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# Attendance Procedure

Department for Education,
Children and Young People

Tasmanian Government

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# 1 Purpose

- This Procedure outlines processes for schools to record attendance and absences, as well as identifying key roles and responsibilities for schools to communicate and engage with parents (which includes carers, guardians and independent students – see definition). The Procedure also aims to provide advice to schools to improve attendance and reduce student absence.

# 2 Overview

- Every day a student does not attend school can have a negative impact on their learning.
- There is a need for positive discussions between schools and parents to ensure challenges relating to school attendance can be addressed in a collaborative manner.
- Principals, parents, teachers, School Social Workers and School Support and Wellbeing Teams all play a role in accurately recording and understanding school attendance and in developing and using strategies to support students who have repeated absences.
- School Support and Wellbeing Teams develop multi-tiered system of support frameworks to support students with repeated absences.
- Repeated failure to attend school can be an indication that a student is experiencing abuse, neglect or other safety and wellbeing concerns.

# 3 Roles and responsibilities

## 3.1 Secretary, DECYP (or delegate including Associate Secretary)

- Provides strategic direction and oversight of children and young people in accordance with the *Education Act 2016*.
- May authorise the appointment of a person as an Authorised Person (see Section 3.7) with functions and powers to investigate unauthorised absences on request by a principal.

## 3.2 Deputy Secretary

- Provides strategic direction and oversight of children and young people in accordance with the *Education Act 2016.*
- The relevant deputy secretary must consider if each part-time attendance application is in the child's or young person's best interests.

## 3.3 Principals (or delegate)

- Must ensure that any expectations relating to attendance are met in alignment with Our Approach to School Improvement.

### 3.3.1 Recording of attendance

- Must ensure appropriate steps are taken to record attendance in accordance with Section 4.1, including ensuring that teachers record attendance:
  - at the start of the first class of the day
  - for every class throughout the day.*

  *In the case of primary schools or district/high schools, this may involve the use of the Inheritance feature. To ensure students are 'known, safe, well and learning' steps to ensure attendance is validated or recorded must occur after each break in scheduled classes (for instance, recess and lunch) or for each Year 11 and 12 class.
- Must ensure that a register is kept recording the daily attendance or absence of each school-aged child, or a student enrolled/ or participating in an Approved Learning Program as part of their school enrolment, in the way shown in EduPoint Attendance Categories.
- Must ensure all students in Years 11 and 12 are enrolled in Subject Master List (SML) courses and attendance is being marked.

### 3.3.2 Follow up for absences

- Must ensure strategies to support a student are undertaken in consultation with the School Support and Wellbeing Team including the School Social Worker, on-call social worker/Senior Social Worker, and other members of the team as appropriate.
- Must ensure relevant staff maintain the contact log in the Student Support System (SSS).
- May choose to issue a 5, 10 or 15-day non-attendance letter in accordance with Section 4.2 – How to Manage Frequent Absences.
- Must ensure there have been efforts to resolve a student's absences, including access to professional support staff prior to escalation to a Student Support Leader.
- May refer a student's unauthorised absences to a Student Support Leader in complex cases, prior to consideration of a compulsory conciliation conference.
- In referring a matter of unauthorised absences to a Student Support Leader is to consider the factors in Section 4.2.4 "How to Refer at Student's Absence to the Registrar, Education".
- Is to ensure processes are in place for school staff to contact parents on the same day as an absence from school.

### 3.3.3 Authorised absences:

- Must determine the absence category in accordance with EduPoint Attendance Categories, and Section 4.1.4 Absence Categories.
- May request further evidence from parents such as a statutory declaration or a medical certificate relating to explained student absences for students in Kinder to Year 12, where a student accrues the equivalent of five full days of unauthorised absences in a school year.

### 3.3.4 Authorised Persons

- A principal may apply to the Secretary, DECYP for the appointment of an Authorised Person under the *Education Act 2016*. The application must be made using the approved Authorised Person App.
- Authorised Persons have certain powers and functions to investigate unauthorised absences under the *Education Act 2016.* For more detail refer to Section 4.4 of this Procedure.

### 3.3.5 Part-time attendance

- Must ensure that the parent has initiated the application process for part-time attendance.
- May initiate discussions with the parent/s surrounding the possibility of utilising a part-time attendance arrangement where this is in the best interests of the student. In this conversation principals must make it clear that this process requires parental support to initiate the application process.
- Must ensure each part-time arrangement is reviewed with the parent/s, at least once each school term, and appropriate records are maintained at a school level (including a Learning Plan for students in K-12).
- Must provide a written statement attached to each application for part-time attendance, ensuring the statement meets the following requirements:
  - indicates support or otherwise for the part-time attendance application
  - demonstrates the school's re-engagement strategies for resumption of full-time attendance and the supervision of the student while not at school
  - demonstrates comprehensive reasons as to why the part-time attendance at school is, or is not, in the student's best interests and the outcomes that are anticipated
  - shows that, where appropriate, other departments or agencies are supporting the student and the school
  - ensures that Professional Support Staff supporting statement/medical certificate is provided as supporting evidence (depending on reason).
- Must refer all applications for part-time attendance for approval to the relevant deputy secretary through email to parttimeattendance@decyp.tas.gov.au.
- Must ensure all applications for part-time attendance have a direct link to the student's Learning Plan.

### 3.3.6 International students

- Government Education and Training International (GETI) is the business unit within DECYP responsible for managing the international education program in Tasmanian Government schools.
- In order to monitor attendance for international students, including those on Student Visas (subclass 500), principals must ensure:
  - that international student attendance and other records are managed in the same manner as all other students

- that satisfactory attendance is maintained as required in student visa conditions (If not the Australian Government requires the school to work with GETI to be proactive in notifying and counselling students on visa subclass 500 who are at risk of failing to meet attendance requirements.)
- that GETI is aware and can report any visa subclass 500 students who have breached attendance requirements
- that the school completes the steps to manage visa subclass 500 student attendance detailed in the International Student Attendance Policy and Procedure.

