



EVERY DAY MATTERS

Keeping students in education is vital for their success at school and in later life. The research tells us that student attendance, along with effective teaching, has the greatest influence on student engagement and achievement. The fewer days that students are at school, the less chance they have of achieving. Missing school isn't just about missing learning; it's also about all the opportunities that are missed – **every day matters!**

At Gisborne Girls' High School we take attendance very seriously. We know that good attendance guarantees great outcomes for our students. We monitor attendance very closely and have been disappointed that our attendance rates have not improved over the years even though we have put a great deal of focus on the issue.

One of the targets for our new strategic plan states:
“Student attendance will improve to at least 85% at each year level”.

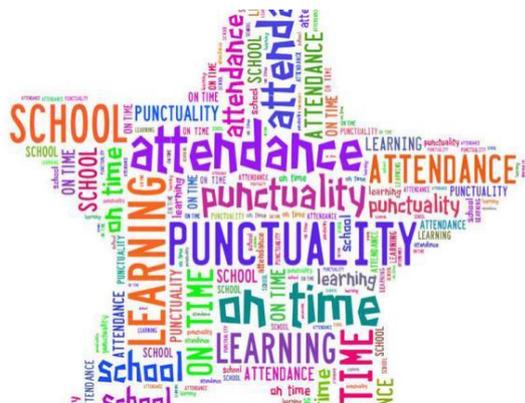
Legislation governing attendance:

Schools (boards, principals, and individual teachers), along with parents and guardians, are responsible for making sure students attend school regularly. Under Sections 25 and 31 of the Education Act 1989, every school board must take all reasonable steps to make sure students attend school when it is open.

At Gisborne Girls' High School we have a comprehensive system for monitoring and improving attendance. Every lesson, attendance is taken by the teacher and recorded on our Kamar system. As a parent or caregiver you can check directly through the Kamar Parent Portal to see the live entry of data. Letters were sent home last holidays with login details. If you need a new copy please contact Sandy in the office. If you are unable to check online you can ring the school office to confirm attendance.



Once attendance is marked in form class and period one, text messages are sent out to the whanau of students who are marked absent if we have not had any notification about them being away. You are asked to reply to the text so we can update our records and ensure students are safe. You can help us by contacting the school if you know your student is going to be away. You can ring and leave a message on the school answerphone system, email your form teacher or send in a note with your student.



If you have told us about your student's reason for being absent we need to complete our records. There are some reasons that are considered 'Justified' by the school and the Ministry of Education. Being unwell is such a reason and will be recorded as a Justified Absence. If a student is absent due to illness and the absence exceeds three days we will require a medical certificate. If the reason given is not considered justified then the absence is recorded as Unjustified. If no reason is given at all then the absence is recorded as 'Truancy' aka 'bunking'.

Another phrase that is used is “Intermittent Unjustified Absence” which is the term for lesson absence. This is when a student fails to attend a particular class and may actually still be present on the school campus. These absences are also very important and why we monitor students every period of every day.

How you can help:

Please talk with your student about their attendance. Praise them for high attendance and follow up when you find out about absences that you were not expecting. Please keep the school informed of any issues that are affecting their attendance and work with us to improve the attendance rate if it is unacceptable.

About being on time too:

Being punctual is also important. There are statistics that link lateness with poor achievement and so we seek your help in getting your student to school on time every day. This is also an important life skill and will be essential when they gain employment.

Current situation:

Our attendance rates for the first term are shown in this table. As you can see from these results we have too many students missing too many days at our school. If a student misses five school days each term, or one day a fortnight, they will miss the equivalent of one year of school over ten years. That would equate to an attendance rate of 90% which would be considered high – but as you can see still has a significant effect on a student’s progress.

Year Level:	Attendance %
9	85.9
10	82.1
11	78.6
12	76.3
13	69.2

All students need to aim to attend EVERY DAY for the WHOLE DAY unless they are unwell.



Student Conferences Survey:

Following the student-whanau conferences last term a survey was run by one of the staff professional learning groups to seek feedback from whanau about the conferencing. Feedback about how the process could be improved was also gathered. One suggestion was to meet with the individual subject teachers. I can understand this response, however, as these meetings are about bringing whanau into school to talk about student progress the student conference process allows for a longer time to make this interview more meaningful. Meeting individual teachers, in the way it has been run in the past, is often very difficult as people try to meet with 5 or 6 separate teachers in a short space of time. We have moved away from this form of meeting as attendance had reduced to as low as 15% which is a strong indication that it is not meeting the needs of students and their whanau. This new form of conference has achieved at least 60% attendance across the school. We aim to increase that to 100% as all students will benefit from these learning-focussed personalised conversations.

Contact with individual subject teachers is certainly encouraged and email or a phone call is the most productive method for this. Interviews can then be set up at a convenient time if required. If you have a concern about your student’s progress please contact their form teacher, subject teacher or Dean as appropriate.

Jan Kumar
Principal