



BUNBURY REGIONAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

BRCC Attendance Policy



Purpose

The role of a CARE school is to endeavour to re-engage at-risk students in the education or training system by increasing school attendance, improving literacy and numeracy skills and providing appropriate life skills for students to increase their work, training or study opportunities after school.

Student attendance may depend on a range of issues such as personal, family, school, and societal factors. These are not simple issues to manage, and different solutions may apply to different people. However, good processes persistently applied along with thoughtful and accommodating approaches have been found to lead to improved student attendance. When a school works to understand the student and their situation and to work collaboratively with the family and other agencies to resolve attendance, improvements can be achieved.

This policy provides information about how Bunbury Regional Community College (“BRCC” or “the College”) manages student attendance and non-attendance. This policy has been designed to help the principal to accurately record and monitor the attendance of all students and implement appropriate strategies to restore attendance when necessary.

This policy will assist the principal to manage the enrolment, education, inclusion, and safety of students in a consistent, legal, and ethical way. Under Division 3 section 23 of the *School Education Act 1999*, Attendance requirements are set out under law as follows:

- (1) *A student must, for every year of the student’s compulsory education period, on the days on which the school is open for instruction —*
 - (a) *either —*
 - (i) *attend the school at which the student is enrolled;*
 - or*
 - (ii) *otherwise participate in an educational programme of the school whether at the school or elsewhere, as required by the principal;*

In the Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools (the Standards), it states the following may be requested before, during or after a renewal of registration school visit: Documentation of the re-engagement strategies implemented when a student’s unapproved absences are having a significant impact on the student’s progress with the learning programme.

To be able to improve student attendance it is essential that staff clearly understand what is expected of them each time a student does not attend, and that they meet those expectations every time. Good recordkeeping is also crucial to supporting the process to improve attendance which enables BRCC to track activity for each student and help make informed decisions.

The starting point to meeting these expectations is to obtain a reason for every absence and record this accurately. Schools are required to seek an explanation for a student’s absence from the start of the absence. This is important for two reasons. It means that the principal can then be sure that parents know about the absence. It also helps the school track what they have done to support each student. This is important whether it is a one-off occurrence or part of a history of non-attendance.



Scope

This policy is applicable to the Bunbury Regional Community College community including the principal, staff, students and parent/carer's.

Definitions

CARE School means a Curriculum and Re-engagement in Education school, established and registered solely for the education of students at educational risk.

Child a child is defined in the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) as a person who is under 18 years of age, and in the absence of positive evidence as to age, means a person who is apparently under 18 years of age. For the purposes of this policy the words 'child' and 'student' are used interchangeably.

Child of compulsory school age means a child who is required to be enrolled in an educational programme as per section 9(1) of the *School Education Act 1999*.

Duty of Care is a duty under common law to ensure that reasonable care is taken to minimise the risk of harm to students while they are on the College premises during the hours when the College is open, and during College-related off-site activities.

Educational Risk A student is at educational risk if he/she is of compulsory school age but unable to participate in mainstream schooling due to one or more of the following reasons:

- Is disengaged as evidenced by persistent non-attendance or a failure or refusal to enrol.
- experiences learning difficulties or disadvantages that cannot be effectively catered for by a mainstream school.
- Is affected by life risk factors including domestic violence, abuse, homelessness, transience, addiction, chronic ill-health or pregnancy.
- Is subject to a Children's Court Order.
- Is the subject of a Responsible Parenting Agreement covering school attendance.
- Is a persistent or serious juvenile offender.

Missing students a student can be regarded as 'missing' when they cannot be located, and their parent/carers cannot be contacted, and the school has not received advice that the student is being educated elsewhere.

Non-attending students where a student is not attending school and either their location is known or contact with the student's parent/s is still possible they are regarded as non-attending rather than 'missing'. A non-attending student includes one whose:

- location is known but they are not actively engaged in an education program; and
- contact is still possible with themselves or their parent/carers but they are not engaged in an education program.

Where a student discontinues attending school and a notice of transfer (or letter of withdrawal from parent/s) is not received, schools are to take all reasonable steps to locate the student and restore attendance by using school and interagency resources such as Department of Communities: Child Protection and Family Support and the Department of Justice. The Act requires that non-attending students remain on the current roll of the school's enrolment register and have their non-attendance recorded.



