Officer Directorate Services
through for any clarifications.

Yours sincerely

Ross Fox
DIRECTOR
28 July 2023

Attachment A - Questions on notice: inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

1. Please provide attendance data by year level

Do you collect data on reasons for absenteeism?

- **If so, please provide the categories you collect data against**
- **Please provide the absenteeism data by year level and by category you collect this data under.**

Year Level	Average Attendance Rate 2023
Kindergarten	88%
Year 1	88%
Year 2	88%
Year 3	88%
Year 4	88%
Year 5	87%
Year 6	86%
Year 7	73%
Year 8	71%
Year 9	71%
Year 10	69%
Year 11	68%
Year 12	61%

Table 1 – Attendance data by year level for semester 1 2023.

This is based on the average attendance rates for each school and year group for CECG Systemic schools. Please note that some of the CECG Secondary schools maintain their own attendance systems, therefore this information is not included in the above table.

Absenteeism Category	Average Rate for 2023
Domestic Necessity	1%
Illness	47%
Medical Appointment	3%
Other Absenteeism Reasons	8%
Suspension	0%
Travel	20%
Unexpected	22%
Unjustified	0%

Table 2 – Absenteeism by categories for 2023. This indicates the average absenteeism rates by absenteeism category.

2. What is your attendance target level for students? 90% Is this consistent across all year groups?

- The attendance target for Catholic Education Canberra & Goulburn (CECG) schools is 90% across all year levels in line with the standards prescribed by ACARA.
- We have a System-wide attendance policy which sets out the obligations and processes to record students' school attendance, respond to attendance issues, consider exemptions or extended leave from school and maintain appropriate records.
- The CECG Attendance Policy reviewed as of 4 April 2023 is attached for your records. Related documents as indicated in the policy can be provided if required.

3. **Have you done any analysis work on the linkage between student attendance and student academic performance?**
 - We do not have any historical analysis conducted to identify any linkages between student attendance and academic performance. This is planned as part of future reporting improvements.
4. **How much of a gap are we seeing between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal, and other students?**
 - As we do not have information on students engaged in school refusal we cannot assess the gap in terms of academic outcomes.
5. **How many children are enrolled in a form of education, other than mainstream school, including: Home School / Virtual School / Distance Education / Other (please define categories). Please provide student data against each category**
 - This information is not applicable to CECG schools and would be best obtained by the relevant state education authorities (ACT Education Directorate and NSW Department of Education as an example).
6. **Is data collected on the reason a student is not attending mainstream school and why an exemption has been provided? Please provide data by category of exemption for how many students are enrolled in alternative methods of schooling.**
 - There is a standard application form for requesting for an exemption from attendance or enrolment in ACT and NSW developed by CECG for all of the Systemic schools. However, we do not have the data around how many students have requested for this. We may be able to contact individual schools if needed to compile this information.
7. **Is data collected on student academic performance for students enrolled in alternative forms of schooling (as above).**
 - Not available.
8. **How much of a gap are we seeing between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal, and other students?**
 - Not available.
9. **Do schools with higher rates of school refusal also have poorer academic performance among the rest of the student body?**
 - Not available.
10. **What is the academic performance like of schools that are specifically geared towards reaching students who engage in school refusal? (e.g. Virtual Schools Victoria is one such school the committee is aware of).**

Not available.
11. **What academic outcomes do we see among students who have previously engaged in school refusal, but have since returned to school?**

Not available.
12. **What data is there on the effect of school refusal on students' employment opportunities later in life?**

Not available.

13. What work has been done to understand the complex factors that influence student absenteeism?

- The School and Family Services team within CECG includes a function that assess attendance rates, practices and develops policies to support schools and families. This includes the following.
 - Clearly defining the responsibilities of students, parents and schools in terms of attendance.
 - Ensuring required attendance systems are in place to record absences.
 - Regular review of general attendance levels and follow up on unexplained absences.
 - Processes and criteria in place for approving extended leave or exemptions.
 - Mandatory child protection reports to DCJ in NSW and CPYS in the ACT.
 - The attendance team would also make referrals to the Wellbeing and Inclusion Team to seek support for these students.

14. What policies do you have that support students and their families re-engage in school when experiencing school refusal?

- This includes the CECG Attendance Policy and a Student Attendance Plan. A copy of the Student Attendance Plan is attached.

15. Has any work been done to identify students who may be at risk of school refusal? What intervention strategies are in place to support these students and families?

- As indicated in the Attendance Policy, the following processes are in place to identify students who are at risk of school refusal and provide the required support. This is mostly done at a school-level by the Principals.
 - Student Attendance Plan for students who are at risk of school refusal.
 - A structured form/letters for applying for extended leave or exemption from attendance.
 - Conducting attendance meetings for those students with concerning attendance patterns.
 - For students with chronic absenteeism, conduct attendance conference with CECG support.

