

Responsibility of:	Darwin High School Principal
Effective Date:	14 July 2025
Next Review Date:	July 2026
Target Audience:	DHS students, parents, staff

1. RATIONALE

Children and young people's educational achievements are enhanced by school attendance and engagement. Supporting our students to improve and maintain their school attendance and engagement is critical to improving their educational and life outcomes.

Darwin High School (DHS) supports all students to engage fully in the learning opportunities provided by the school. To ensure maximum levels of engagement, students are required to arrive on time to attend each scheduled class throughout the day, including study lines, and complete the full school year without interruption.

Strong student attendance will ensure all students benefit from quality teaching and contribute to a collaborative learning environment. This will support academic success, wellbeing, build students' skills and capabilities to achieve their full potential, and ensure success in meaningful pathways beyond schooling. The school recognises that students best engage with learning opportunities that align with their interests and aspirations and, as such, is committed to making available alternative/flexible learning options where these are suitable for students. Any actions carried out under this policy are intended to enhance engagement and improve attendance and educational outcomes for every Darwin High School student.

2. POLICY

This policy outlines the school's expectations for students, staff and families.

The school will maintain accurate attendance records and rigorous monitoring in accordance with the provisions of the NT Education Act (2015) and communicate attendance rates and expectations to students and parents.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The school will:

- inform students and parents/carers about the Darwin High School attendance policy and make it publicly available through the school's website, Compass, newsletters and enrolment packages
- accurately record and monitor attendance daily, including late arrivals, notified and un-notified absences
- regularly communicate student attendance to parents, staff and students and follow up as required
- include attendance on student reports
- support students and families through the Student Support Team to maintain regular attendance. Where regular engagement with a standard timetable is not maintained, students will be supported to access alternative learning options.
- refer students to the department to follow up on chronic non-attendance.

The Principal will:

- ensure staff, students and parents understand school processes and their individual roles and responsibilities
- ensure administration staff are trained in the use of Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions and act in accordance with department policy and guidelines.

Assistant Principals and Year Level Coordinators will:

- case manage students with chronic non-attendance and refer students to external agencies as necessary
- monitor and review attendance with support of the Home Liaison Officer (HLO).

Teachers will:

- accurately record attendance (incl. lateness) within the first fifteen minutes of each lesson commencing
- raise any concerns regarding student attendance with students and families, year level coordinators and the HLO as required.

The Home Liaison Officer will:

- liaise with parents/carers and students regarding attendance
- follow up unmarked rolls with teaching staff via email, with a cc: to the relevant faculty senior
- contact parents/carers if students are absent without notification, are consistently late to school or are truanting
- visit homes in cases involving students experiencing difficulty with aspects of their schooling
- refer students and families, where necessary, to appropriate support agencies (e.g. YouthWorx) and liaise with those agencies to ensure students and families receive proper support and assistance

The Attendance Officer will:

- follow up with parents/carers of students within the first day of an unnotified absence and record attempts to contact as an Attendance Entry Chronicle in Compass and in SAMS
- enter accurate enrolment and attendance data in accordance with department policy and legislation.

Front office staff will:

- enter accurate enrolment and attendance data in accordance with department policy and legislation.

The Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker (AIEW), Defence Mentor, International Education Coordinator will:

- monitor and follow up with their student cohorts.

Students will:

- attend every scheduled learning opportunity throughout the school year unless absence has been approved
- if arriving late, report straight to class for the teacher to record their time of arrival
- remain on school grounds between 8am and 2.30pm unless parental permission has been given to leave for an approved absence, noting that Stage 2 students may be required to stay past 2:30pm.
 - If parental permission has been provided, Year 10, Year 11 and SIEU students will sign out from Student Services and wait in the pick-up/drop-off zone if they are being collected from school.
 - Year 12 students may leave school grounds at recess, lunch and during study lines.
- carry a lesson pass if out of class during timetabled lessons and produce this if requested by a member of staff. Students will be returned to their class if they do not have a pass.