- Students who are Temporary Resident Program students are not subject to additional requirements under the International Student Attendance Policy and Procedure, and attendance must be managed in the same manner as other domestic students.

## 3.4 Teachers

- Record attendance for any classes which they are responsible for teaching, in accordance with Section 4.1, ensuring to:
  - record attendance at the start of the first lesson taught each day
  - record class attendance for every class taught throughout the day*.

    **In the case of primary schools or district/high schools, this may involve the use of the Inheritance feature. To ensure students are 'known, safe, well and learning' steps to ensure attendance is validated or recorded must occur after each break in scheduled classes (for instance, recess and lunch) or for each Year 11 and 12 class.*
- Must accurately record attendance data by using the codes at EduPoint Attendance Categories.
- Must follow steps outlined in Section 4.2 How to Excuse a Student from Attendance when a student is absent (or ensure a member of the school's administrative staff completes these steps).
- For Years 11 and 12 students, make arrangements for students to access learning and course materials for content missed due to absences.

## 3.5 Relief teachers

- Must record attendance in line with the school's practices, and with direction from the principal or school business manager (SBM).
- May request from the SBM to be allocated a temporary user profile so they can complete attendance related tasks in the school system.

## 3.6 School Business Managers

- Must ensure school staff follow up unexplained absences for students enrolled at their school.
- May use MyLogin to create a temporary account in their school for access to systems (for example, SARIS, edi, EduPoint).

- May allocate a temporary role to relief staff by resetting the password and providing to the relief teacher.
- Where temporary roles are not utilised, may provide relief teachers with paper class lists to mark attendance, with administrative staff entering the data.
- Must ensure that school staff maintain a student's individual timetable based on their personalised Learning Plan if required.

## 3.7 Authorised Person

- Has functions and powers to investigate unauthorised absences.
- Must undertake training set out in the Authorised Person App before carrying out the function of an Authorised Person.
- Must follow any DECYP policies and procedures, and any school-based policy or process, including but not limited to the Safeguarding Framework policies relating to the transporting of a school-aged child or young person in a vehicle.
- Must contact the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line on 1800 000 123 if repeated failure to attend school raises any concerns a student may be experiencing abuse, neglect or other risks to their safety and wellbeing.
- Must have their ID card on them when undertaking the functions of an Authorised Person and when approaching a person in their function must show their ID card.
- May be engaged to resolve the unauthorised absences where it would assist the school to do so.
- May:
  - approach any person who appears to be under the age of 18 years and is apparently not in attendance at a school or an Approved Learning Program
  - request the person approached to provide:
    - their name, age and address
    - the name and address of the school or the provider of the Approved Learning Program normally attended by the person approached
    - the reason for being absent from school or the Approved Learning Program.
- In an extreme circumstance, to ensure the wellbeing of a student, an Authorised Person may accompany any person approached to their home, or to the school or the relevant provider of the Approved Learning Program specified by the person approached, to verify the information provided.
- Where an Authorised Person accompanies a person to their home, school or relevant provider they must:
  - gain consent from a parent or parents
  - travel with another DECYP staff member
  - consider any further guidance surrounding transportation from the Legal Services Toolkit for Schools, Colleges and CFLCs.

- In investigating an unauthorised absence, or suspected unauthorised absence of a school-aged child or young person, an Authorised Person may:
  - approach a parent of the child or young person
  - require the parent to explain the reason that the child or young person is, or was, absent from school or an Approved Learning Program.

## 3.8 Registrar, Education

- Is responsible for managing compulsory conciliation conference processes for absences from school.
- May issue a recommendation to the Principal Officer, Non-attendance to issue a Compulsory Schooling Order, following the re-convening of a compulsory conciliation conference.
- Develops process and guidelines associated with compulsory conciliation conferences.

## 3.9 School Social Workers

- Work with schools and parents to reduce barriers to attendance, including by:
  - providing school leadership with an insight into community context, which may be utilised to reduce barriers to attendance
  - providing a comment on each application for part-time attendance
  - ensuring, where a student has repeated absences, the development of strategies to intervene and re-engage the student prior to referral for additional Learning Services supports.

## 3.10 Student Support Leaders

- Provide support for school leaders and School Support and Wellbeing Teams to develop and embed strategies for student attendance and engagement.
- May work with School Support and Wellbeing Teams to encourage attendance and engagement of individual students.
- Work with Student Support and Wellbeing Teams to build the capability of members to address absences at a system level.
- Must consider a referral from a principal to the Registrar, Education and will convene/nominate the DECYP Referral Panel (refer to Section 3.13) to assess the application.

## 3.11 Administrative staff

- May assist others to record student absence/presence in EduPoint.
- Must follow steps outlined in Section 4.2 How to Excuse a Student from Attendance when a student is absent (or ensure the student's teacher completes these steps).

## 3.12 Principal Officer, Non-attendance

- The Principal Officer, Non-attendance is appointed under Section 215 of the *Education Act 2016.*

- The Principal Officer, Non-attendance may issue a Compulsory Schooling Order to require school attendance.
- The Principal Officer, Non-attendance must not issue a Compulsory Schooling Order without a recommendation from the Registrar, Education following the re-convening of a compulsory conciliation conference.
- Where a Compulsory Schooling Order is unsuccessful in addressing attendance-related issues, the school and Principal Officer – Non-attendance may issue instructions to commence enforcement through court proceedings.

## 3.13 Referral Panel

- Assesses applications prior to a referral of a student to the Registrar, Education for a compulsory conciliation conference.
- On assessing an application for referring a student for a conciliation conference the panel, must ensure that the school has followed attendance and engagement processes and considered all reasonable strategies to re-engage the student.
- Must decide to:
  - provide advice to the school as to further re-engagement strategies to be undertaken OR
  - refer the matter to the Registrar, Education.*

    **Whilst the Referral Panel may refer an application, the decision to conduct a compulsory conciliation conference rests with the Registrar, Education.*
- Considers the Guidelines for Schools: Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference.