Title	Attendance Policy
Description of policy	Sets out the obligations and processes to record student school attendance, respond to attendance issues, consider exemptions or extended leave from school, and maintain appropriate records. It applies to all CECG schools in NSW and ACT.
Required because	CECG schools have legal obligations to record and encourage students' attendance at school. This policy ensures a consistent approach to meeting these obligations across all CECG schools.
Description of changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor editorial changes to correct links
Applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> Organisation-wide <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific: Schools <input type="checkbox"/> Staff only <input type="checkbox"/> Students only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff and students
Status	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major revision of existing document <input type="checkbox"/> Minor revision of existing document

Publication location	Intranet and Public Website
Related documents	Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment ACT Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment NSW Application for Extended Leave from School ACT Application for Extended Leave from School NSW Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment ACT Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment NSW Attendance Letter 1 - Attendance Concern Attendance Letter 2 – Attendance Planning Meeting request Attendance Letter 3 – School advises CEO for Referral Attendance Support Attendance Letter 4a – School Advises Referral for Attendance Conference Attendance Letter 4b – CECG Advises Attendance Conference Attendance Letter 5a – CECG Advises NSW Referral Attendance Letter 5b – CECG Advises ACT Referral Response to Absenteeism Flowchart Student Attendance Plan Student Destination Unknown Notification Enrolment Policy Behavioural Support Suspension and Expulsion Policy
Intranet category	School Administration
Review date	April 2025
Trim reference number	R549488

Approval authority for this version:	School and Family Services Leader
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Accountable authority	School and Family Services Leader
Responsible officer	Senior Officer School and Family Services (Attendance)

1. Summary	3
2. Attendance Policy	3
Students' responsibilities	3
Parents' responsibilities	3
Principals' responsibilities	4
School employees responsibilities	5
3. Keeping the attendance register	5
4. Recording absences	5
5. Following up unexplained absences	6
6. Encouraging attendance	6
7. Responding to absenteeism	7
8. Extended leave and exemptions from enrolment and attendance	7
9. Applying for extended leave and exemptions	8
10. Reasons for extended leave or exemptions	8
Extended leave	8
Exemptions from attendance	9
Exemption from enrolment	9
11. Who can approve extended leave or exemptions?	9
12. Criteria for approving/supporting extended leave and exemptions	10
Additional considerations for exemption from enrolment	11
Exemption for health or disability	12
Exemption for alternative education or employment	12
13. Conditions on extended leave or exemptions including distance education	12
14. Leaving school for alternate training or employment	12
15. Leaving school for other reasons and removal from enrolment and attendance registers	13
No longer of compulsory school age	13
Removed for home schooling or other education	14
Removed from school – destination unknown	14
Enrolment has been cancelled by CECG	14
16. Record keeping and sharing information	14
Schools with access to the Compass application	15
Schools without access to the Compass application	15
17. Definitions	15
18. Related Documents and Legislation	16
19. Contact	16

1. Summary

- 1.1 This policy sets out the obligations and processes for managing student attendance and absences, including:
 - Recording and encouraging attendance
 - Exemptions and extended leave, and
 - Responding to absenteeism.
- 1.2 It applies to all Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) Primary and Secondary schools in NSW and the ACT.
- 1.3 This is a publicly available policy with links to supporting documents and resources. Some supporting documents and resources are accessible by CECG staff only.

2. Attendance Policy

Students' responsibilities

- 2.1 Under ACT and NSW law, students must attend the school they are enrolled in for the times required by that school, unless the student's absence is approved by the Principal or their delegate.
- 2.2 Any student departing school early must be signed out by a parent/guardian or receive a leave pass from the school.
- 2.3 A leave pass may be issued by the school if the student's departure is pre-approved in writing by a parent. At a school's sole discretion, leave passes may also be issued if the student is over the age of 17 and departure will not interfere with attendance requirements (e.g. a student departs, or departs and returns, during a period without scheduled classes).

Parents' responsibilities

- 2.4 Parents/carers must ensure children of mandatory school age are enrolled in school or an approved alternative education program, or in approved employment¹.
- 2.5 Parents/carers must ensure that enrolled students attend every day of school, and every activity or event the school requires the student to attend, during the required times. This is known as the 'full-time participation' requirement.
- 2.6 Parents/carers must provide an explanation to the school for any absence, ideally on or before the day of absence, and no more than five school days after the absence occurs. Parents/carers may be liable under the ACT or NSW Education Acts if students fail to attend school without a reasonable excuse.
- 2.7 Parents/carers must notify the school of planned absences of up to 25 school days in a 12-month period (including 25 part days) in writing, including the reason for the absence.
- 2.8 Planned absences of more than 25 days in a 12-month period, other than sick leave, have additional requirements and parents/carers must apply in advance for extended leave or exemption (see sections 8-10 of this document). The application and approval process complies with strict requirements of the NSW and ACT governments. CECG recommends, and the NSW Department of Education expects, that students granted extended leave of more

¹ [Section 22 NSW Education Act 1990](#); [section 10 ACT Education Act 2004](#)

than 100 days in a twelve-month period **be unenrolled from school and enrolled in home or distance education.**

- 2.9 Parents/carers should understand that schools are required to record any absence as an unapproved or unjustified absence, unless they receive and accept a reasonable explanation before the attendance register is finalised.