Parents will:

- support their child(ren) to arrive by 8am every school day. This includes scheduling family holidays outside of term time

- notify the school of absences and lateness at the earliest opportunity (this includes attendance at medical appointments)
- monitor their child's attendance via Compass
- provide a medical certificate for absences in excess of three (3) days due to illness.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1. Recording attendance

4.1.1. Marking the roll

Teachers will accurately mark student attendance in Compass, using the codes P (Present), NP (Not Present) and L (late). This will be done within the first fifteen minutes of each lesson commencing. Students who arrive within the first fifteen minutes should be marked as present (P).

Comments and markings in Compass must reflect attendance in class. The Home Liaison Officer will communicate any inaccuracies via email with teachers, with a cc: to their faculty senior.

The Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning, is responsible for ensuring the quality and timeliness of roll marking of relief teachers, including providing them with access to Compass.

4.1.2. VET students

The attendance for students enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses or work experience is managed by the VET Coordinator and marked as V (VET Course). If the student attends class at the school instead of VET, the class teacher will mark the student in line with usual procedures and notify the Home Liaison Officer of the student's attendance. A student's attendance at VET is provided to the VET Coordinator by external providers, and school administration will update student attendance in SAMS and Compass, as required, at the earliest convenience of receiving the information.

4.2. Monitoring attendance

4.2.1. Subject teachers

When a student's attendance drops below 80% for a subject, the subject teacher should:

- discuss their concerns with the student and check-in with the parent/carer.
- complete a contact record.
- create a Compass Chronicle using the '*Attendance concerns – Subject teacher*' template.
- monitor ongoing patterns of attendance.

If the student's attendance remains below 80% for two consecutive weeks, refer to the Year Level Coordinator. When referring to the Year Level Coordinator include:

- student name and class
- summary of your concerns
- action already taken
- support you are requesting.

4.2.2. Wellbeing teachers

Wellbeing teachers will check attendance via Compass two to three times per term and identifies students with an attendance rate of **60-80%**. The wellbeing teacher should:

- discuss their concerns with the student and check-in with the parent/carer.
- complete a contact record.
- create a Compass Chronicle using the '*Attendance concerns – Subject teacher*' template.
- monitor ongoing patterns of attendance.

If the student's attendance remains **below 80%** for **two consecutive weeks**, refer to the Year Level Coordinator. When referring to the Year Level Coordinator include:

- student name and class
- summary of your concerns
- action already taken
- support you are requesting.

4.3. Notification and authorisation of absences

4.3.1. Notifications - parents and independent students

Parents will notify the school of all student absences, including partial days. Independent students must notify the school themselves. This can be done by completing an Absence Notification in Compass, calling the Front Office on 8999 1222, emailing dhs.attendance@ntschoools.net, or completing the absentee notification form on the Darwin High School website.

4.3.2. Notifications - teachers

Where a teacher is notified of an absence by a parent or student, they will record the student's details, the name of the student's parents, reason for absence and date range of absence and forward to the Home Liaison Officer or relevant Assistant Principal.

4.3.3. Authorisation

An absence will not be considered authorised by the school until a parent has provided a satisfactory explanation. As outlined in the department's [Attendance and Participation Policy](#), satisfactory explanations for absences include illness, medical appointment, unexpected family circumstances or 'other' as determined by the Principal and situation presented.

A family holiday during school term will not automatically be authorised.

4.4. Unnotified absences

Department policy requires all schools to have developed and implemented processes to follow in regards to unnotified absences.

4.4.1. Process

Parents/carers will be contacted via Compass notification or by school staff within the first day of an absence being unnotified and implement support strategies. The Principal must be satisfied that the reason for the student's absence fits an excusable absence under the department's lesson codes or it may be regarded as an offence under the Act.

All attempts to contact parents / carers must be entered as an Attendance Chronicle Entry in Compass.