Notice of Transfer all Western Australian schools are required to notify the former principal of a student's transfer as per Regulation 11 of the *School Education Regulations 2000*. Transfer notes are the recommended form for such communication. A notification of transfer should be completed and sent to the student's former principal within five school days of the student's new enrolment.

Parent/carer – a person who is the mother, father, stepfather, stepmother of the child; or at law has responsibility for the care, welfare and development of the child or is specified as the child's adoptive parent under the *Adoption Act 1994*.

Reportable Incident is an incident requiring a police or other emergency services response when a student appears to have been taken or removed, or goes missing and cannot be accounted for, from the school or from a school-related activity without proper authority.

Responsible person in relation to a student, means a parent/carer of the student; or if the student has turned 18 or who is a prescribed child, the student; or (c) a person whose details have been provided under section 16(1)(b)(ii)(II).

SEQTA is the Student Management System used by the College and 600 other schools in Australia and South-East Asia to record student information, attendance and notes. SEQTA was created by two Perth teachers to reduce administration workloads for teachers.

Policy

Context

Bunbury Regional Community College (BRCC) is a 'Curriculum and Re-engagement in Education' (CARE) School that caters specifically to students who have disengaged from mainstream education.

Participation at school is an essential element to achieving social and academic learning outcomes. BRCC is committed to providing a supportive and engaging learning environment and curriculum with regular attendance being a cornerstone to achievement.

Non-attendance has several negative effects on students, not just academically but socially as well. Absenteeism increases social isolation, including alienation and lack of engagement with the school community and peers, which leads in turn to emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Under the *School Education Act 1999* students are required by law to attend class on the days that the school is open for instruction, or otherwise participate in an educational programme of the school.

BRCC has responsibilities under the law to monitor student attendance and to manage non-attendance and absenteeism. BRCC staff are required to ensure these legal obligations are met in relation to BRCC students.

BRCC's legal obligations include compliance with Non-Government School Registration Standards, Public Health requirements, State and Commonwealth funding requirements, and other related legislated requirements.

There are some broad factors shown to negatively impact attendance levels. These include:

- Academic self-concept, depression, anxiety, negative attitude toward peers or teachers, and a lack of sense of belonging.



- Family factors, such as how highly education is prized in the home, and the level of family involvement in things like homework.
- School-related factors, such as the tolerance of bullying, poor teacher relationships, or poor connection to peer groups.
- Individual factors, such as low self-esteem, feeling academically inadequate, lack of motivation or goals, disliking school, boredom, pursuit of activities outside school.
(https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/11319-aitsl_spotlight_attendance_web-fa.pdf?sfvrsn=5bb0ff3c_6 <https://clueylearning.com.au/blog/why-school-attendance-matters/>)

Any school related factors impacting attendance should be made known to by discussing the matter directly with the Advisory Teacher, Campus Manager or Principal.

BRCC recognises that some students do not have access to transport, or have issues at home, or do not have a home. Furthermore, some have family problems, drug or substance abuse problems, or physical and/or mental health issues that may prevent regular attendance. Support and a safe learning environment are provided to encourage students to achieve reengagement in learning.

This policy aims to meet the legislative requirements for Western Australia while also meeting the educational needs, and reflecting the personal circumstances, of the students enrolled at BRCC.

Aims

1. To provide BRCC staff with information and procedures enabling them to understand and how to meet all legal requirements in relation to attendance at the College.
2. To ensure BRCC keeps accurate attendance records.
3. To be aware of the reason for absences and to monitor long term attendance of students.
4. To minimise the impact of frequent or extended absences on a student's wellbeing and educational outcomes by implementing appropriate strategies.
5. To ensure attendance meets the legislative requirements of the *School Education Act 1999* and Regulations.
6. To ensure the principal can comply with requests from the Department of Education, or other Government agencies such as CPFS and Centrelink, to provide information on student attendance.

