

Here's the revised Otahuhu College Attendance Policy with enhanced details about chronically absent students and the process for gaining a dispensation to participate in extracurricular activities:

Attendance Policy

Rationale

Research demonstrates a strong link between high attendance levels and academic achievement. Non-attendance at Otahuhu College is a significant barrier to success and a key indicator of at-risk students. In New Zealand, every child has the right to attend school, and parents/caregivers are responsible for ensuring the attendance of all children up to age 16.

Under Section 48 of the Education and Training Act 2020, the Otahuhu College Board must take all reasonable steps to ensure students' attendance. Regular attendance is defined as attending over 90% of half-days.

Objectives

1. To monitor attendance effectively and implement interventions at appropriate thresholds.
 2. To support and guide students toward consistent attendance to achieve their potential.
 3. To align with the Ministry of Education's Stepped Attendance Response guidelines for managing absenteeism.
 4. To reduce the overall percentage of students classified as chronically absent (attendance below 70%).
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Key Procedures

1. Daily Monitoring and Communication:
 - Attendance will be recorded every half-day, and absences will be communicated to parents/caregivers promptly.
 - Parents/caregivers will receive regular updates on their child's attendance, including a summary of missed learning.
2. Threshold Interventions:
 - 10-15 Days Absent in a Term (Under 16 Years):

- Students will be referred to the Attendance Service for intervention.
 - Formal notifications will be sent to parents/caregivers, and meetings may be arranged to address barriers to attendance.
 - 15 or More Days Absent in a Term (Under 16 Years):
 - The school will notify Oranga Tamariki, following formal communication with parents/caregivers.
 - A multi-agency response may be initiated, including attendance services and support plans.
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Chronically Absent Students and Extracurricular Activities

Definition of Chronic Absence

A student is chronically absent when their attendance falls to 70% or below.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Students who are chronically absent from school will be ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities, including sports, cultural groups, and school events, unless they meet the following criteria:

1. Eligibility for Dispensation:

- Students must demonstrate improved attendance over four consecutive weeks, reaching at least 90% attendance during that period.
- Dispensation is at the discretion of the principal and will consider:
 - The student's reasons for prior absences (e.g., medical or family emergencies).
 - Commitment to future attendance improvements.
- Students who are granted a dispensation must maintain at least 90% attendance for the remainder of the activity period.

2. Ongoing Monitoring:

- If a student's attendance improves to above 70%, they will no longer be classified as chronically absent but must maintain improvements to participate fully in extracurricular activities.
- Attendance rates will be monitored weekly to ensure compliance with the dispensation agreement.

3. Revocation of Dispensation:

- If attendance drops below 90% after dispensation is granted, the student will immediately lose eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.
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Supporting Chronically Absent Students

1. Individual Attendance Plans:

- Guidance counselors and attendance officers will work with chronically absent students to identify barriers to attendance and create a personalized attendance plan.
- Plans will include milestones and regular check-ins to support students' return to consistent attendance.

2. School and Community Resources:

- Students may access in-school counseling, second-hand uniform, and other resources to alleviate barriers.
- Families will be connected with external services (e.g., Attendance Services, Oranga Tamariki) if absences persist despite school interventions.

3. Parental Involvement:

- Parents will be required to attend meetings to address reasons for absences and collaborate on strategies to support their child.
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Reporting and Review

The school will report attendance data, trends, and interventions to the Board of Trustees each term. The policy will be reviewed annually to align with Ministry of Education updates and community needs.