Principals' responsibilities

- 2.10 Principals must ensure a daily attendance register is kept in line with this policy for all enrolled students for each day the school is open including school events like sporting carnivals.
- 2.11 Principals must ensure the school has an effective process for managing late arrivals and early departures to/from the school and recording the time of arrival and departure.
- 2.12 Principals must make the attendance register available to any authorised person when requested during school hours. Principals may be required to provide additional information about unsatisfactory attendance of compulsory school age children upon request by State or Territory officials.
- 2.13 Principals must communicate attendance requirements to students and families each semester, including any requirements for absences to be approved, and ensure students are encouraged to attend school regularly. This may require interpreters and translated materials when communicating with parents/carers from language backgrounds other than English in matters relating to school attendance.
- 2.14 Principals must ensure CECG workers are informed and trained to implement attendance policies and procedures, and that CECG workers with delegated responsibilities discharge them effectively.
- 2.15 Principals must ensure unsatisfactory attendance, including part-day absences, are followed up and that issues of concern or students at risk are addressed appropriately. This includes ensuring:
- all unexplained absences are followed-up to seek an explanation,
 - emerging absenteeism and attendance issues are identified early through strategies such as regular attendance register checks, and are addressed in line with this policy,
 - students and their families are referred to support services where required, including internal pastoral care and counselling support or external support agencies, and
 - mandatory reporting or other child protection requirements are assessed and implemented.
- 2.16 Principals can require a parent to attend a formal meeting to discuss attendance improvement². See section 6 and 7 for further information on encouraging attendance and responding to absenteeism.
- 2.17 Principals remain legally responsible for these requirements but may delegate individual tasks to:
- Registered or Accredited Teachers, or
 - School Administrative Services employees, Level 4 or above.
- 2.18 Classroom and Learning Support Services and School Operational Services employees may not be delegated attendance tasks, such as marking attendance registers.

² Subsection 102(3) ACT [Education Act 2004](#); subsection 22C(3) NSW [Education Act 1990](#)

School employees responsibilities**2.19 School employees must:**

- help encourage regular attendance through the provision of teaching and learning activities that stimulate, challenge and support the needs of students,
- accurately maintain the register of attendance,
- effectively perform any attendance tasks appropriately delegated by the Principal, and
- respond to absences and attendance issues in line with this policy, including seeking explanation for unexplained absences or raising unexplained or unjustified absences for follow-up by the Principal or delegated responsible employees.

3. Keeping the attendance register

- 3.1 Principals or delegates must accurately record student attendance and absence on the attendance register for each day the student is enrolled, using the applications and formats provided by CECG. See the [Managing Attendance Instructions](#).
- 3.2 The attendance register must be completed within 30 minutes of the relevant time, which is:
- for primary students – once per day at the beginning of the school day.
 - for secondary students – at the beginning of the school day and beginning of each lesson. Marking attendance in each lesson is necessary in secondary schools due to more frequent student movements. Attendance at sufficient classes also may be a criterion for students receiving a completion certificate.
- 3.3 The attendance register must be updated if necessary to record student movement outside these times. For example, if a student leaves school during the day, the register must be updated to record a part day absence.
- 3.4 CECG workers should use functions available in digital attendance registers (e.g. Compass 'event' and 'activity' modules) wherever possible to record the movement of students that are present on school grounds but are not in scheduled classes. This ensures that if a teacher marks a student as not present because they are not in class when the attendance register is marked, the activity/event module records the student as present elsewhere.

4. Recording absences

- 4.1 All absences must be recorded as unexplained (A) unless another explanation is provided and accepted before the attendance register is marked. Any unexplained absence must be followed up to notify the parent of the absence and seek an explanation (see section 5 below).
- 4.2 If an explanation is received and accepted after the attendance register is marked, the register should be updated to record this **within ten school days** of the absence occurring.
- 4.3 Student absences must be recorded as part day or full day absences. For part-day absences, the time of arrival or departure must be recorded.
- 4.4 Principals may request a medical certificate at their discretion to support any absences for a medical condition. A medical certificate must state that the student did not attend school because of a condition briefly described in the certificate.
- 4.5 Principals may also seek parental permission to speak with medical specialists to obtain information to assist in developing an attendance plan that is considerate of a student's health care needs. If the request is denied, the Principal can record the absences as unjustified.

