Attendance Rules
back pocket advice and guidance

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Attendance Rules

Rule 1: The principal of a State school (other than distance school) must ensure that attendance records are kept

1.1 The principal must ensure that an attendance record is kept for each student who is enrolled at the school (either by half-day or period) for each half-day that it is open for instruction.

1.2 To enable the accurate and timely collection of attendance records, the principal must ensure that the school has an absence notification process so that absences can be notified by and to the school promptly. (a) Every notification process (e.g. text or e-mail) for advising a parent/caregiver that a student is absent without explanation must be based on up-to-date information. (b) Notifications must be sent as soon as practicable on the day that a student has not arrived at school without explanation.

Advice and Guidance

- Your daily attendance records are official documents. Along with attendance records, they record your school's roll number and the year level of students.
- Your Board must keep these roll records for seven years.
- It is important that your school community knows how they can notify your school when a student is going to be absent or late.
- We encourage you to communicate with your school community that they should contact you on the day of any absence.
- It is important that your school community keeps you up to date with their contact information so your notifications can be received by them.

Rule 2: The principal of a State school (other than a distance school) must use a Ministry-approved Electronic Attendance Register (eAR) unless exempt

2.1 The Secretary for Education may exempt a principal from using a Ministry-approved eAR if: (a) the school has a roll of less than 30 students; and (b) the principal agrees to use a Ministry-approved mechanism for the collection and submission of attendance data.

- We encourage you to have at least two school staff who are comfortable with using the electronic Attendance Register within your SMS.
- It's helpful to maintain a good relationship with your SMS provider, making use of any training that is provided, and keeping up to date with any system changes.
- If you change SMS provider, please make sure your new and former providers follow the correct transfer process.

Rule 3: The principal of a State school (other than a distance school) must use Ministry-approved attendance codes.

3.1 The principal must ensure that: (a) the school's eAR or other Ministry-approved mechanism uses attendance codes approved by the Secretary for Education. (b) an attendance code is recorded for each student in the school's eAR (either by half-day or period) for each half-day that the school is open for instruction. (c) a default attendance code is used to mark a student's absence for each half-day or period that the student is absent without explanation.

- We have a revised set of Attendance Codes that come into effect from 2025. Please make yourself familiar with these.
- Your SMS will always have the updated Attendance Code set. You will not be able to select non-code letters or characters.
- It is important that where possible an attendance code, not a '?' is loaded against each student as soon as possible, and preferably by the end of the day a school is open for instruction.
- We recommend having school policies on how you will use the attendance codes and that these are made available to your school community.