# 4 Process

- This Procedure provides information to support schools to record student attendance accurately and in a timely manner, to enable identification of suitable interventions or additional supports to promote consistent student attendance.
- This process identifies:
  - how to record attendance
  - how to excuse a student from attendance
  - how to manage absences
  - the process for part-time attendance.

## 4.1 How to record attendance

- Principals have duty of care for every student while they are attending school at the required times under the *Education Act 2016*.

- Principals are required to keep a register recording the daily attendance or absence of each student, to ensure that the school can identify those students who are attending and those who are not.
- Where a student or parent has indicated an intention to transfer to another school (including interstate or overseas), the school is to maintain the enrolment in accordance with the Enrolment Procedure and is to record daily attendance until the school has received written notification from the new school that the student has an active enrolment at the new school.

### 4.1.1 Requirement to record attendance

- Where 'inheritance' is enabled in EduPoint:
  - The school may elect to routinely record attendance at other times of the day.
  - The school must update attendance if a student's attendance status has changed since it was last recorded.
  - Where 'inheritance' is not enabled in EduPoint, the school must record attendance for every session that a student is timetabled throughout the day*.

    **In the case of primary schools or district/high schools, this may involve the use of the Inheritance feature. To ensure students are 'known, safe, well and learning' steps to ensure attendance is validated or recorded must occur after each break in scheduled classes (for instance, recess and lunch) or for each Year 11 and 12 class.*
- A student is present when:
  - The student is in class.
  - The student is, for example, off campus on an excursion, attending a work experience/placement activity, or visiting another school as part of an endorsed school activity.
- A student is absent whenever they are not attending their scheduled class, or another alternative authorised activity, even if they are on campus.
- All present and absent EduPoint categories can be found at EduPoint Attendance Categories.
- Where an explanation is provided by a parent that is not outlined in EduPoint Attendance Categories schools must record it as an unauthorised absence.
- If a parent provides a reason for an absence that is not authorised by the *Education Act 2016* or *Ministerial Instruction No 4 Students Excused from Daily Attendance at School* the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

### 4.1.2 School timetables

- Each school may timetable classes using EduPoint. Some secondary schools elect to record homegroup and recess/lunch breaks in order to track attendance throughout the day, although this is not compulsory. Schools may have different timetables for different year cohorts, for example Years 7-10, 11-12 and Virtual Learning Tasmania (VLT) students.
- Schools delivering from Kindergarten to Year 10 are required to record attendance at the start of the first lesson of the day. The first lesson of the day is the first session that a student is required to attend.

- Schools delivering Years 11 and 12 must ensure these students are enrolled in Subject Master List (SML) courses, and attendance is recorded for each class/lesson.
- For example, if the student is a high-school student and they have a 15-min home group at the start of the day this would be the first lesson.
- From time to time schools may decide to have on-site whole-grade or school activities (for instance, a school activity day or sports carnival). Where this occurs schools must use local practice to monitor and record attendance, ensuring that all students are "known, safe, well and learning".

### 4.1.3 Off-campus excursions

- Schools must have systems in place to record attendance at excursions and comply with the Off-Campus Activities Planning Procedures. Section 5.2 outlines the Teacher in Charge is responsible for "*Conducting a head count to ensure that no student is missing which must be completed and recorded in an attendance list before, at relevant times during, and at the completion of the activity*".
- This attendance list must be documented in EduPoint in a timely manner.

### 4.1.4 Absence categories

- There is a list of specific reasons for a student to be authorised as absent from school under the *Education Act 2016*.
- Where a student arrives at school late or leaves school early they must be recorded as "Arrived Late" or "Left Early" respectively in EduPoint for the session which they partially attended.
- A parent must provide an explanation as to why a student is absent from school and may be required to provide further support evidence (on request from a principal).
- A student may be authorised as absent from daily attendance at a school for a period deemed reasonable by the principal where the student is:
  - sick or incapacitated, where the school has been notified of the reason within five days
  - suffering an infestation or disease that is categorised by the Director of Public Health as infectious, contagious, or harmful
  - directed by the principal, on advice from the Director of Public Health, to not attend school (For more information please telephone the Public Health Service hotline on 1800 671 738 or visit the Department of Health website.)
  - absent due to other excusable circumstances in Section 3.1 of *Ministerial Instruction No 4 Students Excused from Daily Attendance at School* (such as a significant family event, natural disaster and so on).
- A staff member must attempt to contact a parent on the day for each occasion where a student is absent and the reason is unexplained. Such an attempt may include:
  - an email or text message to a parent advising of absence and seeking an explanation
  - telephoning a parent
  - contacting a parent through the school's preferred method (for example Dojo or Seesaw).

- If the absence is still unexplained by the end of the term, the school may contact parents on all outstanding unexplained absences to obtain explanations.
- If a student's absences raise any safety or wellbeing concerns, including concerns of abuse and neglect, staff must contact the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL) on 1800 000 123 in accordance with the Mandatory Reporting Procedure. Making a report may prevent an occurrence, or further occurrences, of harm.
- When administrative staff (or teaching staff) first contact a parent about a student's unexplained absence:
  - If the reason provided by the parent is sickness or another excusable circumstance the administrative staff (or teaching staff) must record it in EduPoint as an authorised absence, using the appropriate category from the EduPoint Attendance Categories, and add an attendance note with brief explanation provided by the parent if necessary.
  - If the reason provided by the parent is not an excusable circumstance that can be authorised (for example, student is absent because it is their birthday), the administrative staff (or teaching staff) must record it as an unauthorised absence using the appropriate category, and add an attendance note with a brief explanation provided by the parent.
  - If the parent is unable to be contacted the administrative staff (or teaching staff) must record the absence as unauthorised using the unexplained by parent/carer category, and add an attendance note with the time and date of the unsuccessful contact.
- When teaching staff/support staff are following up unauthorised absences:
  - They must access student absences records and attendance notes in EduPoint. (The EduPoint report *AT002 Student Listing of Daily Absences* can be used to get a list of student absence records and attendance notes for the current school year.)
  - They must enter details of all conversations with parents surrounding absences (including unsuccessful attempts to speak with parents) in the contact log in the Student Support System (SSS).