- 4.6 Principals are not required to accept an explanation for an absence or to approve exemptions, planned leave, or flexible arrangements. Acceptance and approval is granted only if the Principal is satisfied with the reasons for the absence, and that the absence is in the best interests of the student.
- 4.7 All absences considered not to be in the best interests of the student (see 12.1) should be marked as unjustified.

5. Following up unexplained absences

- 5.1 If a student has three days of unexplained absence in a row, on the third day the school must contact the student's nominated parent(s)/carer(s) to notify them of the absence to seek an explanation.
- 5.2 If a student is marked absent without explanation (A), the Principal or delegate must attempt to contact the student's parent(s)/carer(s) **no later than five school days after the absence** to notify them of the absence and enquire about the explanation.
- 5.3 If no explanation is received after this request, it is the school's discretion whether follow-up requests are made.
- 5.4 Written contact is preferred for record keeping purposes, for example via Compass, email, or SMS, but contact may also be made by telephone. All contact must be recorded on the student's file (e.g. Chronicle entry), attaching a copy of written correspondence. Digital copies are sufficient; it is not necessary to keep original or paper records.
- 5.5 Records relating to an absence including copies of correspondence must be retained at least until the student reaches 25 years of age or seven years after the action, whichever is later (see section 16 for further record keeping requirements).

6. Encouraging attendance

- 6.1 Principals have a legal duty and a pastoral obligation to encourage attendance and respond to absenteeism. Frequent absences are detrimental to students' education and may indicate a student's need for support and/or pastoral care.
- 6.2 CECG identifies the following levels of attendance:

Excellent Attendance	95% and above (e.g. 2.5 days absence or less in a term or 10 absences over a year)
Regular Attendance	90%-94.9% (e.g. 2.6 to 5 days absence in a term or 10.1 -20 absences in a year)
Emerging Absenteeism	80%-89.9% (e.g. 5.1 to 10 days absence in a term or 20.1 - 40 absences in a year)
Chronic Absenteeism	Less than 80% (e.g. more than 10 days absence in a term or 40 absences in a year)

- 6.3 Principals (or delegates) must ensure:
- Regular school attendance is encouraged and attendance requirements are communicated to parents/carers each semester.
 - Any unexplained absences are followed up as required in section 5.
 - Any sudden decline in attendance is followed up and attendance improvement support is provided if appropriate or necessary.

- All emerging absenteeism is responded to and support is provided to improve attendance (<90% attendance).
- Provision of additional support to students and families exhibiting ongoing chronic absenteeism (<80%) including referral to internal pastoral care and counselling through the CECG Wellbeing Team, or additional support if appropriate.

7. Responding to absenteeism

- 7.1 CECG acknowledges it may not always be possible to improve attendance, for example where students are unable to attend school for health reasons, but CECG schools will take all reasonable steps to support students experiencing difficulties attending school regularly.
- 7.2 Principals or delegates must respond to all emerging absenteeism (<90% attendance) with support to improve attendance. The [CECG Responding to Absenteeism Flowchart](#) outlines expected actions. Principals may respond to any sudden decline in attendance with support to improve attendance as required.
- 7.3 Where appropriate, schools will develop a [Student Attendance Plan](#) in consultation with families. Consultation may also include the School and Family Services Senior Officer Attendance and/or Senior Officer Child Protection and where appropriate, the Aboriginal Education Specialist.
- 7.4 For chronic absenteeism (<80% attendance) additional support may be required to improve attendance in consultation with parents/carers and the School and Family Services Senior Officer Attendance, to support the wellbeing, mental health and learning needs of students.

8. Extended leave and exemptions from enrolment and attendance

- 8.1 The ACT and NSW governments recognise there are circumstances where students may be granted extended leave from school, or an exemption from the requirements to be enrolled at school or to attend full time³.
- 8.2 Planned absences of more than 25 school days (including 25 part days) in a twelve-month period for reasons other than sick leave (S) require prior consideration and approval by the Principal, or they will be considered unapproved/unjustified absences. This ensures extended absences do not breach legal obligations for students to attend school or undermine a student's education.
- 8.3 Planned absences may be:
 - Extended Leave for personal reasons (L), or
 - Exemptions from the requirement to be enrolled, or from the requirement to attend full time (M).
- 8.4 Extended leave and exemptions may occur as a single extended absence or a series of periodic full or part-day absences.
- 8.5 For planned absences of more than 25 school days (including 25 part days) parents/carers begin the exemption or leave process by completing the appropriate application form indicating the nature and reasons for the exemption or leave, and submitting it to the school Principal (see sections 9-10 below for further information).

³ Section 25 [Education Act 1990](#) (NSW); Part 2.3 [Education Act 2004](#) (ACT)

- 8.6 Any unapproved exemption or extended leave is recorded as an unjustified absence (in line with a school's discretion regarding any absence in paragraphs 4.6- 4.7).