Attendance Goals

The immediate goal for BRCC students is to have regular attendance while demonstrating an improvement over time. It is recognised that BRCC students are already at “educational risk” and most often come to BRCC with attendance levels that are well below expected levels. While this is due to a range of factors, BRCC will work with students and parent/carers to address barriers and factors impacting attendance. To maximise the benefits from education students should aim to be present between 90% and 100% of the time. Anything less which will likely have a negative impact on their learning and in turn their future after they have left school.

- **‘Regular’** attendance: more than 90 per cent attendance. This is understood to pose minimal educational risk. It equates to missing up to half a day a week
- **‘Indicated’** educational risk: 80-89 per cent attendance (missing up to one full day per week)



- 'Moderate' educational risk: 60-79 per cent attendance (missing one to two days per week)
- 'Severe' educational risk: less than 60 per cent attendance (missing more than two days per week).

Modified Schedules

Some students will be placed on modified schedule to accommodate the student's individual needs. Modified schedules must be approved by the principal.

Responsibilities

The College has legal obligations and a duty of care to ensure students are in attendance each day the school is open, or, to record the student's non-attendance or non-participation. BRCC staff are required to follow up on any absences that have not been notified by the parent/carer and keep records about the contacts made and information received.

The College is responsible for:

- Promoting regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students as outlined in this policy.
- Maintaining accurate records of student attendance by recording and monitoring attendance and non-attendance.
- Managing absenteeism.
- Providing clear information to students and parent/carers regarding attendance requirements, and the consequences of non-attendance.
- Implementing programs and strategies to address attendance issues and patterns of non-attendance when they arise.
- Keeping records (stored electronically but capable of being produced in written form) of attendance and non-attendance and actions that are taken to follow up one-off non-attendance and strategies employed to re-engage students with patterns of non-attendance.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Reviewing and reporting attendance rates on a weekly basis to the Executive meetings and monitoring trends in attendance at least once each term and reporting findings through to the Executive meeting and at scheduled Board meetings.
- Implementing strategies to restore attendance; and ensuring all staff follow the procedures and policy in relation to attendance.
- Ensuring records are kept up to date.

The Teachers are responsible for:

- Student attendance is to be recorded three times a day. **Student attendance is required to be marked in SEQTA at the beginning of Sessions One, Two and Three.**
- Keeping attendance records and monitoring attendance of students in their class on SEQTA.
- Following up on a daily basis on individual, un-explained absences.
- Discussing and proactively engaging with the student and parent/carer when they see absences are increasing or if there is a concern to consider what additional strategies can be considered to start reengagement and to mitigate the absences from affecting the students.'
- Ensure students who leave the College grounds at recess or lunchtime have parent/carer approval.



- Following BRCC's policy and procedures in relation to attendance or reasonable requests by the campus manager or principal (depending on the circumstance).

The support staff (Education Assistants, Social Workers, Youth Workers,) **are responsible for:**

- Reporting absences of students in their care from planned activities on SEQTA and to the Advisory Teacher.
- Following consultation with the Campus Manager and Advisory Teacher, the support staff may approach the student and parents if they feel absences are affecting the student's achievement of outcomes or social wellbeing.

Parent/Carers are required to:

- Ensure the student/s attend the College every school day.
- Inform BRCC before class commences and to provide the reason for the absence and the expected return date. This may be done verbally or in writing to the Advisory Teacher or Education Assistant. Responses received from the parent/carer are entered into SEQTA on the day they are received. These are called explained absences.
- Explain the absences of the student from the College promptly and respond to requests or calls from the College in relation to absences.
- Work in partnership with BRCC to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at the College, including communicating with the College if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance.
- Work cooperatively with the College if their child is absent chronically or for an extended period;
- Notify the College immediately in the event of the student:
 - Transferring to another school, training organisation or TAFE.
 - Commencing part or full-time work, including work experience not arranged/endorsed by the College

Students are responsible for:

- Attending College every school day or in line with their Individual Education Plan and learning goals.
- Following all College procedures in relation to attendance.

Other responsibilities

BRCC is an alternative learning environment where students may be involved with the Department of Child Protection or Corrective Services, in these cases BRCC must advise these agencies if a student is absent.

Parent/carers and students need to be aware that lengthy, unexplained absences may result in loss of some Centrelink allowances.

