Student Attendance

Do Schools need to comply?

Yes - schools are required under the Education Act 1972 (SA) and the Education (Compulsory Education Age) Amendment Act 2007 to ensure that students enrolled at your school are attending school or participating in an approved learning program and to maintain the appropriate attendance registers.

Conditions of compliance:

Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of sixteen years) residing in South Australia are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless exempted by the Minister.

Students of Compulsory Education age (between 16 and 17 years) are required to be in attendance at school or a combination of school and other approved training unless exempted by the Minister.

If you have to comply, what do you have to do?

Maintain attendance rolls and enrolment registers or computerised records of the same, with reasons for absences and dates of sessions of enrolment recorded.

Adequate hard copy material or an electronic record must be available for inspection by the Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board when it visits the school as part of the review of registration process. This material must demonstrate that a comprehensive record of absences and attendances is being maintained, both for the current year and to meet legislative requirements for information retention.

The average student attendance rate is one of the student outcomes that schools must publish as part of the School Performance Information reporting requirements stipulated by the Australian Government. Schools have obligations to follow up the extended absence from school of students under the age of compulsion. There are specific procedures in place for the granting of exemptions:

Delegations

All delegations must be exercised in accordance with any guidelines published under Section 81A (1) of the Education Act 1972.

1. The delegate may, by written notice, grant or vary an exemption (conditionally or unconditionally) from the requirements of Part 6 of the Education Act 1972 or revoke an exemption for a child of compulsory education age enrolled within a school for a period of no greater than one month.

   Delegated Authority: The Head Teacher of the school in which the child is enrolled.

2. The delegate may by written notice, grant or vary a temporary exemption (conditionally or unconditionally) for Family Travel/Holiday reasons form the requirements of Part 6 of the Education Act 1972 or revoke an exemption for a child of compulsory education age enrolled within a school for a period of no less than one month and for a maximum of 12 months.
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Delegated Authority: The Head Teacher of the school in which the child is enrolled.

3. The delegate may, by written notice, grant or vary a temporary exemption (conditionally or unconditionally) for Medical or Other/Conditional reasons from the requirements of Part 6 of the Education Act 1972 or revoke an exemption for a child of compulsory education age enrolled within a school for a period of no less than one month and for a maximum of 12 months.

Delegated Authority: Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia in relation to children enrolled or intending to enrol in non-government school other than a registered Catholic school.

4. The delegate may, by written notice, grant or vary a permanent exemption (conditionally or unconditionally) from the requirements of Part 6 of the Education Act 1972 or revoke an exemption for a child of compulsory education age enrolled within a school for a period of no less than one month and for a maximum of 12 months.

Delegated Authority: Chief Executive Association of Independent Schools of South Australia in relation to children enrolled or intending to enrol on a non-government school other than a registered Catholic school.

5. The delegate may, by written notice, grant or vary an exemption (conditionally or unconditionally) from the requirements of Part 6 of the Education Act 1972 or revoke an exemption for any child of compulsory school age for a period of up to 24 months, including for home school purposes.

Delegated Authority: Chief Executive, Department for Education and Child Development, Executive Director, Preschool and School Improvement or Director, Programs and Regional Management.

Temporary exemptions

Principals have the authority to approve temporary exemptions for up to 12 months for the reason of Family Travel / Holiday. If more than one month and for reasons other than travel/family holiday, the application requires approval by the Director, Programs and Regional Management (Central Delegate) or the Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (Independent Schools).

Permanent exemptions

Students under 15 cannot be given a permanent exemption unless there are strong recommendations from the school and the education department. Students aged 16 don’t need an exemption if they can provide evidence to the school that they are:

- Attending TAFE or other courses
- Doing an apprenticeship or traineeship

Students aged 15 and 16 who are taking up full-time employment can apply for permanent
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exemption from school. To qualify:

- Students under 16 must be working more than 30 hours per week
- 16 years olds must be working more than 25 hours per week

Evidence (such as letters from employers or training organisations) must be submitted with the application for exemption from school.

Application forms and attaching supportive evidence

Complete the exemption from school application form ED175
Complete the Form C if Conditional Exemption e.g. Disability, Medical, part-time attendance and attach at least one or all to the application:

- A documented plan
- Planned review process which includes a timeline demonstrating how time at the school will increase
- IEP, NEP or draft meeting minutes, parent letters, other DECD support involved and other agencies involved

Ensure all forms have been signed by all parties.

Forms

Exemption Application FORM A
Exemption Application FORM B
Conditional Exemption Application FORM C

For more detailed information you should refer to the AISSA publication Compulsory Education Age Guidelines – Effective 1 January 2009.

What are the consequences if you don’t comply?

- You may lose your registration as a school.
- You may be in breach of the Education Act 1972 (as amended) (SA).
- You may also put yourself at risk in the event that an attendance roll is required as evidence in a court of law.

Useful links:

Office of Non-Government Schools and Services
Education Act 1972