Every day counts
Step 3: Record and follow up student absences

The information below expands on advice to improve student attendance provided in [A model for making every day count](#).

All schools are required to mark rolls daily in accordance with departmental procedures. Teachers need to be aware of and follow the department's roll-marking requirements so that checks can be done on students who are absent without explanation ('unexplained absence').

Timely follow-up with parents and carers is a key preventative strategy in reducing absenteeism. Schools are to notify parents of an unexplained absence on the day of the student's absence. This makes it harder for students to miss school without being caught. It also enables parents who may not be aware that their children are absent to take action.

'Consistent and persistent' follow up is a key strategy employed by many schools that have seen significant improvements in attendance.

Ideas[1]

- At induction and at the beginning of each year, remind staff of the importance of establishing a routine to ensure rolls are marked prior to teaching lessons.

- Generate a OneSchool 'Unmarked rolls export' report daily to follow-up on classes that have not been marked.

- Decide how parents must notify the school of an absence. Some schools require parents to write a note or fill in a form as a deterrent to unnecessary absences, while other schools will accept an email or phone call. These requirements could be clearly articulated in a school attendance policy.

- Establish a dedicated attendance email inbox or phone line, depending on procedures for parents to notify of absences.

- Contact parents (either personally or electronically) seeking an explanation for unexplained absences.

- Meet with parents to discuss reasons for their child's high levels of unexplained absences or lateness, and to identify practical strategies for getting students to school on time.

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[1] These ideas have been collected from Queensland schools, as well as other national and international schools. Schools will need to consider local circumstances, priorities, age of students etc in determining which (if any) of these ideas might be useful in the local context.

Ideas (continued)

- Consider purchasing and implementing a text messaging system to alert parents when students are absent without explanation.
- Set a target of zero unexplained absences.
- Consider the data for patterns of absence that require further attention, such as: three or more consecutive unexplained absences; five unexplained absences in a year; two Mondays or Fridays as unexplained absences; or an attendance rate below the school's attendance benchmark in the previous year.
- Ensure casual and relieving teachers are provided with rolls for relevant classes.

Useful links

- DoE Procedure: Roll marking in state schools
- DoE Procedure: Managing student absences and enforcing enrolment and attendance at state schools
- OneSchool Help: Attendance and Absence (for departmental employees only)