### 4.1.5 Overview of absence categories with examples

| Example | How schools will record the absence with the appropriate EduPoint Category |
|---|---|
| A student is absent sick for fewer than 5 total days per school year and the school is notified within 5 days for each day's absence. | Explained - Sickness/Incapacity (E) |
| A student is absent sick for fewer than 5 total days per school year and the school is not notified within 5 days of each day's absence, or at all. | Unauthorised - Unexplained by parent/carer (U) |
| A student is bereaving a person of close, significant or family relationship for a period the principal considers reasonable and the school is notified within five days of each day's absence | Explained – Other (O) |

| Example | How schools will record the absence with the appropriate EduPoint Category |
|---|---|
| A student is absent sick for 6 or more days (not necessarily consecutive) per school year, and:<br>• the school does not request a medical certificate or statutory declaration<br>• or the school requests a medical certificate or statutory declaration and the parent member provides it. | Explained – Sickness/Incapacity (E) |
| A student is absent sick for 6 or more days (not necessarily consecutive) per school year, and the school requests a medical certificate or statutory declaration, and the parent does not provide it. | Unauthorised – Not an Excusable Circumstance (X) |
| A student comes to school but is not attending a specific class that they should be. | Unauthorised – Truant (T). |

### 4.1.6 Further evidence to explain absence

- Section 19(2) of the *Education Act 2016* provides that if a student has failed to attend at a school because of sickness or incapacity for a total of 5 days in any school year a parent is to provide a certificate from a medical practitioner in relation to any further failure to attend because of sickness or incapacity if requested to do so by the school's principal.
- This request is discretionary based on a principal seeking further evidence. Given significant delays and costs associated in seeing a local general practitioner (GP), the principal should consider a number of factors prior to requesting further evidence, including:
    - whether the principal believes an explanation of a student's absence is likely to be true (For instance, where a student was sighted at a movie cinema that day it is unlikely to be true.)
    - length of consecutive absences (for example greater than five consecutive school days, or consecutive absences from particular classes)
    - number of period/s of absence
    - where a regular pattern of absence is emerging (in the context of Years 11 and 12 this may account for particular class absences)
    - access and costs associated with attending the local General Practitioner (GP)
    - current illness/es circulating in the school community and the advice of the Director, Public Health
    - other family circumstances of which the principal or School Support and Wellbeing Team is aware.
- The principal may request additional evidence, such as a statutory declaration from a parent, to confirm the explanation.
- Instead of requesting additional evidence a principal may consider having a conversation with the student's parent/s to discuss reasons for absence and methods for re-engagement:

- School administrative staff may mark the absence as “Unauthorised – Unexplained by parent/carer (U)” until the requested evidence is provided.

- Evidence provided or requested may include:
  - a medical certificate from a medical practitioner
  - a statutory declaration from a parent.
- If the principal requests evidence (such as a certificate from a medical practitioner or a statutory declaration) the parent must provide this evidence for the student to be marked as away from school as “Explained – Sickness/Incapacity (EduPoint Code E)”.
- If a principal requests evidence and this is not provided the absence must be marked as “Unauthorised – Not an excusable circumstance (MI4) (EduPoint Code X)”.
- Principals must not accept a medical certificate that does not specify an end date.

## 4.2 How to manage frequent absences

- Identifying and responding to absences enables schools to offer appropriate follow-up supports to students and parents regarding a student’s attendance and empowers principals to adopt early-intervention strategies to address absences.
- Frequent unexplained absences may indicate a student is experiencing abuse or neglect, including child sexual abuse or harmful sexual behaviour.
- All staff must be aware of the signs and take reasonable steps to prevent and respond to concerns, incidents or disclosures of abuse and neglect. The Mandatory Reporting Procedure provides guidance on signs of child abuse and neglect, on how to respond to a child that discloses abuse or neglect and on how to make a report to the ARL.

### 4.2.1 Non-attendance letters

- When a student has the equivalent of five, ten or fifteen days of unauthorised absence (not necessarily consecutive), the Student Support System (SSS) will generate an email to the principal advising that the absence threshold has been breached and will add an alert to the principal’s ‘To Do’ list.
- Principals should have considered/discussed strategies for re-engagement of a student with the School Social Worker prior to SSS generating a 15-day non-attendance letter.
- Principals may determine whether a non-attendance letter is sent.
- Principals may know of extenuating circumstances and/or may wish to discuss the non-attendance with a parent in a less formal manner, before or instead of the issuing of a non-attendance letter.
- Where the letter is dismissed the reason must be recorded in the student’s Contact Log as a Quick Note.
- If the principal determines to send a letter it must be generated from SSS.
- A signed copy of the letter and attachments must be uploaded to the student’s SSS file.
- The letter must be posted, delivered or emailed to the parent/s.

### 4.2.2 Strategies to improve attendance and reduce absence

- Strategies to reduce absence work best when other foundational supports and conditions are present in schools. These may include conditions that are rooted in relationship-building and relevant and engaging curriculum and pedagogical practices. These strategies will look different in different contexts and for individual students. High levels of absenteeism can be indicators that these positive conditions have not been established or have deteriorated. Schools should ensure that foundational preconditions for improved attendance are in place, prior to implementing strategies for re-engagement / reducing absence.
- Schools must begin implementation of a whole-school approach to improving attendance and reducing absence and establish a multi-tiered system of supports framework for attendance. Strategies to reduce absence will vary depending on the student and the reasons behind the absence. Schools must consult with their School Support and Wellbeing Team and reference Every school day matters: A framework for improving attendance and reducing absence when considering strategies to reduce absence.
- Generally, principals or teachers attempt to resolve a student's unauthorised absences before referring the student's absence to the School Support and Wellbeing Team. After fifteen days of unauthorised absences principals should consider the Guidelines for Schools: Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference in deciding whether they feel a compulsory conciliation conference is an appropriate re-engagement strategy for the student.
- Further strategies for re-engagement are available in:
  - Every School Day Matters: Developing an Attendance Inquiry
  - Every School Day Matters: A Framework for Improving Attendance and Reducing Absence.

