



Information for parents – The importance of regular attendance in the early years

Developing the habit of going to school every day is vitally important so your child does not miss out on important ideas, concepts, knowledge and skills they need for future learning.

Does my child have to go to Kindergarten?

If a child is enrolled in Kindergarten, while not compulsory to attend, it is recommended they do. Regular attendance helps your child to feel comfortable in their surroundings, develop friendships with other children, and relationships with school staff.

The early years of school gives your child new experiences and sets the foundation for their future learning. At Kindergarten, your child is supported to develop and learn new ideas and skills in a setting of acceptance, and one that inspires and challenges them. Going to school every session allows your child to build on what they know and what they have learnt.

The skills learnt in Kindergarten set the foundation for Pre-primary. In Kindergarten your child will build important social and emotional skills that help them throughout their school life. They also develop literacy and numeracy skills.

Pre-primary – the beginning of compulsory schooling

Pre-primary is the first compulsory year of schooling in Western Australia. Pre-primary provides your child with a broad range of skills to help them understand the world. Your child learns more about literacy and numeracy, and further develops their personal and social skills, critical and creative thinking, and physical wellbeing.

Did you know?

- In the early years of school, many concepts, such as literacy and numeracy, are taught in a sequence. If your child is often away from school, it can make it difficult to catch up later.
- The Western Australian Telethon Kids Institute has found that the attendance habits set in Kindergarten and Pre-primary are likely to continue throughout a child's school life, so it is important for them to attend school every day.
- The *School Education Act 1999* requires all compulsory school-aged students to attend every day that their school is open.
- **Missing half a day of school each week** equates to one month of missed learning opportunities each year.
- **Missing half a day of school each week between Pre-primary and Year 10**, equates to missing almost one full year of learning.

What can you do?

- It is an exciting time for the whole family when your child starts school. You can help to ensure they have a positive first experience by providing your child with routines that help them understand what to expect and feel secure in new environments. This can reduce their anxiety about going to school and help them develop independence and confidence.
- Access the Department's [Starting School](#) resources to support your child on their schooling journey:
 - [Hello Kindergarten!](#)
 - [Hello Pre-primary!](#)
 - [Say hello to school.](#)

You can help by:

- Talking positively about school with your child.
- Showing interest in what your child is doing at school and talking with the teacher about what you can do at home.
- Teaching your child how to share and take turns and support them in making friends.
- Arriving at school and collecting your child from school on time.
- Getting uniforms and lunches ready the night before.
- Making sure your child gets nutritious meals each day and enough sleep each night.
- Being involved in the school community by volunteering and helping out at school where possible.
- Making appointments with doctors, dentists and specialists outside of school time.
- Making holiday plans during school holidays and not during school terms.
- If your child is unwell or you are having trouble getting your child to school, please let the office staff know straight away. By having information about your child's absences, we are better able to assist you.

What will staff at our school do to help?

- Offer developmentally, socially and culturally responsive learning opportunities.
- Monitor every student's attendance including talking with you about any absences.
- Work with you to overcome problems affecting your child's attendance.

What if my child doesn't want to go to school?

- Talk with the teacher or someone from the school as soon as possible so you can get advice and support.
- You may also attend a [Positive Parenting Program](#) (Triple P) for additional support and advice, including setting boundaries and routines.

For more information you can contact the school to arrange for an interpreter.

REMOVE THIS SECTION IF DISTRIBUTING THIS INFORMATION TO PARENTS

Information for schools

Prior to use, Principals should make a professional judgement on the information contained within this resource to ensure its relevance and validity within the context of their school.

This may include:

- adapting text within the resource where required;
- whether the content is suitable for the whole school, a target group, or in individual cases;
- whether the information would be best received as a supplementary resource to a meeting or face-to-face conversation with a parent or community member; and
- utilising key messages within this resource over a period of time as part of existing communications with parents and the community, rather than distributing the fact sheet as a once-off complete resource. For example, via SMS, the school app or social media, within the school newsletter, at assemblies or school events.

The requirements

While enrolment in Kindergarten is not compulsory, a student must, for every year of the student's **compulsory education period** (Pre-primary onwards), on the days on which the school is open for instruction, either attend school at which the student is enrolled, or participate in an educational program of the school (Section 23 of the *School Education Act 1999*). Some functions of the *School Education Act 1999* relating to student attendance are not applicable for non-compulsory-aged students, such as attendance panels and prosecution.

The research

The Telethon Kids Institute report, [Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts](#) found that attendance patterns are established very early and are consistently maintained throughout a student's school career. The report highlighted the need to target the early years in order to improve attendance before patterns become established and difficult to change.

Recording absences in the early years

In accordance with *Section 3.4 of the Student Attendance in Public Schools policy and procedures*, Western Australian public schools are required to maintain accurate attendance records for every enrolled student, including the pre-compulsory year, Kindergarten (whether school-based or at a community Kindergarten).

Schools should record absences using the relevant [lesson attendance codes](#). The Principal has the authority to determine which code is most applicable for each circumstance.

The purpose of these codes is for schools to be able to disaggregate their attendance data to determine common reasons for absence.

Communicating with parents

Informing parents of the critical learning, concepts or activities that their child will be missing and the potential impact may assist in communicating with parents about why attending every day is important.

Support

Join the [Student Attendance Connect Community](#) to connect with other Western Australian public school staff about communicating with parents and student attendance strategies.

Support parents to access [Triple P](#).