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In the event that issues regarding the child's attendance are not addressed by the previous processes, then some other processes are available. These are described below.

### APPLICATIONS TO THE CHILDREN'S COURT – A COMPULSORY SCHOOLING ORDER

Legal compliance can be sought through an application to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The aim is to assist a family and/or child to address the issues which are preventing satisfactory school attendance. This has the added enforcement of a Court's powers.

### PROSECUTION IN THE LOCAL COURT

If all attempts by schools and DEC regional support staff fail to improve a student's attendance, action can be taken in the Local Court and the result can be fines up to a maximum of \$11,000.

## Further information

Further information can be obtained from the following websites.

### Policy and information (Catholic Education Commission)

<http://bit.ly/zdLonM>

### The school leaving age (NSW Department of Education and Communities)

<http://bit.ly/ginrQl>

## Do you need an interpreter?

Interpreting services are provided, where possible, for parents/carers who do not speak or understand English well and for Deaf parents/carers who use sign language. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the telephone number: 131 450. You will not be charged for this service.

See the website address:

[http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help\\_with\\_translating/](http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/help-with-english/help_with_translating/)

The information in this brochure has been provided to all NSW schools. It arises out of amendments to the Education Act 1990.



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# compulsory school attendance

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
OFFICE SYDNEY





## The compulsory years of schooling

Did you know that if a student misses as little as eight days in each school term, by the end of primary school the student will have missed over a year of education?

In New South Wales, all children from six years of age are legally required to attend school or be registered for home schooling. After they complete Year 10 and until they turn 17 years of age, students then have the following options. They may also be in:

- + full-time further education and training (eg TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship)
- + full-time, paid employment of an average of 25 hours per week; or
- + a combination of both of the above.

Children are expected to attend all school activities, on time. Regular attendance helps your child:

- + develop the skills needed to access the world of work and other opportunities
- + learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- + make and keep friendships.

## What if my child has to be away from school?

If your child has to be absent from school, you **must** tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may be required to:

- + send a note to the school, or contact the school via electronic means such as SMS text message, fax or email, or
- + telephone the school, or
- + visit the school.

The school will inform you of the required procedures for contacting the school.

A small number of absences may be accepted by the Principal. For example, if your child:

- + has to go to a special religious ceremony
- + is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (eg a funeral)
- + is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.

If you consider that it is in your child's best interests to be exempted from the legal requirement to attend school for any length of time, you **must** apply to the Principal for an exemption. The school will provide you with an 'Application for Exemption from Attendance at School' form and assist you to complete it. The Principal will consider your application and decide whether to grant a 'Certificate of Exemption from Attendance at School'.

## What are school Principals responsible for?

Principals help to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of your child. Principals have to keep accurate records of student attendance and the reasons for any absences. Principals are responsible for accepting or not accepting a parent's explanations for their child's absences. Principals may request further information from parents for long or frequent absences, even where they are explained by parents as being due to illness.

When absences are unexplained by parents, or the explanations are not accepted by the Principal, the school will work with parents to help address the issue. The main aim is to sort out what is preventing the child from getting to school and putting strategies in place to help. Sometimes the school will ask support staff and other agencies to assist.

## What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?

It is important to understand that the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) may take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unacceptable absences from school. Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

### ATTENDANCE MEETINGS AND COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE CONFERENCES

Parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a meeting with school personnel and DEC regional officers. The aim of the meeting is to help identify strategies to support the child and family. Other agencies may also be invited along to help, if parents agree.

If the school and DEC regional officers have tried to help improve a child's attendance, without success, parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a compulsory attendance conference. The conference will be run by a trained conference convenor. The aim of the conference is for the school, parents (and sometimes their child) and other identified agencies ('the parties') to further identify the issues which are impacting on a child's attendance.

The outcome of a compulsory attendance conference is for the parties to agree to undertake certain actions to improve the child's attendance. These actions are written in the form of undertakings.

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