4.5. Recognising strong and improved attendance

Darwin High School will recognise students with 100% attendance and improving attendance

4.6. Identifying and following up with non-attendance

4.6.1. Record of unnotified absences or late for 50% or more over a two-week period:

When a student has a record of un-notified absences or 'lates' for 50% or more of classes over a two-week period, the following actions will be taken:

- The Student Support Team will facilitate a meeting between the parent(s), student and school to identify barriers to engagement and determine an alternative pathway to improve student attendance. Independent Students may choose to bring a support person. All attempts to contact the parent will be logged as an Extended Absence Notification Chronicle Entry in Compass for the student. The plan will be communicated to all teaching and support staff working alongside the student
- The Student Support Team will follow up with those students on individualised learning plans to ensure progress on the plan as required.
- The Assistant Principal/Year Level Coordinator and the student's parent(s) will monitor progress on the Individualised Learning Plan.

4.7. Consequences of ongoing non-attendance

Where a child demonstrates ongoing non-attendance, the parent, or if the child is living independently, then the child, may be subject to enforcement measures and may face legal consequences. Enforcement measures commence only after substantial re-engagement strategies have been undertaken by the school and Student Engagement.

Students with an attendance record of 90% or below may not be allowed to attend extra-curricular activities, such as the Year 12 formal, school sport activities and interstate and overseas excursions.

Where a pattern of absences/lateness is affecting the achievement of other students, the student may be removed from an identified subject.

4.8. Communicating student attendance

Students, staff and parents have access to attendance records, including daily attendance, through Compass.

Individual student attendance, including lateness, will be included on regular student reports.

The Principal will provide attendance updates to the school board.

5. DEFINITIONS

Alternative learning options: These are identified through an Individualised Learning Plan and may include an apprenticeship, YouthWorx, the Malak Re-engagement Centre or other options as determined by the school, parent and student.

Authorised absence: As outlined in the Department of Education's Attendance and Participation Policy, satisfactory explanations for an absence to be authorised include illness, medical appointment, unexpected family circumstances or others as determined by the Principal and situation presented.

Compass: The system utilised by Darwin High School to record and maintain student data including, but not limited to, attendance, academic performance and wellbeing.

Identified subject: A subject with selective enrolment, limited capacity or is otherwise a subject requiring a significant amount of collaborative work between students. Such subjects include all Centre for Excellence subjects, Dance, Music, Business, VET courses, apprenticeships, etc.

Independent student: A child who is of or above the age of 14 years and not living with a parent. A child who is living with a parent is also considered to be independent if the parent is unable to assist the child in relation to enrolment, attendance and participation.

Late: A student who arrives after the first 15 minutes of class is considered late.

Learning opportunity: All scheduled classes and educational activities as determined by a timetable or Individualised Learning Plan. These may include VET courses and school-based apprenticeships, training, work experience, study lines, required excursions, assemblies and other school-related activities.

Lesson pass: A pass provided to students when they have permission to be out of class during a scheduled learning opportunity.

Leave pass: A pass provided to students when they are leaving the school site during the school day after signing out from Student Services.

Notified absence: A student absence that has been communicated to the school by a parent. Students living independently will notify their own absence.

Un-notified absence: A student absence that has not been notified by a parent or independent student

Parental permission: A child's parent is required to give permission through contact with the school for all absences, including where a student is required to leave before the end of the school day. Where a student is identified as an independent student, parental permission is not required.

Personal timetable: A printed timetable which a student carries with them and has signed by the teacher at the end of each class to confirm attendance and provide feedback on progress.

Student Support Team: The team of school staff responsible for ensuring student engagement and attendance. This includes Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principals, Home Liaison Officer, School Counsellor and/or the Aboriginal and Islander Education Worker.

Student Services: The administration team managing sign out procedures.

6. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Northern Territory Department of Education	Attendance and Participation Policy Attendance: Compliance guidelines Exemptions from Attendance and Participation guidelines Recording and Reporting guidelines Lesson Attendance Codes and Descriptions
Northern Territory Government	NT Education Act (2015)

7. EVALUATION

All staff are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of performance and student attendance in line with this policy. The policy and associated guidelines will be reviewed after 12 months and revisions made to accompanying guidelines as necessary. This will include analysis of enrolment and attendance and the impact of Individualised Learning Plans.