Reasons for absences and material conversations with parent/carer should be recorded. Records should also be made of the strategies employed and/or agreements entered as part of managing problematic absences with a view to managing a student back to regular attendance.

While circumstances around these types of absences can be very complex, situations where the BRCC staff member believes that it is more a case of truancy and it is not being supported by the parent/carer in its endeavours to re-engage the student, BRCC can make contact with the Department of Education's attendance team for assistance, and possible referral to an attendance advisory panel.



Acceptable and unacceptable reasons for absence

Examples of what BRCC considers to be acceptable and unacceptable reasons for absence (as required under s.25 of the *School Education Act 1999*) are listed in the table below:

Acceptable reasons for absence	Unacceptable reasons for absence
Illness	Student can't be bothered attending/or decides not to go to school (Truancy)
At risk of being infected by someone else who is sick	Haircuts or dental appointments
Temporary ill health	Shopping – with or without parent/carer
Permanent ill health	Parent/carer wants help at home or work
Unavoidable major issues: such as family trauma; family bereavement; death of a close friend	Holiday or family trip
Cultural or sporting event the student is participating in	Part-time or casual work that is not endorsed by BRCC
School excursion or school organised activity such as off campus training	Appointments which could be made outside of school hours e.g. Driving test/lessons
Approved off campus training and work experience	Taking excessive time for appointments that are avoidable

Removal of a student during the school day by a parent/carer

Parent/carers are requested to provide prior notice to the student's Advisory Teacher if the student is going to be leaving the class during the day. BRCC has a duty of care towards students, which includes being aware of a student's whereabouts from class during the school day.

Students leaving college grounds during the school day

Students, who have consent from their parent/carer, may be allowed to leave the college grounds at recess or lunchtime to buy food at the discretion of the Advisory Teacher. Consent2Go approval is required.

Leaving the grounds without permission is not permitted as unauthorised absences may potentially place a student at risk. The College has a duty of care to ensure the safety of students during school hours and needs to be always aware of student whereabouts.

Process for managing absenteeism

Explained Absences

When a student is absent, parent/carers are required to inform BRCC before class commences and to provide the reason for the absence and the expected return date. This may be done verbally or in writing to the Advisory Teacher or Education Assistant. Responses received from the parent/carer are entered into SEQTA on the day they are received. These are called explained absences.



Unexplained Absences

BRCC staff are required to follow up unexplained absences as quickly as possible and in accordance with BRCC policies and procedures.

The following steps are to be taken if a student does not turn up to College or, goes missing without explanation during the school day, either from BRCC or a school related activity:

1. Student attendance is to be recorded three times a day by the Advisory Teacher. Student attendance is required to be marked in SEQTA at the beginning of Sessions One, Two and Three.
2. If a student is not present (and/or cannot be found on the College site) at the start of the school day or session and no explanation has been provided for the student's absence, the College is to contact the parent/carer as a matter of urgency.
3. Contact is required to be initiated within 30 minutes of the absence being noted or as short a time as possible. A message is to be sent to the parent/carer by the Advisory Teacher through SEQTA. This can be done directly from the screen where attendance is marked.
4. The message requests for the parent/carer to contact the College ASAP.
5. If a student is absent for more than two consecutive days, the next step will involve phoning the parent/carer, using home, mobile, and work numbers to make contact. The attempt and outcome should be recorded in SEQTA.
6. If BRCC is still unable to establish the whereabouts of the student, other options may include calling WA police if the student's wellbeing or safety is of concern or at risk. If not, checking in with their siblings/relatives and friends at the College about the student's possible whereabouts before checking in with other agencies (e.g. DCPFS) Information about any action taken must be recorded in SEQTA.
7. If the above steps do not locate the student and their whereabouts are of concern, a home visit by two BRCC staff members may be made and if unsuccessful, followed by contacting the WA Police. Information about any action taken must be recorded in SEQTA.
8. Where a student appears to have 'gone missing' during the school day, the same process, as described above, will apply. Additional earlier measures will include a search of the school premises/ground. Information about any action taken must be recorded in SEQTA, and an incident report should be recorded.

Reporting a student who appears to be missing

Parent/Carers and students have been made aware through the *Attendance Policy for Parents/Carers and Students* on the website and at enrolment that if the College remains unable to locate a student and has a concern for their safety or wellbeing, contact should be made with WA Police to meet the College's Duty of Care requirement.