9. Applying for extended leave and exemptions

- 9.1 Parents/carers must complete the appropriate CECG form and submit it to the school Principal⁴:
- Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment ACT
 - [Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment NSW](#)
 - [Application for Extended Leave from School ACT](#)
 - [Application for Extended Leave from School NSW](#)
- 9.2 For exemption from attendance or enrolment in the ACT, parents/carers must apply to the ACT Education Directorate for formal approval via an ACT Government Exemption Application. The Directorate will ask Principals whether they support the application. The CECG form in this instance provides Principals with the information they need when considering an application.
- 9.3 Procedural fairness applies to all applications for extended leave and exemptions, which requires:
- the decision-maker and process are free from bias,
 - the decision is supported by evidence, and
 - any person that may be adversely affected by a decision receives an opportunity to present their case before a decision is made (i.e. applicants receive an opportunity to respond to a decision not to approve leave/exemptions before it is finalised).
- 9.4 Applications for exemptions or leave that cannot be approved by Principals should still be sent to Principals for consideration, as they will require a recommendation by the Principal before the relevant authority will approve an application.
- 9.5 Principals must refer requests for extended leave or exemption of more than 50 school days to the relevant Senior Officer School and Family Services for assessment and a supporting recommendation. This helps to ensure exemptions are assessed and granted consistently across CECG schools, with appropriate due diligence regarding the student's welfare and education needs.
- 9.6 The relevant Senior Officer School and Family Services is available to assist Principals with any request for exemption or statements of support.

10. Reasons for extended leave or exemptions

- 10.1 In all cases, the Principal must be satisfied that extended leave or exemption is in the student's best interest before issuing approval.

Extended leave

Extended leave (Code L) is most commonly expected to involve family travel but may also be granted for:

⁴ No application is necessary if a student is unable to attend school due to a direction under NSW *Public Health Act 2010* or ACT *Public Health Act 1997*. Exemptions can be granted based solely on the public health direction (if sick leave is not a more appropriate solution).

- 'Bridging' leave to allow students to start alternative training while Ministerial exemptions are being processed.
- Domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member.
- Attendance at funerals and bereavement leave.
- Attendance at recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
- Participation in special events not related to the school.

Exemptions from attendance

10.2 Examples of appropriate reasons for exemption from attendance are:

- Exceptional circumstances, including health considerations where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate (e.g. a student would benefit from Catholic rather than specialist education, but individual circumstances mean full-time schooling would not be appropriate).
- Short-term employment opportunities after which the student will return to school, if the Principal is satisfied this is in the student's best interest.
- Participation in elite arts or sporting events (e.g. at State, National or International level)
- The child is prevented from attending school under a direction of the *Public Health Act 2010* and sick leave would not be more appropriate. See the [Management of Infectious Diseases in Schools Policy](#) for exclusion periods.

Exemption from enrolment

Exemption from enrolment may be supported for reasons of:

- Age,
- Health or disability, or
- Participation in approved alternate education or training before a student completes Year 10 (e.g. TAFE/CIT or traineeship/apprenticeship).

See section 12 for additional considerations for exemptions from enrolment for age or health/disability. See section 12 and 14 for additional considerations for exemptions for approved alternate education.

11. Who can approve extended leave or exemptions?

11.1 In the ACT

- Principals may approve extended leave (Code L) of up to twelve-months, if they are satisfied the leave is in the best interest of the student for the approval to be granted. Extended leave (Code L) of more than twelve months may only be granted by the Education Directorate via an ACT Government [Exemption Application](#)⁵
- Exemptions (Code M) of more than 25 days (including part days) may only be granted by the Education Directorate via an [Exemption Application](#)⁶. Approval will only be granted if the student's Principal supports the application.

⁵ <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/transitions-careers/career-learning/exemption-certificates-and-approval-statements>

⁶ <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/transitions-careers/career-learning/exemption-certificates-and-approval-statements>

Note: The ACT government uses the same 'exemption application' to cover extended leave and exemptions from attendance or enrolment.

11.2 In NSW

- Principals may approve extended leave (Code L) and exemptions (Code M) of up to 100 days in a twelve month period if they are satisfied the leave or exemption is in the best interest of the student for the approval to be granted.
- Exemptions (Code M) of more than 100 days in a twelve month period may only be granted by the NSW Minister for Education (or government delegate).

11.3 The NSW Department of Education expects, and CECG recommends in both the ACT and NSW, that students granted extended leave of more than 100 days in a twelve-month period **be unenrolled from school and enrolled in home or distance education.**

12. Criteria for approving/supporting extended leave and exemptions

12.1 Principals can approve or support applications for extended leave or exemptions from enrolment or attendance if they are satisfied:

- it is for a permitted reason for extended leave or exemption (see section 10), and
- it is in the best interests of the student to be absent from school for the proposed reason, considering the individual needs of the student, including:
 - the student's health
 - the student's academic progress
 - the student's sense of racial, ethnic, religious or cultural identity
 - the student's social development
 - whether the exemption would benefit the student
 - any other relevant information.