### 4.2.3 Senior secondary re-engagement and interaction with the Youth Participation Database

- The Youth Participation Database (YPD) provides a mechanism for DECYP following up students who have not physically attended or been marked present, despite being enrolled in Year 11 or 12.
- The YPD does not focus on absences, but rather looks to focus on students with an inactive enrolment after Year 10 to ensure they are engaged in their Approved Learning Program.
- For more information refer to the YPD Policy, the YPD Procedure or refer to the YPD Engagement and Reengagement Flowchart.

### 4.2.4 How to refer a student's absence to the Registrar, Education

- The Registrar, Education was established under the *Education Act 2016* to help resolve reasons for students' continued unauthorised absences from school. A compulsory conciliation conference is a process whereby students, parents and principals can discuss and agree to a resolution to support a student to attend school.
- If a student's absence/s raises any safety or wellbeing concerns, including concerns of abuse or neglect, staff must contact the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (ARL)

on 1800 000 123 in accordance with the Mandatory Reporting Procedure. Making a report may prevent an occurrence, or further occurrences, of harm.

- After fifteen days of unauthorised absences please refer to the Guidelines for Schools: Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference, in considering whether a compulsory conciliation conference is an appropriate re-engagement strategy for the student.
- At any time, a principal, or person authorised by the principal, may ask that the Student Support Leader refer a student's unauthorised absences to the Registrar, Education to conduct a compulsory conciliation conference.
- To make this request, the principal must complete the Compulsory Conciliation Conference Application Form. The School Social Worker, on-call social worker, or Senior Social Worker is required to provide a summary of the School Social Worker's intervention as part of this application.
- Where a principal refers a student's unauthorised absences to the Student Support Leader the Student Support Leader will nominate a panel of DECYP delegates ('the Referral Panel') to assess the application/s.
- In completing the application form the principal is to review the Guidelines for Schools: Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference to understand the relevant material required for a referral and the requirement to engage with a School Social Worker to help re-engage the student.
- The principal must send the Compulsory Conciliation Conference Application Form to Learning Services.
- This is to be done through emailing the completed form to the relevant email address (Learning Services Northern Region: learning.services.nr@decyp.tas.gov.au; Southern Region: learning.services.s@decyp.tas.gov.au), in doing so ensuring:
  - that signatures are obtained from the School Social Worker, on-call social worker or Senior Social Worker on the application form
  - that the application includes the information specified in Section 3.2.3 of the *Ministerial Instructions No 6 Relating to School Student Absences* and any other matters prescribed by the Registrar, Education including the Guidelines for Schools: Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference.
- The Referral panel will either:
  - accept the request and refer the application form and request form to the Registrar, Education and copy to the principal
  - not accept the request and, where deemed necessary, a delegate will contact the school to discuss other potential student re-engagement options with the school to exhaust the school's supports.

### 4.2.5 Compulsory conciliation conference

- The Registrar, Education is an independent statutory position responsible for the compulsory conciliation conference process. The Registrar will determine if the matter is suitable for a compulsory conciliation conference and will appoint an independent conciliator to run the process.

- If the Registrar, Education accepts a referral, they will require the parent, the principal and/or any other person involved in supporting the student to attend a conciliation conference to work through the reasons contributing to unauthorised absences.
- The compulsory conciliation conference will provide everyone with an opportunity to discuss the reasons for the student's absence, and what can be done to assist the student to attend school every day, or agreed part-time provision. The conciliation conferences are designed to be helpful and to offer support to resolve any problems and to assist to find ways to improve the student's attendance.
- Where a compulsory conciliation conference results in the agreement recommending a part-time attendance arrangement this must be processed in accordance with Section 4.3 below (for instance, use of an Adjustment of Hours in first instance and lodging an application for part-time attendance).

## 4.3 How to process applications for part-time attendance

- It can be in the best interests of some students to attend school on a less than full-time basis.
- A Certificate of Part-time Attendance may be issued for up to two school terms. This is to ensure that a student's part-time attendance is still in the best interests of the child and is subject to regular reviews.
- After a Certificate of Part-time Attendance is issued for two school terms an application for further Part-time Attendance may occur in accordance with Section 4.3.1.
- Adjustment of Hours: A parent may initiate an Adjustment of Hours. The length of this adjustment must not exceed one consecutive school term and must occur in accordance with the Learning Plan Procedure.
- An Adjustment of Hours may be used prior to or while an application for Part-time Attendance is being processed.
- Details must be recorded within the Learning Plan Tab in the Case Management Platform (CMP) – refer to the Learning Plan Procedure.
- Only a parent (or independent student) can initiate an application for a student to attend part-time.
- Students may also attend school less than full-time when the student is home educated (with relevant approval under the *Education Act 2016*).

### 4.3.1 Application for part-time attendance

- A parent may initiate an application for part-time attendance by completing the Part-time Attendance Form. A school must not make an application without the parent initiating it.
- A school may initiate a discussion with parent/s surrounding the possibility of utilising part-time attendance to transition a student towards full-time attendance but must make it clear that this process requires the parent to initiate the application process.
- If a parent does not support an application for part-time attendance the school must continue to work with the parent to achieve the best educational outcomes for the child or young person.
- An application must attach any relevant supporting evidence including strategies the school has implemented or is working towards, and detailing why the application is in the best interests of the child. This must be accompanied by a "written statement" from a School Social Worker (or similar as outlined below) and principal:

- If you need access to one of these staff members, please contact the Senior Social Worker in your school's contact network or email partimeattendance@decyp.tas.gov.au.

