CASCADE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Attendance Policy

Rationale
Parents and school staff need to work in partnership to support the regular attendance of students. Any student whose attendance falls below 90% (i.e. 10 or more half days absences per term) is deemed to be at educational risk by the Department of Education (DoE).

The purpose of this document is to ensure that Cascade Primary School has adequate procedures in place to help prevent students from falling into this “at risk” category.

To assist in this endeavour the school has the responsibility for the following actions:

- Providing a curriculum that is inclusive of cultural and individual differences and supportive of learning.
- Monitoring student attendance systematically.
- Developing and implementing retention and participation strategies to encourage regular attendance.
- Collaboration with parents/caregivers and other agencies such as the District RAP Co-ordinator, DCP, Juvenile Justice personnel and Health agencies.
- Reviewing the attendance policy each year to ensure it is current and effective.

Student Attendance

Teachers are required to monitor and encourage student attendance by:

- Inputting attendance codes and comments (if applicable) for their class each morning and afternoon through the Integris Lesson Attendance on the computer network.
- Keeping written absentee notes and telephone messages and updating computer records as required.
- Following up any unexplained absences with students and/or parents/caregivers.
- Implementing the Cascade Primary School strategies as required.
- Adapting the learning environment and the teaching learning program to accommodate the individual child’s needs when necessary.
- Valuing the culture of individual students and seeking information to assist the child in feeling comfortable in the classroom.

School Attendance Officer (Principal) is required to monitor and encourage student attendance by:

- Ensuring the data is being entered daily.
- Survey the school each week to identify students who have no plausible excuse for being absent from school.
- Every 2 weeks generate a list of students whose attendance has fallen below 90%
- Complying with Cascade Primary School strategies where students’ absences exceed 10 half days per term.
- Taking intervention action if a student’s attendance is putting him/her at risk.
- Assisting teachers to implement teaching and learning programs that are inclusive and appropriate.
• Encouraging teachers and RAP co-ordinator to build bridges between the school and home.
• Ensuring that records are kept of contacts, or attempts to make contact, with the student’s family and the intervention strategies implemented to restore student attendance.
• Making statistics available for acknowledging students who have attended regularly for each term and semester.
• Carry out DoE voluntary and mandatory audits on attendance,
• Provide regular newsletter updates on attendance
• Keep teachers, parents/care givers informed of outcomes of intervention plans.

Parents/Caregivers are required to:
• Comply with the Education Act regarding school attendance.
• Respond in writing or verbally to explain student absences
• Work together with the school to support the students’ regular attendance.

Retention and Participation Strategies for “At Risk” Students

To meet the objectives of this attendance policy the following aspects need to be addressed: appropriate curriculum, systematic monitoring and collaboration with all parties involved.

Appropriate Curriculum
The School Attendance Officer and District Office staff, if appropriate, will work together with the teachers to provide resources and advice on ways of encouraging “at risk” students to feel more valued and comfortable in the classroom. This may include professional development and case conferences based on the individual needs of the students.

Systematic Monitoring of Attendance
Prior to the student being designated “at risk” the following steps will have been taken regarding a child’s absence from school:
1. Unexplained absences have been followed up by the classroom teacher.
2. Follow-up letters have been generated each month for all unexplained absences which parents have not responded to. Letters to be generated by the SAO
3. Make telephone calls to patents/caregivers.

Procedure for Improving Attendance of “At Risk” students
Once the student has been identified as “at risk” (i.e. 10 half days unexplained absences) the following steps will take place:
ATTENDANCE INTERVENTIONS FLOWCHART

On a FORTNIGHTLY basis, use SIS to identify all students with < 90% attendance for that period (as a result of unauthorised absences only)

Check what action has already been taken by the classroom teacher to follow up attendance concerns for each of the identified students.

Depending on above, seek an explanation for the student’s unauthorised absences via:
- Phone call
- Note
- Letter (SIS)
- Home Visit (with AIEO or other staff member)

Maintain records of all contact, and attempted contact, with the families of non-attending students. (see Attendance Intervention Record – Appendix)

If attendance remains unsatisfactory, refer to school Case Manager/SAER Coordinator (or equivalent) to arrange a case conference involving all parties.

ATTENDANCE CASE CONFERENCE

Use Attendance Case Conference Record and Documented Plan (Appendix) to record details of meeting.
Develop an Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) and set review date. Repeat as often as necessary until attendance returns to a satisfactory level. If parents/caregivers repeatedly fail to attend attendance case conferences and/or the student’s attendance remains unsatisfactory, proceed to next step.

CONSULT WITH RAP COORDINATOR

The RAP Coordinator may:
- Offer advice
- Attend next case conference
- Recommend proceeding to Preventative Panel

DISTRICT-BASED PREVENTATIVE PANEL

The Preventative Panel is convened and chaired by the RAP Coordinator, and comprises representatives from various community agencies. The purpose of this panel is to provide the parents/caregivers of the non-attending student with informal advice and support that may assist in improving attendance and thereby prevent referral to a formal School Attendance Panel.

A Responsible Parenting Agreement (RPA) may be developed at a Preventative Panel. If parents/caregivers refuse to enter into a RPA, or do not make a reasonable attempt to comply with a RPA, application for a Responsible Parenting Order (RPO) may be made to the Director General.

FORMAL DISTRICT-BASED SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PANEL

If attendance fails to improve despite all of the above interventions, then the school Principal can request referral to a formal School Attendance Panel. This Panel is convened by an Executive Officer appointed by the District Director, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Act 1999.

PROSECUTION

If the advice and support of this Panel are ignored and the student’s attendance fails to improve, the Panel has the authority to issue a certificate of non-compliance and to recommend prosecution. This can result in a fine of up to $1000 being imposed on the parents/caregivers of the non-attending student OR $2500 for a non-enrolled student.
Collaboration with all Parties
The collaboration between students, class teachers, school administration and ancillary staff, District Office, other agencies and parents/caregivers is considered to be important.

Class teachers are encouraged to discuss attendance with the children in their classes and to talk with individual students about how they are feeling at school. Administration officers and ancillary staff should make new arrivals feel comfortable and welcome. Parents/Caregivers should be approached by administration early in the process of dealing with attendance concerns rather than later. School staff should support and encourage the acknowledgement of students who attend regularly.

District Office has many resources in the form of personnel and programs. They should be contacted for assistance at any stage.

Collaboration with outside agencies such as DCP, Community Health, School Nurse, Ministry of Justice, Police is encouraged to make sure that all parties have access to the information they need to make it possible for all students to have the best possible attendance record.