12.2 Principals may request additional details to support an application.

12.3 At the discretion of the Principal, a certificate of leave or certificate of exemption may impose reasonable conditions on a case-by-case basis that are necessary to support the best interests of the student.

12.4 Principals must not approve requests for extended leave or exemption of more than 50 days without a supporting recommendation from the relevant Senior Officer School and Family Services.

12.5 Principals should encourage parents to travel during school holidays rather than during the school term and should not accept a reason for travel during school term if it is not in the best interests of the student.

12.6 Principals should ensure that parents/carers understand any implications on student academic progress as a result of the extended leave.

12.7 Principals should also ensure that parents/carers understand any implications on student academic year/class placement on their return from the extended leave.

12.8 Both the NSW (1990) and ACT (2004) Education Acts state that the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents. Schools are not responsible for managing teaching and learning for a student during extended leave.

12.9 A decision not to approve or support an application for extended leave or exemption should be communicated to the applicant via formal letter.

Additional considerations for exemption from enrolment

12.10 Exemption from the legal requirement to enrol in school is a more serious consideration than a temporary exemption from attendance. In general, CECG Principals will only grant, or consider providing a statement of support, for exemption from enrolment due to age, health/disability, or alternative attendance, training or employment.

12.11 Exemption for age may be granted:

- in **NSW** by the Principal where a child turns six years on or after 1 October and the Principal is satisfied it is not in the student's interest to enrol in the year they turn six years old.
- in the **ACT** by the Principal where a child's sixth birthday falls within 25 school days of the last day of the school year in the year they turn six years old and the Principal is satisfied it is not in the student's interest to enrol in the year they turn six years old.

12.12 In both ACT and NSW, to be granted exemption a child must be engaged in:

- full program of preschool education at an accredited preschool for the remainder of that school year, or
- participation in full or part-time accredited preschool programs for students with disabilities leading to enrolment and full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school not later than six months after the child's sixth birthday.

12.13 The Principal will require proof of enrolment or participation in the preschool, and the child should be involved in a transition-to-school program as a condition of their exemption.

12.14 All exemptions from enrolment for reasons of age that fall outside of the criteria set out in 12.11 require approval from the NSW Minister for Education via the [Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment NSW](#) form or the ACT Director General of Education via the [Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment ACT](#) and ACT Government [Exemption Application](#).

Exemption for health or disability

- 12.15 Exemption for health or disability may be granted for a student who requires exemption to continue in an individual program supported by medical specialists.
- 12.16 Exemption cannot be granted longer than six months after the student's sixth birthday.
- 12.17 The Principal will require a statement in support of the exemption from the child's medical specialist and the child should be involved in a transition-to-school program as a condition of their exemption.

Exemption for alternative education or employment

- 12.18 Exemption for alternate education or training may be considered for students who have not completed Year 10 and wish to leave school for alternative training such as TAFE/CIT or other RTO, or through a traineeship or apprenticeship (see section 14).
- 12.19 Exemption from enrolment to leave school for full-time employment is not available for students who have not completed Year 10.

13. Conditions on extended leave or exemptions including distance education

- 13.1 In all cases, the person approving the leave or exemption can place reasonable conditions on the approval if they are in the best interests of the student. For example, a condition that students applying for more than 100 days of extended leave (one semester) are unenrolled from school and enrolled in distance education. This condition is an expectation of the NSW Government for all NSW students, and CECG also recommends it for students in the ACT.

14. Leaving school for alternate training or employment

- 14.1 Students may leave school under the age of 17 for alternate training in three situations listed below. In general, the NSW government has granted schools greater autonomy to manage these issues. Additional process may be required for students and parents in the ACT.

Student Year	Requirements	Process
Student is in Year 9	<p>Can leave school for approved alternate training if they receive exemption from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NSW Minister for Education OR ACT Director General of Education 	<p>Parents/carers complete the appropriate CECG NSW or ACT Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment form (see section 9 for links) and return it to the school principal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For NSW Students; this form must then be forwarded with supporting documentation to the relevant Senior Officer CECG who will progress it through to the NSW Department of Education for approval. For ACT Students; parents/carers must also complete the ACT Government Exemption Application and submit this to the ACT Education Directorate for approval.
Student is in Year 10	Can leave school for approved alternate training	Parents/carers complete the appropriate CECG NSW or ACT Application for Exemption from Attendance or

	<p>if they receive exemption from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a NSW school Principal OR • the ACT Director General of Education. 	<p>Enrolment form (see section 9 for links) and return it to the school principal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For NSW Students; this application can be approved by a school principal. • For ACT Students; parents/carers must also complete the ACT Exemption Application and submit this to the ACT Education Directorate for approval.
Student has completed Year 10	<p>Can leave school for full-time employment <i>or</i> approved alternate training if they receive approval from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a NSW school Principal OR • the ACT Director General of Education. 	<p>Parents/carers complete the appropriate CECG form and return it to the school principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment ACT • Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment NSW • For NSW Students; this application can be approved by a school principal. • For ACT Students; parents/carers must also complete the ACT Approval Statement Application⁷.

