East Preston Islamic College

ATTENDANCE
POLICY

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Last Review: April 2023	**Constructed / Reviewed by:** East Preston Islamic College on advice from Russell Kennedy Lawyers
Next Review: April 2025 (and every two years thereafter in accordance with the College's review cycle, or more frequently as required)	**Approval Required:** Leadership Team
	Approval Date: April 2023

1 Statement of Context and Purpose

1.1 East Preston Islamic College (the **College**) is committed to the success and wellbeing of all students. Daily attendance at school is important for students to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind socially or developmentally.

1.2 College participation and attendance:

    1.2.1 maximises life opportunities for students by providing them with education and support networks;

    1.2.2 helps students develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community; and

    1.2.3 contributes to students' academic success and helps them develop habits of punctuality, self-discipline and responsibility.

1.3 The *Education Training and Reform Act 2006* (Vic) (the **Act**) sets out requirements for enrolment and attendance of students at school in Victoria. While there are some exceptions, generally speaking, children of compulsory school age (not less than 6 and no more than 17 years of age) are required to be enrolled in, and attend, school or be registered for home schooling.

1.4 Under the Act and school registration requirements overseen by the Victorian Regulations and Qualifications Authority (**VRQA**), independent schools are responsible for monitoring, recording, and following up student absences as well as implementing intervention strategies to improve student engagement and school attendance. The College is committed to acting in accordance with its legal obligations and requirements regarding school attendance.

1.5 Accordingly, this policy sets out the College's expectations and processes regarding student attendance and absences.

1.6 The College strives to:

    1.6.1 ensure that all students who are enrolled at the College attend every school day;

    1.6.2 ensure students, staff and parents have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school;

    1.6.3 explain to staff and parents the procedures that the College has in place to:

        (a) support, monitor and maintain student attendance; and

(b)   record, monitor and follow up student absences.

2   Attendance Procedures

2.1   The College's procedures for monitoring attendance include:

2.1.1   Maintaining a register of enrolments.

2.1.2   Roll marking in accordance with the College's internal procedures and promptly recording attendance electronically (typically via computer, iPad or mobile phone) in the College's online management system.

2.1.3   Monitoring the attendance of each student enrolled at the College:

(a)   at least twice per day in the primary (typically once in the morning and again in the afternoon); and

(b)   every period in the secondary school.

2.1.4   Identifying and recording all absences using in the College's online management system. Absences are then notified to relevant administration staff and cross checked twice daily against absentee notifications that have been provided to the College that day.

2.1.5   Following up on any unexplained or unapproved student absences in accordance with this policy.

2.1.6   Notifying parents of any concerns about a student's poor attendance.

2.1.7   Keeping written recording of a student's unsatisfactory attendance at the College (including on electronic student files).

3   Roles and Responsibilities

3.1   The various roles and responsibilities are outlined in the table below.

Principal	- Provide clear information to staff, students and parents regarding attendance requirements and consequences for unsatisfactory attendance or unapproved absences - Ensure the College has effective procedures to monitor and follow up student absences - Ensure staff are trained to implement the College's attendance policies and procedures (which includes this policy) - Ensure that attendance and enrolment records are maintained in an approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance and enrolment of students - Ensure that attendance data is monitored and chronic absence is followed up appropriately - Ensure strategies are developed to ensure regular school attendance - Follow procedures for approving or disapproving a student's absence from the College

	• Provide support to the Leadership Team regarding chronic absence and attendance improvement plans
	• Refer serious matters regarding student attendance to the relevant authorities
	• Has overall responsibility for following up a student's unsatisfactory attendance with their parents
	The Principal is required to:
	• Ensure the College records attendance at least twice a day in the primary school, and every period in the secondary school
	• Keep written records of all attendances and non-attendances and the reasons for any non-attendance
	• Determine whether an excuse provided by a student's parent for their child's failure to attend school is a reasonable excuse
	• Approve or disapprove absence a student's absence
	• Contact parents and request reason(s) for their child's failure to attend the College where no excuse has been given
	• Provide a School Attendance Officer with any information regarding the enrolment or attendance of students if requested to do so
	• Refer a concern to a School Attendance Officer in the event that the student has been absent from the College on a least 5 separate days in the previous with 12 months without reasonable excuse and interventions/strategies to improve attendance are inappropriate or have been unsuccessful
VicePrincipal	• Provide clear information to staff, students and parents regarding attendance requirements and consequences for unsatisfactory attendance
	• Promote regular attendance at the College
	• Support staff when dealing with parents regarding chronic absences
	• Meet with parents should student attendance fail to improve or become a concern
	• Determine appropriate course of action and interventions to be put in place
	• Liaise with relevant specialists and external agencies
	• Liaise with the Leadership Team and other key staff if a student needs an attendance improvement plans
	• Coordinate the reporting of students at risk to the relevant authorities
	• Keep the Principal informed of serious student attendance issues and support strategies being implemented in response
Leadership Team	• Provide clear information to staff, students and parents regarding attendance requirements and consequences for unsatisfactory attendance
	• Promote regular attendance at the College
	• Regularly monitor attendance data and follow up chronic absences
	• Support staff when dealing with parents regarding student attendance
	• Ensure that attendance concern emails are sent to parents and followed up

