

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2020

Forming part of: *Giant Steps Tasmania's Curriculum & Learning Experiences Manual*

Policy Statement

Giant Steps Tasmania supports the objectives of the Education Act 2016, these being:

- To encourage parents/ carers to ensure regular school attendance in order to help students make steady progress with their learning and gain the skills and knowledge they need.
- To help students see themselves as valuable and enthusiastic members of their classroom and so have high expectations of their own potential.
- To help parents/ carers emphasise to their child the value and importance of their education.

Furthermore, both as an independent special school and as a school where some students are dual-enrolled in mainstream schools, Giant Steps Tasmania feels it has an important role to play in helping to ensure that there is a consistent, statewide approach to authorised absences in Tasmania.

A copy of this policy is given to parents/ carers at enrolment and is available on the school's website.

Purpose

To ensure that the procedures around attendance at Giant Steps Tasmania are clear and transparent to school staff and parents/ carers.

To ensure that the reasons for which a student may legitimately be absent are clear and transparent to school staff and parents/ carers.

To ensure that parents/ carers understand that the school can support them if they are trying to ensure regular attendance but are experiencing difficulties.

To ensure that parents/ carers understand that a place cannot be held open for a student who is not attending and where there has been insufficient communication with the school to explain why this is the case (see also Home/ School Agreement).

Implementation

As of 2020, all Tasmanian students have to participate in education or training from the age of 5 until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or turn 18 (whichever occurs first). It is therefore the responsibility of parents/ carers to ensure regular attendance at a registered school/ college for children between these ages. Giant Steps Tasmania wishes to assist families to fulfil this legal obligation.

Daily attendance is recorded at Giant Steps Tasmania. The class teacher takes the attendance and sends the Report to the School Office before 9.30 am where the

information is recorded on the Attendance Spreadsheet. Any unauthorised absences are followed up by phone. If a parent/ carer cannot be contacted on the day of the absence, the student's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

An Attendance Report is provided to the Principal fortnightly.

The Principal or his Authorised Person arranges follow-up with parents/ carers in any cases where the number of unauthorised absences and/ or the lack of communication is a cause for concern.

Where students are dual-enrolled, and where contact regarding absence has not already been made by the mainstream school, the Principal or his Authorised Person will contact the mainstream school to see if this is an issue across both schools.

Issues of non-attendance which cannot be remedied informally with the Principal/ Authorised Person will be referred to the Education Registrar <https://oer.tas.gov.au/> who will commence a compulsory conciliation process in which students (where possible), parents/ carers and the Principal can agree how best to support students to attend.

The reasons a student can be authorised to be absent from Giant Steps Tasmania are:

- sickness/incapacity (*the Principal may require a medical certificate if a student has had more than 5 days sickness during a term*)
- medical, legal or related appointments
- natural disaster or extreme weather preventing students from safely attending school
- any other event requiring the school to be closed and for students' education to take place remotely (*evidence of engagement with on-line learning will be necessary for a student's absence to be authorised*)
- terminal illness of an immediate family member
- bereavement of a person the student has had a close, significant or family relationship with
- having witnessed or been subjected to family violence
- being a participant in a recognised State, National or International event
- participation in a recognised learning experience
- an application for Home Education having been received by the Education Registrar and provisional registration having been granted.

If a student needs to be absent from school for any of these reasons, parents/ carers are required to contact the school office as soon as possible to let the school know why the student will be absent and when they will return. This will ensure that sufficient staff members are on duty to ensure the safety and effective learning of all students.

All messages regarding absence must be directed to the School Office on 6362 2522. The Office will then ensure that all relevant people are notified.

Messages regarding absence cannot be given directly to the classroom staff or to the bus driver or bus supervisors. If parents are running late they may contact the bus driver to ask

if the bus can wait for them (this may not always be possible) but all absences must be reported to the Office.

If a student is absent from school for any other reason or if no communication is received from a parent/ carer on the day of absence explaining the reason for a student's absence:

- The absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If a student has an unexplained absence of more than a week (5 consecutive days when s/he is expected to attend Giant Steps Tasmania), or an unexplained pattern of absences, or 10 unexplained days of absence in any term, Giant Steps Tasmania will:

- send parents/ carers a letter notifying them of the number of unauthorised absences the student has and requesting a meeting to discuss the issue;
- work with parents/ carers to increase the student's attendance and so maximise the student's learning.

If the student's attendance does not improve, the Principal or his Authorised Person will:

- refer the matter to the Education Registrar and a conciliation process will begin.

The student's enrolment at Giant Steps Tasmania may be terminated if attendance does not return to an acceptable level. (See also Home/ School Agreement).

Given the number and length of term breaks, it is expected that families will arrange holidays during these times. If in exceptional circumstances a parent/carer wishes to take a student out of school during term time for a family holiday or event, written authorisation is needed from the Principal. If a student has attended regularly and arrived punctually, it is probable that authorisation will be given.

Authorised by:	Paul Bowman
Position:	Chair of Board
Signature:	
Date accepted:	
Original policy developed by:	Chris Jacobsen
Position:	Fairlight Educational Consulting
Date Original Policy developed:	New policy, adapted from Emergency & Disaster Recovery
Date of last review:	October 2017
Staff consultation period:	August 2020
Revisions prepared by:	Chris Jacobsen, Fairlight Educational Consulting
Date of next review:	October 2022

Addendum

Attendance Procedures

Attendance Procedures

