



School: Attendance

Do I have to go to school?

Every young person of compulsory school age must attend school or participate in an educational programme inside or outside the school as required by the Principal under the law in Western Australia.

Compulsory school age is:

- From the beginning of the school year in which the child is aged 5 years and 6 months (Pre-Primary);
- Until the end of the school year in which the young person turns 17 and 6 months or 18 whichever happens first.
- At the age of 16 and 17, the student can be enrolled at school or training program or a combination of school, training and employment with permission of the CEO of the Department of Education.

There are some exceptions to this such as when you have obtained special approval by the CEO of the Department of Education. This may be because you are being home educated, have completed your last year of school early or are engaged in an approved course or apprenticeship.

Each school is required to keep a register of all students enrolled at the school.

Each student is required to attend school on the days the school is open.

The school is required to keep an attendance record for each student.

A parent of a child who does not ensure that the child is enrolled in an education programme for each year of the compulsory education period for that child may be prosecuted.

What happens if I don't go to school?

You can be excused from attending school on school days for health reasons, reasonable cause or for religious or cultural observance.

If the Principal is of the opinion that the reasons for your non-attendance are not genuine or insufficient, your lack of attendance can be referred to the Attendance Panel at the Department of Education, who can conduct an investigation which will involve you and your parents to try to improve your school attendance. If you continue to be absent from school without a good reason, both you and your parents may be prosecuted.



Attendance Officers

Students who take unexplained absences from school can be picked up by Attendance Officers.

Attendance Officers are given the power to:

- Stop and detain you if they reasonably believe you to be an 'absentee student'.
- Enter any public premises for the purposes of checking whether any 'absentee student' is on that premises.
- Require you to give your full name, address, date of birth and name of school.

If you give the Attendance Officer false details or resist, hinder or obstruct the Attendance Officer you can be charged with an offence.

The Police can also apprehend an 'absentee student' and contact their parent or responsible adult to collect them.

**Schools in Western Australia can be government or non-government (Catholic and Independent). This information applies to government schools, different policies and procedures may apply to a student's repeated non-attendance at non-government schools.*

More Information

Government of Western Australia. Department of Education:

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/enrolling-in-school>

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/attendance-and-absenteeism>

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/non-government-schools>

Please note: Laws are subject to change. Last updated July 2020.

Important: The information provided in this infosheet is for information only.

It should not be relied on as legal advice.

Please seek legal advice about your particular circumstances.