15. Leaving school for other reasons and removal from enrolment and attendance registers

15.1 Students may be removed from the register of enrolled students if they are removed from a CECG school. This may occur because a student:

- is no longer of compulsory school age (completed Year 12⁸ or are over 17 years of age),
- is undertaking approved alternate training or employment (see section 12 and 14),
- has been removed by their parents/carers to attend home schooling or other education,
- has been removed by their parents/carers and CECG is unable to identify the destination school, or
- CECG has cancelled enrolment in line with the CECG Behavioural Support Suspension and Exclusion Policy, the CECG School Fees and Levies Policy, or this Attendance Policy.

15.2 Regardless of the reason a student may leave a CECG school, it is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure a student of compulsory school age continues to be enrolled in appropriate education, not the responsibility of the school.

No longer of compulsory school age

⁷ <https://www.education.act.gov.au/public-school-life/transitions-careers/career-learning/exemption-certificates-and-approval-statements>

⁸ A student has 'completed year 12' upon completion of their final year 12 assessment or the last formal day of attendance required by the school (e.g. a completion day after exams), whichever comes later.

- 15.3 Parents/carers of a student who is no longer of compulsory school age and will no longer be attending school must notify the school that enrolment has ceased. The school removes the student from the enrolment register.

Removed for home schooling or other education

- 15.4 A student may be removed from a CECG school because the family moves, selects another school, or wishes to transition to home schooling. Home schooling must be formally approved by the NSW Education Department or ACT Education Directorate ⁹.
- 15.5 Schools must make all reasonable efforts to obtain evidence of enrolment in another school or approved home schooling before they remove a student from the enrolment register, including official approval of home schooling (if relevant). The evidence for this must be archived with the student's electronic file (e.g. Compass or MAZE).
- 15.6 In the event no evidence has been provided despite all reasonable efforts, refer to the process for destination unknown.

Removed from school – destination unknown

- 15.7 If a parent has removed a student from a CECG school for any reason and the Principal has been unable to obtain evidence of the student's destination, the Principal should notify the CECG Senior Officer Attendance and record that destination as unknown in the student's electronic file (e.g. Compass or Maze).
- 15.8 In NSW, the Principal must also complete the [Student Destination Unknown Notification](#) template and forward it to the NSW Department of Education.
- 15.9 In the ACT, the student's electronic file must be updated to reflect destination unknown. This is then reported to the ACT Education Directorate through the ACT Student Transfer Register process which is undertaken fortnightly by CECG office employees.

Enrolment has been cancelled by CECG

- 15.10 CECG policy and duty of care anticipates situations where a student's enrolment will be cancelled by CECG, including:
- for the safety of students and workers, in line with the CECG Behavioural Support Suspension and Exclusion Policy,
 - because the student no longer meets the requirements for enrolment under the CECG Enrolment Policy or CECG Fees and Levies Policy, or
 - because the student no longer meets attendance requirements in line with this Attendance Policy.
- 15.11 In the event that all relevant policies and processes have been followed and it is necessary to cancel a student's enrolment, the reason enrolment was cancelled and evidence of the process through which the decision was reached must be recorded in the student's electronic file (e.g. Compass or MAZE). The student's destination or 'destination unknown' must also be recorded on the electronic file, as set out above.

16. Record keeping and sharing information

- 16.1 Attendance records must be retained for the periods outlined in the table below in each student's school file.

⁹ Section 71-72 NSW [Education Act 1990](#) or section 131 of the ACT [Education Act 2004](#)

- 16.2 Digital copies of paper records are preferred. Paper records should be confidentially destroyed after their digital copy has been successfully uploaded to the student's official electronic file. See the [Record Keeping Policy](#) for further detail.

Schools with access to the Compass application

Schools with access to the Compass system must upload digital records to the student's Compass system student file (e.g. emails and attachments; file note/chronical entry of a phone call; scanned copies of hardcopy communication relating to absences).

Schools without access to the Compass application

Schools without access to the Compass application must store copies of paper records securely (digital copies are preferred in line with [Record Keeping Policy](#)).