	• Meet with parents should student attendance fail to improve or become a concern
	• Determine appropriate course of action and interventions to be put in place
	• Liaise with relevant specialists and external agencies
	• Ensuring staff record information on a student's electronic file, each time information is provided about a student's absence (particularly in the event that the explanation is not deemed to be reasonable)
	• Liaise with the Deputy Principal if the student needs to be placed on a attendance improvement plan
	• Make mandatory reports (as required) should a student's attendance and absence records give rise to such concerns
	• Complete re-entry plans for a student's return to campus following an extended absence
Teachers	• Promote regular attendance at the College
	• Accurately record student attendance in accordance with the College's roll marking procedures
	• Monitor student attendance and follow up absences (including in accordance with this policy)
	• Record information on a student's file, each time information is provided about a student's absence by their parents (particularly in the event that the explanation is not deemed to be reasonable)
	• Discuss attendance concerns with students, parents and appropriate staff members
	• Assist in determining appropriate course of action and interventions to be put in place
	• Assist in determining appropriate course of action and interventions to be put in place
Administrative staff	• Promote regular attendance at the College
	• Record, monitor and maintain accurate attendance records
	• Inform the Leadership Team of frequent late arrival/early departures and/or student absences
	• Support staff when dealing with parents regarding student attendance
	• When required, contact parents regarding absence
	• Disseminate information to staff regarding student absences (including late arrivals and departures)
Parents	• Ensure their child of compulsory school age is enrolled in, and attending College
	• Ensure their child attends school every day that the College is open for attendance, and arrives on time
	• Ensure their child attends every activity of the College that the College requires the child to attend

	• Provide a reasonable excuse to the College for their child's absence on any particular school day. Notification may be provided via email or by telephoning the College and should be made prior to the start of the school day. A reasonable excuse for a student's absence from the College might include (but is not limited to):
	
	    o Illness and accidents;
	
	    o An unforeseen event or circumstances;
	
	    o Attending or observing a religious or cultural event or observation; or
	
	    o The student being suspended as an interim or disciplinary measure.
	
	• Work in partnership with the College to resolve any attendance issues
	
	• Otherwise act in accordance with their legal obligations, and the College's internal policies and procedures regarding their child's attendance at school

Students	• Attend school every day and participate in all classes/excursions/activities as directed by the College • Be punctual to all classes and activities • Seek assistance from staff if there are any issues affecting their attendance • Senior students are required to be proactive in making alternate arrangements with staff regarding VCE assessment tasks if their absenteeism prevents them from completing set tasks on time

4 Following Up Student Absences

4.1 It is essential to maintain connection with young people and their families. This also improves the success rate of maintaining high attendance and reducing chronic absence/school refusal. Accordingly, the College adopts the following strategies when following up on student absences:

Day of absence	Where an absence has not been explained by the mid-morning an SMS text message is forwarded to the student's parents notifying them of the absence and requesting that they immediately contact the College to provide a reason for their child's absence. Where the absence remains unexplained or explained without a reasonable excuse, the student's Homeroom teacher will contact the parents again to follow up. After this, the matter will be reported to the relevant member of the Leadership Team for investigation and follow up.
5 days absent	If a student reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absence in the preceding 12 months, then the College and the Principal will work with the student's parents to implement the appropriate support or intervention to assist the student and ensure they attend school every day and remain at the College during school hours. A relevant member of staff (typically the student's Homeroom teacher) will contact the student's parents (try phone at first instance, then follow up by email) to express concern about the ongoing absence and work out a suitable way forward.

	Staff are required to record any information shared by the student's parents on the student's electronic file.
	The College may also be required to make external reports, referrals and notifications, in accordance with its legal obligations.
15 days absent	The student's parents will receive an email to express concern about the student's extended absence.
	Where appropriate, staff will request that the student and their parents attend a meeting at the College. The purpose of this meeting will be to further understand the student's absence, offer support and work towards the student's prompt return to school.
	If appropriate, the College will implement strategies such as an attendance improvement plan and consider the need for a re-entry meeting prior to the student's return to campus.
20+ days absent	The College will repeat the process outlined above (for 15 days absent). Subject to the circumstances, the College will likely encourage the family to seek professional wellbeing and support services for the student (which may include a mental health plan, if appropriate).

5 Strategies to Encourage Attendance

Attendance Improvement Plan (**AIP**)

5.1 An attendance improvement plan may be used to broadly identify the specific barriers prohibiting the student from attending the College (for example: school refusal, school withdrawal, or truancy), and outlines strategies to address those issues.