- Where an application for part-time attendance is made following a recommendation in a compulsory conciliation agreement the "written statement" from a School Social Worker may refer to this recommendation as evidence that the application is in the student's best interests.
- If a School Social Worker is not available, the "written statement" may be provided by another professional such as a School Psychologist, an Inclusive Practice Coach, external psychologist or social worker, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) practitioners, medical practitioner or similar.
- Medical evidence supporting a part-time attendance application will be considered in conjunction with the professional advice on the 'best interests of the child or young person', which is to be provided by the School Support and Wellbeing Team and included in the application.
- The completed application form must be emailed by the school to parttimeattendance@decyp.tas.gov.au.
- Completed applications will be assessed within three weeks. If more information is required to support the application the process may take longer.
- The part-time attendance commences on the date specified on the returned Certificate of Part-time Attendance issued by the deputy secretary (schools may use an Adjustment of Hours prior, as detailed in Section 4.3).
- The Certificate of Part-time Attendance establishes the minimum number of hours; however, schools do not need to apply to increase a student's hours above this minimum (but must re-apply after two terms).
- While an application is being considered schools may be using an Adjustment of Hours under a Learning Plan provided the conditions in Section 4.3 are met.
- Where a student increases their hours under an approved part-time attendance schools must ensure that a student's attendance is appropriately timetabled and recorded.
- The application for part-time attendance may require or document other alternative learning arrangements or other learning-from-home arrangements to support part-time attendance (for example NDIS support, Targeted Youth Support Services [TYSS]).
- Certificates of Part-time Attendance will be issued for a maximum of two school terms; however, they may be issued for less where the application specifically states this and/or where the deputy secretary agrees.

### 4.3.2 Review of part-time attendance

- At least once per term, the principal must review each part-time attendance arrangement.
- The principal must consult with parent/s as part of this review.
- If, following consultation, both the principal and parent/s agree that the part-time attendance arrangement should be altered with a reduction in hours then a new application must be submitted to the deputy secretary at parttimeattendance@decyp.tas.gov.au.
- Parents have a right to request that the part-time attendance arrangement stop. If, following consultation, both the principal and parent agree that the approval should be revoked, the principal must email the deputy secretary at parttimeattendance@decyp.tas.gov.au.

## 4.4 How to appoint an Authorised Person

- Authorised Persons can be appointed under Section 40 of the *Education Act 2016* and may be used by schools to assist in the investigation of an unauthorised or suspected unauthorised absence of a school-aged child or young person from a school or Approved Learning Program. The information collected from an Authorised Person's investigations could also be provided at a compulsory conciliation conference.
- Schools are not required to request an Authorised Person be appointed; however, they may choose to where it may assist with managing unauthorised absences in accordance with the school's local practices to re-engage students who have repeated unauthorised absences.
- Where a school seeks to appoint an Authorised Person under the *Education Act 2016*, the Authorised Person/s must act in accordance with any policy of DECYP or school policy and must undertake an e-learning training module before carrying out their duties.
- The *Education Act 2016* provides Authorised Persons with the authority to approach school-aged children or young people who are not at school to determine whether they should be at school, and to take steps to help them return to school where that is appropriate.
- Authorised Persons may also approach a parent of a child or young person and ask that the parent explain the reason that the child or young person is or was absent from school or an Approved Learning Program.
- Authorised Persons are managed through the Authorised Person App.

### 4.4.1 Appointment

- A person who is appointed as an Authorised Person must be someone who is likely to be known to a school-aged child or young person and must be an employee of DECYP:
  - For example, an Authorised Person may be a School Social Worker who is known to and has a relationship with students, and who has experience working with students and parents to resolve unauthorised absences.
- The person nominated must be considered by the principal at the school at which the person works to have the skills and attributes deemed appropriate to undertake the role of an Authorised Person.

### 4.4.2 Identification and requirements

- The Secretary, DECYP may authorise a person to be an Authorised Person.
- The Authorised Person will be issued with an ID card valid for 3 years bearing their photograph and must carry this ID card at all times while performing the role.
- The Authorised Person must present their ID card to anyone that they contact for the purpose of investigating any unauthorised or suspected unauthorised absence of any school-aged child or young person from a school or an Approved Learning Program.
- The Authorised Person must keep a record of any contact made and conversations had with any persons as part of their investigation.
- An Authorised Person does not have authority to restrain a school-aged child or young person. (Refer to the Restrictive Practices Policy and Procedure.)

- For questions about Authorised Persons, please contact the Learning Services, Manager Professional Support Staff.

# 5 Related policies

- Approved Learning Programs: Requirements and Guidance for Youth Engagement in Post-Year 10 Education and Training
- Attendance Policy
- Duty of Care Policy (under development)
- International Student Attendance Policy (Under Development)
- Restrictive Practices Policy
- Student Engagement Policy
- VET in Schools Policy
- Work-based Learning Policy
- Youth Participation Database Policy

# 6 Related procedures

- Duty of Care for Students on Departmental Educational Sites Procedure [Staff Only]
- Enrolment Procedure [Staff Only]
- International Student Attendance Procedure (Under Development)
- Learning Plan Procedure [Staff Only]
- Mandatory Reporting Procedure
- Procedures for Planning Off Campus Activities [Staff Only]
- Restrictive Practices Procedure
- Student Engagement Procedure [Staff Only]
- Work-based Learning Procedure [Staff Only]
- VET in Schools Procedure [Staff Only]
- Youth Participation Database Procedure [Staff Only]

# 7 Supporting information/tools

- Attendance - EduPoint Resources Intranet Page [Staff Only]
- Authorised Person App – manages the appointment process including required training and delivery of the ID Card [Staff Only]
- Authorised Persons Parent Fact Sheet
- Compulsory Conciliation Application Form

