



## Thomastown West Attendance Policy 2024 - 2028

Thomastown West Primary School motto is **Together Working on Pathways to Success**. At Thomastown West Primary School we want every child to achieve their full potential and we know that parents share this goal. There is a clear link between good attendance and educational achievement. If your child is not in school, on time, as often as possible they will be missing out on many important parts of their education.



### HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Thomastown West Primary School on 03 9465 4317 or [thomastown.west.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:thomastown.west.ps@education.vic.gov.au).

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure all children enrolled at Thomastown West Primary School attend school every day that the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Thomastown West Primary School has in place to:
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Thomastown West Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Policy Advisory Library guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Thomastown West Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

### DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the [Family Law Act 1975](#) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

### POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps children and young people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.



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Students are expected to attend Thomastown West Primary School during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student (such as a medical appointment)
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Thomastown West Primary School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Thomastown West Primary School for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Thomastown West Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Thomastown West Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Thomastown West Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Thomastown West Primary School's *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by:

- Developing Attendance Support Plans with students, parents and teachers.
- Providing supervision and free breakfast (care) before school from 7:45am at our morning Breakfast Club
- Providing after school activities and clubs in conjunction with the Thomastown West Community Hub
- Offering after school care through TheirCare



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- Daily class attendance recorded on class calendar promoting communal responsibility and collective encourage.
- Presenting 100% attendance awards and encouragement awards each term and semester at assembly.
- Providing Dojos for student attendance in class
- Running a 'TWPS Cup of Life' Competition between classes each term, where children can win a free lunch. The 'TWPS Cup of Life' winners for the year win a free bowling excursion.
- Sharing attendance awards and 'TWPS Cup of Life' results at weekly and assemblies and fortnightly newsletters.
- The wellbeing team designing individual responses and support for poor attendance or school refusal

### **Recording attendance**

Thomastown West Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Thomastown West Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom or specialist teacher at the start of the school day and after lunch using the Compass Education System.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

### **Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Thomastown West Primary School of absences by:

- contacting the school via phone to notify of and explain student absences
- utilising the Compass Education software to notify of and explain student absences

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Thomastown West Primary School will notify parents through Compass notification and/or SMS and/or phone call. Thomastown West Primary School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contacts nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

Thomastown West Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the [Education Training Reform Act 2006](#) (Vic) and the [School Attendance Guidelines](#).

If Thomastown West Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**excused absence**'.



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If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'unexcused absence'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

### **Staff and parent responsibilities in supporting and monitoring student attendance**

All members of the Thomastown West Primary have the responsibility for supporting and monitoring student attendance at school. Thomastown West Primary School have developed a number of processes for following up on unexplained absences to ensure that every child attends school. Students who have two or more unexplained absences in a week will be followed up according to the TWPS Weekly Attendance Process (Appendix A).

Students who have an attendance percentage of below 90% will have the TWPS Weekly Attendance Process enacted to support their improved attendance.

Students who have an attendance percentage of below 80% will have the TWPS Ongoing Attendance Process enacted to support their improved attendance (Appendix B).

### **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Thomastown West Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff and DET Student Support Services including the Koorie Education Support Officer

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required. Monthly data collection on students with under 80% attendance will be used to identify and monitor student attendance at Thomastown West Primary School.



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### Referral to School Attendance Officer

If Thomastown West Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the North Eastern Regional Office for further action.

