



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS REGARDING SMS COMMUNICATIONS FOR STUDENT UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES AND LATE ARRIVALS

Mullaloo Beach Primary School has implemented a new system that will use mobile phone Short Message Service (SMS) to send text messages to parents/guardians/caregivers to notify them of an unexplained absence or late arrival of their child. SMS may also be used to provide information to parents such as school community notices and emergency/unplanned events such as school closures.

Parents will be informed by mobile phone SMS each time their child is absent when an explanation has not already been provided to the school. If your child is absent and a reason has been provided before the time the SMS is due to be sent, you will not receive a text message.

Mullaloo Beach Primary School is introducing SMS communications to build on existing attendance procedures such as notifying the school of a student's absence through the school app or calling the administration on 9307 2099. This is to ensure that parents are notified as soon as possible if their child is absent from school without an explanation. This system has been shown to assist in making schools (and parents) more aware of where students are and improve student attendance. These factors will enhance learning opportunities for all students and contribute to their safety.

ADVANTAGES OF USING SMS TO COMMUNICATE TO PARENTS.

- **Faster Communication**
It takes a long time for school staff to individually make phone calls to each parent. By using SMS we can get important messages to parents faster and can send a message to one or more people instantly. Parents can also use this system to notify the school of their child/ren's absence to avoid receiving a text message. The school can be contacted by SMS 24/7.
- **Cost effective**
It can be expensive, from a monetary and time perspective, for school staff to individually phone large numbers of parents regarding student absences. SMS communication to parents will be less expensive for the school and for parents replying via SMS. It also removes the need for parents to wait in telephone queues to provide an explanation for a student absence. The requirement for the school to issue absentee follow-up letters will also decrease.
- **Emergency Message**
If there is an emergency situation that requires rapid communication to parents this can be achieved using SMS. This communication would not usually be possible without the use of SMS.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SMS COMMUNICATIONS

As a parent, what do I need to do?

- You will be notified when the school is going to commence the use of SMS. If you know your child is going to be absent, please call the school well before the set SMS sending time which will be 10:30 am every day. If you do not contact the school, the SMS system will automatically send you a text message advising you that your child is not at school.
- If you do not wish to receive SMS communication regarding student unexplained absences, please contact the school to discuss other options for receiving this information.

How do I reply to an SMS message from the school?

When you receive an SMS about an absence, reply to the number and make sure that the text includes the student name, date of absence and reason for absence. Do not call the number as it is an automated system using a virtual number. Sample SMS Reply Message:

Jane Citizen, 11 Feb, Sick

What will it cost me?

Standard SMS charges apply, depending on your mobile phone carrier and plan. The cost of an SMS is usually cheaper than a local telephone call.

What if my mobile number changes?

Please notify the school *immediately* if your mobile number changes.

What if I don't have a mobile phone but I still want to receive messages about my child?

Contact the school to discuss the available options for receiving messages.

What if I decide that I don't want to receive the messages anymore?

Contact the school. A form will need to be completed to have your details removed from the SMS Messaging system.

What if there is a custodial order preventing contact?

The parent/guardian with legal custody of the child must provide evidence to the school in the form of a court order for the school to legally deny a parent/guardian access to any information about their child.

What are the requirements for notification of student absences?

It is a legal requirement that parents contact the school regarding any student absences or reasons for lateness. If an explanation for the absence has been provided prior to 9:45 am each morning, then parents will not receive an SMS.

Parents need to be aware that this system is an additional absence follow up service only. There will be times when parents may not receive a text message due to technical issues. In cases where you are concerned about your child's attendance, please contact the school directly on 9307 2099.

If you have any other questions regarding the SMS Communications plan for Mullaloo Beach Primary School, please call the Manager of Corporate Services Cathlin Ryan on 9307 2099 for more information.

Michael Black
Principal