Contact with WA Police constitutes a **reportable incident** that will be notified to the College Board and the Director General of the Department of Education within 48 hours.

Incidences of unexplained absence requiring a police or emergency response fit the description of a Reportable Incident, as defined under **Critical and Emergency Incidents Standard - Standard 7.2** which states that: *The governing body ensures the Director General is notified of every reportable incident as soon as practicable, and in any event within 48 hours of the incident, using the form published by the Director General for this purpose.*



Missing Students, Tracking and Reporting

This initiative applies to all schools in Western Australia. The Director General of the Department of Education may check that where a school has been unable to locate a student within 20 days of the start of an absence and the Parent/Carers cannot be contacted, the principal has regarded the student as missing and contacted the Student Tracking Coordinator (STC) in the Department of Education.

The SWU Request Form

(<http://det.wa.edu.au/studentsupport/behaviourandwellbeing/detcms/navigation/student-attendance/related-information/>), should be completed for missing students within 15 school days of their last date of attendance.

BRCC will use the following strategies in attempts to locate missing students:

- written communication to parent/carers
- telephone parent/carers (home and work)
- conduct a home visit
- telephone emergency contacts
- check previous school
- query relatives and peers attending the school
- contact relevant agencies (if involved) e.g. Department of Communities: Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS)
- consultation with Student Tracking Coordinator.

The Student Tracking Coordinator may authorise the principal to make an adjustment to the attendance records and enrolment register to reflect that the enrolment has ceased.

Process for student(s) exclusion at the direction of the Chief Health Officer

If a student has a medical condition, that on advice from the Executive Director of Public Health, or a registered medical practitioner, leads the principal to believe may be infectious, contagious, or otherwise harmful to the health of students and staff at BRCC, the Principal may require the student not to attend College, or educational programme of the College.

The principal will provide the requirement not to attend the College or educational programme of the College, in writing to the Parent/Carer, or student (if they have turned 18, or are a prescribed child). This is a requirement of s27 of the *School Education Act*.

A fine of \$500 applies under the Act if an adult who is notified does not ensure the student complies with the request to not attend.

Confidentiality and privacy requirements in relation to attendance records

Maintaining privacy of student attendance and associated records is a legal obligation, under the *Privacy Act 1981 (Cth)* and the *Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)*. BRCC maintains confidentiality of student records as a priority. Please refer to the BRCC Privacy Policy for more information. This is available on the College's webpage.



Secure storage and retention of attendance records, for the prescribed period

All attendance records are stored securely, in a manner to ensure their protection from environmental damage or digital degradation which also allows for ease of retrieval of information. BRCC stores attendance records as required under the *School Education Regulations 2000*. In the event the College closes before the prescribed period the records will be transferred to the Director General at the Department of Education for possible permanent retention.

Attendance Resources

SEQTA
Withdrawal letter
Student Handbook
IEP
Request for Modified Schedule
Learning Plan

Partners

Participation & Engagement (Yr 11 & 12)
Regional Attendance Officer (Year 10)
Compass Busselton (Yr 10)

Applicable Legislation

Privacy Act 1981

School Education Act 1999 - Part 2, Division 3 of Act sets out attendance requirements that all Western Australian schools must satisfy.

School Education Regulations 2000

School Curriculum and Standards Authority Act 1997

The ***Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-Government Schools (the Standards)***, outlines the registration standards that Independent schools must comply with.

- *Standard 6* of the Registration Standards is relevant to student attendance and requires student enrolment and attendance procedures and practices comply with all legal requirements.
- *Standard 7.2* covers Critical and Emergency Incidents and requires the governing body to notify the Director General of every reportable incident within 48 hours of the incident. This Standard is relevant to attendance because one of the definitions [7.2(3)] of a reportable incident is: *An incident requiring a police or other emergency services response when a student appears to have been taken or removed, or goes missing and cannot be accounted for, from the school or from a school-related activity without proper authority.*

Policy Review Date

This policy is reviewed on an on going basis and approved every two years.



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Approval Process	New Policy or Amendment	Minor Amendment or Review
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