As part of Thomastown West Primary School's Attendance process, monthly data will be used by the wellbeing staff and Principal Class members to identify and monitor student attendance. For students who remain under 80% attendance, despite supports offered by the school or with considerable unexplained absences, a referral to the School Attendance Officer may be made.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the principal may also make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful.
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

### COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school upon request

### MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL):

- [Attendance](#)



## Thomastown West Attendance Policy 2024 - 2028

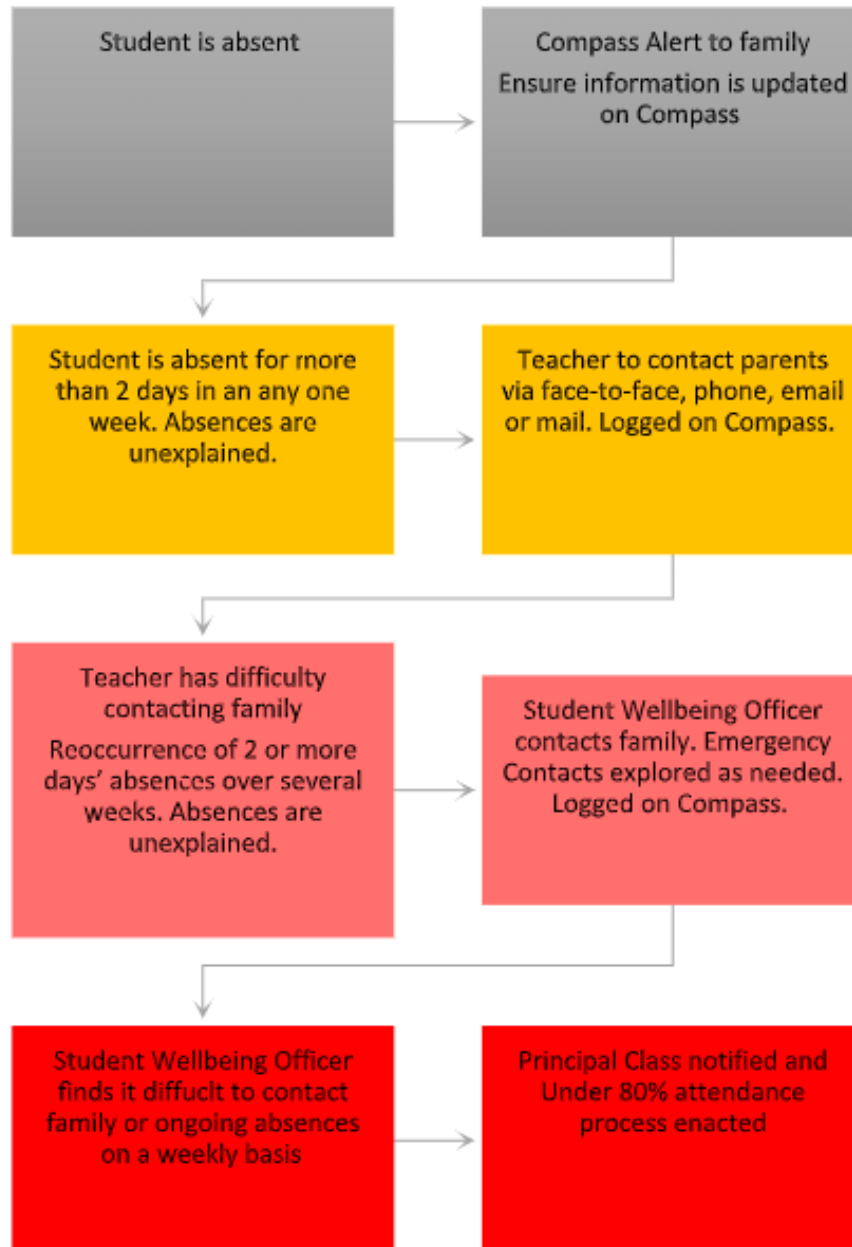
### EVALUATION

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the Thomastown West Primary School four-year policy review cycle.

<b>Date Implemented</b>	2020, 2024
<b>Author</b>	Principal Assistant Principal
<b>Approved By</b>	Principal
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	August 2020, October 2024
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Assistant Principal Principal
<b>Review Date</b>	October 2028
<b>References</b>	Victorian Government Schools Policy Advisory Library

Appendix A

**TWPS Weekly Attendance Process**



Appendix B

**TWPS Ongoing Attendance Process: A Staged Response**