5.2 All areas of College life should be considered as part of the AIP planning process. These may include strategies to:

5.2.1 facilitate a gradual transition to College that builds up to full-time attendance and is achievable, plan what the student will be doing, where and with whom;

5.2.2 manage expectations regarding completion of schoolwork and assessments;

5.2.3 ensure a key contact person is established for a regular check-in/check-out;

5.2.4 have a student-friendly 'safe place' to go to if needed;

5.2.5 access appropriate external specialists;

5.2.6 address any additional needs that the student may have (which may involve the College seeking permission from a student's family to liaise and consult with the student's care team and/or appropriate external mental health services or providers);

5.2.7 support social engagement and interactions with peers as part of the re-entry to school process; and

5.2.8 facilitate communication processes between the student, their family and the College.

5.3 Once the AIP has been developed, follow up communication is generally sent to the student's family, attaching a copy of the AIP, along with the actions to be undertaken and

any nominated review date. Where appropriate, the AIP may also be shared directly with the student concerned.

General Strategies

5.4   Some of strategies utilised by the College to improve a student's engagement and attendance may include:

    5.4.1   Discussions with the student and their parent regarding reasons for poor attendance and implementing strategies to support the student in improving their attendance and enhancing their engagement at the College.

        (a)   It is preferable that meetings are conducted face to face, however in rare cases, the College may exercise its discretion and allow this meeting to be conducted remotely (eg. via phone, Zoom or Teams).

        (b)   Parents need to be aware that if proceeding remotely, it may be difficult for the College to accurately gauge a student's (and their family's) understanding of the absenteeism, the plan to facilitate the student's return to work and level of commitment required to reduce the attendance concerns.

    5.4.2   Variations to a student's timetable.

    5.4.3   Imposing conditions on a student's enrolment.

    5.4.4   Implementing an individual learning plan.

    5.4.5   Arranging assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff.

6   Factors Influencing Attendance

Generally

6.1   A variety of complex, interrelated factors influence student absenteeism.

6.2   Non-attendance has a variety of effects on students, both academically and socially and can include social isolation (including alienation), a lack of engagement with the College community and peers, and leading to emotional and behavioural difficulties. The effects of non-attendance on achievement are cumulative and can impact both academic achievement and attendance in future years of schooling.

6.3   An understanding the complex interactions between these factors is crucial to addressing problematic attendance and optimising outcomes for all students.

Individual Factors

6.4   Individual factors that influence student absenteeism relate to student's attitudes and motivations. The individual factors that are most likely to predict a student's non-attendance include;

    6.4.1   Academic self-concept and self-esteem - negative beliefs about academic abilities and feeling academically inadequate

    6.4.2   Not feeling safe at school (eg due to bullying)

    6.4.3   Depression and anxiety

6.4.4   Lack of connectedness to the College and peers - lack of 'belonging'

6.4.5   Negative attitudes towards teachers

6.4.6   Lack of motivation or goals

6.4.7   Disliking the College, boredom, pursuit of other activities outside the College

Family Factors

6.5   The level of respect that a family has for their child's education, the extent to which parents are seen as a role model for their child and parental attitudes can shape a child's attitudes to attendance at school.

6.6   Family involvement, in the form of support with homework and academic progress, active monitoring of attendance and participation in the College community, can increase a student's engagement and achievement at school.

6.7   Correspondingly, a lack of such parental involvement can have negative effects on student attendance. Instability and conflict in the home also predict students' non-attendance. If parents do not value education and are not involved in their child's schooling, student's may adopt similar attitudes, which might inform their decisions about whether to attend the College.

College Related Factors

6.8   The College environment can also influence a student's decisions about attendance. At the College, all students have a right to learn in an environment where they feel safe, happy and supported, and which is underpinned by the College's paramount commitment - student safety.

6.9   However, if, for example, a student perceived a 'climate of tolerance' for bullying or racism at the College (which for the avoidance of doubt, is not condoned or tolerated), they may not feel safe to attend. A sense of belonging to the College community is also an important factor related to absenteeism. A lack of belonging or connectedness to the College may be characterised by poor relationships with teachers and conflict with peers or ostracism from peer groups.

7   Records of Enrolment and Attendance

7.1   The Principal has a responsibility to ensure that records of all enrolments and attendance are made.

7.2   The electronic register of enrolments includes the following information for each student:

7.2.1   name, age and address;

7.2.2   the name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s);

7.2.3   date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the College and the student's destination;

7.2.4   the Victorian student number allocated to the student; and

7.2.5   the date that the student ceases to be enrolled at the College (if applicable).

7.3   The electronic register of attendance includes the following information for each student to ensure the care, safety and welfare of students and continuity of learning:

    7.3.1   attendance records for each calendar year, including twice daily attendance checks;

    7.3.2   absences;

    7.3.3   reason for absence; and

    7.3.4   documentation to substantiate reasons for a student's absence.

7.4   The College will retain records of attendance of enrolments in accordance with its Records Retention Policy.