- Department for Education, Children and Young People Strategic Plan 2024-2030
- EduPoint Attendance Categories [Staff Only]
- Every school day matters: Developing an attendance inquiry
- Every school day matters: A framework for improving attendance and reducing absence
- Government Education and Training International
- Guidelines for Referring a Matter for a compulsory conciliation conference [Staff Only]
- Legal Issues Toolkit
- Office of the Education Registrar – Compulsory conciliation conferences Information for Schools
- Our Approach to School Improvement
- Parent Fact Sheet – Attendance
- Part-time Attendance Form
- *Safe. Secure. Supported.* Our Safeguarding Framework
- Senior Secondary SML (Subject Master List) Guide
- Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Website
- Together with Families Approach
- Youth Participation Database: Youth Engagement and Re-engagement School Process [Staff Only]

# 8 Definitions

**Authorised Person**

- Refers to a person appointed by the Secretary, with functions and powers to investigate unauthorised absences, as set out in Section 40 of the *Education Act 2016*.

**Government school**

- Means a State school, as defined in the *Education Act 2016*.

**Independent student**

- A school-aged child or youth who is living independently from their parents.

**International student**

- An international student is someone who pays international student tuition fees, holds a primary visa (subclass 500), and must adhere to the visa compliance conditions under the ESOS Act. They are participants in the GETI international student program. Their enrolment is exclusive to CRICOS-accredited schools and they are governed by this policy.

**Multi-tiered system of supports framework for attendance**

- A multi-tiered systems of supports framework may include analysis of behaviour, suspension, wellbeing and engagement data, and identification and implementation of data and evidence-informed informed interventions, in order to improve attendance and reduce absence.

**Non-government school**

- A school, other than a State school, that provides educational instruction at any level up to and including the final year of secondary education.

**Parent**

- As defined in Section 5 of the Education Act 2016, a parent includes:
  - a legal guardian of a child
  - another person who has the care, control or custody of a child
  - another person who generally acts in the place of a parent of a child and has done so for a significant length of time (including an Independent Student).

**School-aged child**

- A child aged 5-18 years, who has not been issued with a transition statement during Year 10.other than an overseas student, who –

  (a) is required under section 11(1) *Education Act 2016* to be enrolled at a school (or provided with home education

  (b) would be required under section 11(1) *Education Act 2016* to be enrolled at a school or provided with home education, if not exempted under Part 3.

**Supervised duty**

- The locations and times, as determined by the principal, at which staff have a duty of care for students.

**Temporary Resident Program students**

- These are students named as dependents on their parents' visas. Typically, their parents are in Tasmania for study or work, or they might be refugees with a humanitarian or protection visa. In some cases, these students might have a subclass 600 tourist visa, which permits short-term study of less than three months. Although they might be informally referred to as 'international students', they are not governed by the ESOS Act. They can attend any school in Tasmania, provided they meet the same local area qualifications as local students.

**Years 11 and 12**

- Includes Students who are enrolled in Years 11, 12 or Year 13 in a Government school.

# 9 Legislation

- *Education Act 2016*
- *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth)*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 3 for Part-Time Attendance at School*

- *Ministerial Instruction No 4 Students Excused from Daily Attendance at School*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 5 for Authorising a Person to Act as an Authorised Person for the Purposes of sections 40(2) and 40(3)*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 6 Relating to School Student Absences*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 7 for Elimination or Amelioration of Risks to Health and Safety of Persons at School*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 10 Application Exemption Participation in Approved Learning Program*
- *Ministerial Instruction No 11 for Application for Part Time Attendance at an Approved Learning Program*
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*
- *Secretary's Instruction No 5 for Managing Absences in a State school that are not Authorised by the Education Act (2016)*
- *Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003*