Type of Record	Retention Period
Daily attendance registers	Permanent
Correspondence and other records relating to absenteeism (e.g. digital copies of notes, messages from the school, files notes of contact, medical certificates)	Until the student reaches 25 years of age or seven years after the action, whichever is later.
Records relating to exemptions and extended leave	Until the student reaches 25 of age or seven years after the action, whichever is later

17. Definitions

- 17.1 **Chronic absenteeism:** attendance for less than 80% of required days. Chronic absenteeism requires additional intervention to improve attendance and will require a mandatory report.
- 17.2 **Compulsory school age/compulsory education age:** a child is of compulsory school age (NSW) or compulsory education age (ACT) from the age of six years old until they reach 17 years old, or complete year 12.
- 17.3 **Emerging absenteeism:** attendance less than 90% of required days. Emerging absenteeism requires a response and support to improve attendance.
- 17.4 **Exemption from Attendance:** approved absence over 25 school days (including 25 part-days) in 12 months for:
- Exceptional circumstances, including health considerations where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate.
 - Short-term employment opportunities after which the student will return to school.
 - Participation in elite arts or sporting events (e.g. at State, National or International level)
 - The child is prevented from attending school under a direction of the Public Health Act 2010 (and sick leave would not be more appropriate).
- 17.5 **Exemption from Enrolment:** temporary exemption over 25 days from the legal requirement to be enrolled in school, available for:
- Age: where a child turns six years on or after 1 October and the Principal is satisfied it is not in the student's interest to enrol in the year they turn six years old,
 - Health or disability of a child that requires them to continue in an individual program supported by medical specialists not longer than six months after the child's sixth birthday, or

- Participation in approved alternate education or training before a student completes Year 10 (e.g. TAFE/CIT or other registered RTO or traineeship / apprenticeship).

17.6 **Extended leave:** approved absence over 25 days (including 25 part-days) in twelve months for:

- family travel
- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- attendance at funerals and bereavement leave
- attendance at recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions
- participation in special events not related to the school

18. Related Documents and Legislation

18.1 Related CECG Documents:

- Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment ACT
- [Application for Exemption from Attendance or Enrolment NSW](#)
- [Application for Extended Leave from School ACT](#)
- [Application for Extended Leave from School NSW](#)
- Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment ACT
- Notice of Intention to Undertake Training or Full-Time Employment NSW
- [Attendance Letter 1 - Attendance Concern](#)
- Attendance Letter 2 – Attendance Planning Meeting request
- Attendance Letter 3 – School advises CEO for Referral Attendance Support
- Attendance Letter 4a – School Advises Referral for Attendance Conference
- Attendance Letter 4b – CECG Advises Attendance Conference
- Attendance Letter 5a – CECG Advises NSW Referral
- Attendance Letter 5b – CECG Advises ACT Referral
- Response to Absenteeism Flowchart
- Student Attendance Plan
- Student Destination Unknown Notification
- [Enrolment Policy](#)
- [Behavioural Support Suspension and Exclusion Policy](#)

18.2 Related legislation or Standards

- NSW [Education Act 1990](#)
- ACT [Education Act 2004](#)

19. Contact

19.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the CECG School and Family Services Area.

[DOUBLE CLICK] INSERT SCHOOL LETTERHEAD HERE

STUDENT ATTENDANCE PLAN

SCHOOL			
STUDENT			
YEAR LEVEL		DATE OF BIRTH	
PARENT/CARER 1			
PARENT/CARER 2			
MEETING ATTENDEES			
DATE OF MEETING			

DETAILS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE ABOUT ATTENDANCE
Full details recorded in [name of system]
•

ATTENDANCE STATISTICS FOR THIS STUDENT			
Acceptable attendance rate %	>90%		
Student's current attendance rate %			
Overall number of absent days		days absent out of	

Parents or carers of children of compulsory school age are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly. The **Education Act 1990** defines regular attendance as attending for the days and hours the school is open for instruction.

ATTENDANCE CONSIDERATIONS/CONCERNS	
Student	Parent/carer
Student's areas of strength	
•	

LENGTH OF PLAN			
Length of this plan is to be 20 school days (recommended)			
Start date of plan		End date of plan	

[DOUBLE CLICK] INSERT SCHOOL LETTERHEAD HERE

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL		
Family Responsibilities	Student Responsibilities	School Responsibilities
1.	1.	1.
Intended Outcome/s		
To support the student in improving school attendance		
To assist the student in achieving academically and to engage socially with peers		
To support the student in fulfilling his/her life opportunities		

This plan will be enacted for **20 school days** at which point a meeting will be scheduled to review the plan and assess the student's return to regular attendance. A meeting may be scheduled sooner if it is deemed the parent/s and/or student failed to meaningfully engage with this plan and return the student to regular attendance. Further action may be required.

DETAILS OF DAILY RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN FOR [CHILD'S NAME] IF TRANSITION REQUIRED				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

AGREEMENT SIGNATURES			
Student		Principal /delegate	
Parent / carer 1		Parent / carer 2	
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of plan sent to CECG School and Family Services Senior Officer			
<input type="checkbox"/> Report made to DoCJ (NSW) or CYPs (ACT) on [date]			

REVIEW OF PLAN			
Review date			
Did the parent/carers and student meaningfully engage with the plan?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Plan to be extended?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Recommendations			
CECG School and Family Services Senior Officer		Date	