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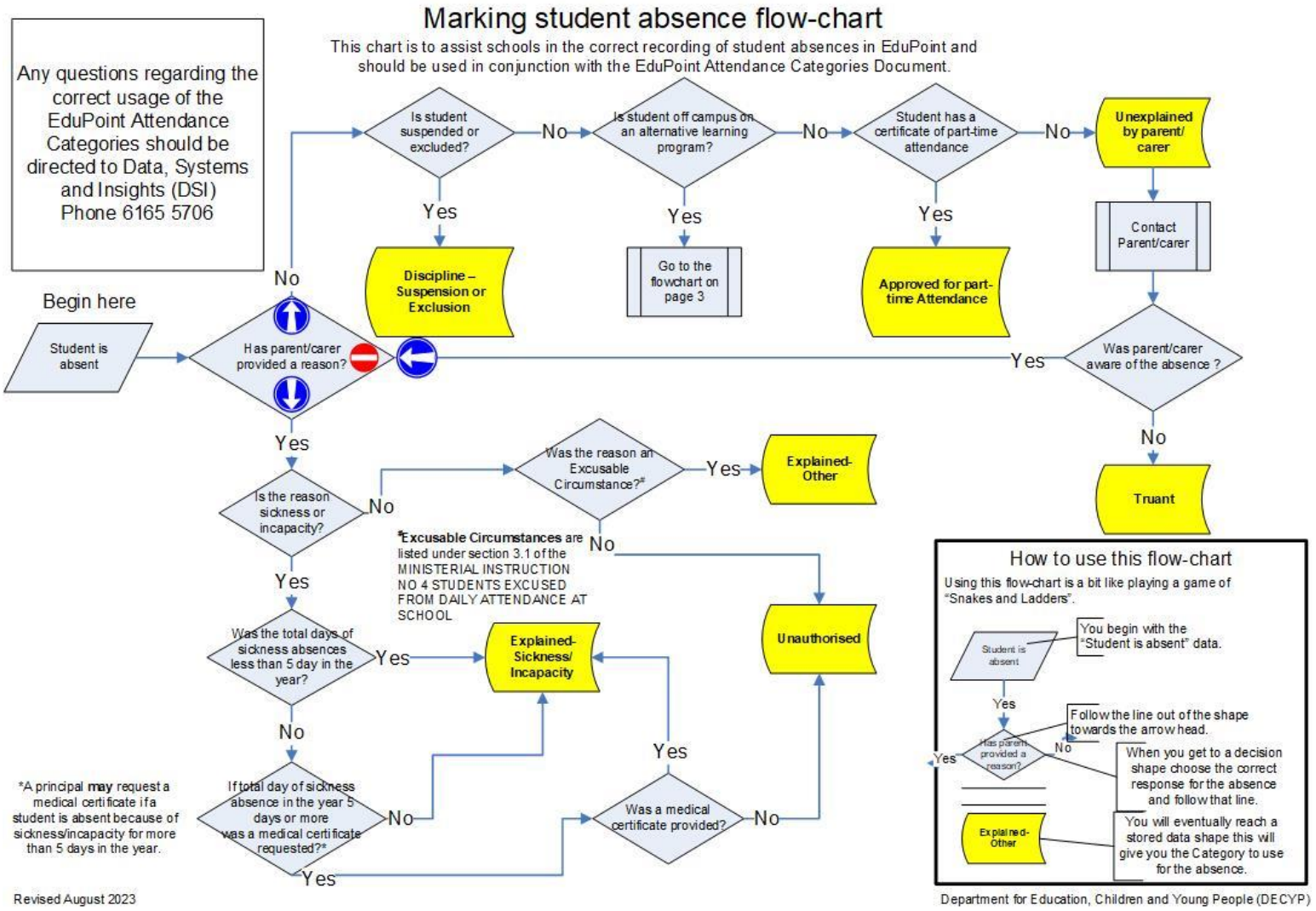
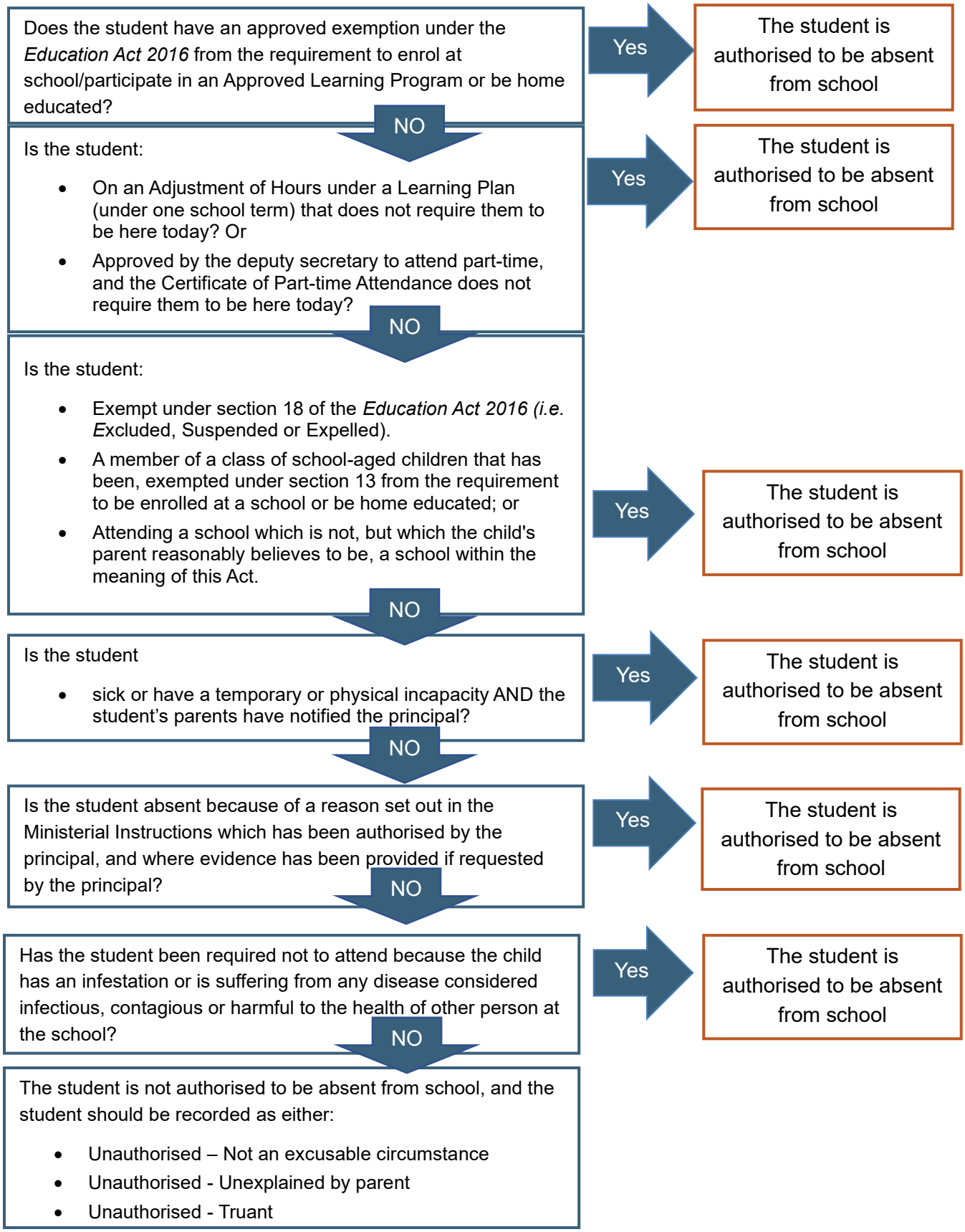
|---|
| **Authorised by:** Trudy Pearce, Deputy Secretary for Schools and Early Years |
| **Contact:** Strategic Policy and Projects: SPP.admin@decyp.tas.gov.au |
| **Last significant review:** 21 November 2023 |
| **Review due:** 21 November 2027 |
| **This document replaces:** Attendance Policy and Procedure |

# Appendix A - Student Absence Flowchart



# Appendix B - Attendance Flowchart for School Business Managers and Administrative Staff