



ADDRESSING ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOLS PROCEDURES

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MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

**ADDRESSING SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE
PROEDURES**





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01

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCEDURES

- / To record, excuse, monitor and follow up student attendance in order to meet the requirements of the Education Act 2012.
- / To provide a uniform reporting system and procedure to be followed by all schools.
- / To facilitate the implementation of the policy amongst the various stakeholders.

02

REPORTING OF ATTENDANCE

2.1

Responsibility of Head of School

The Head of School has a pivotal role in the effective implementation of this policy. The final goal of this policy is students' attainment. Thus it is of critical importance that the judgments taken for un/justified absenteeism be taken in a context of learning and attainment.

2.1.1

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that attendance records are maintained in the approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.

2.1.2

The medical certificates presented by the parents have to satisfy a list of validity criteria (Appendix 1). If this is not the case, the Head of School has to refuse the medical certificate and inform the parent that it is not valid.

2.1.3

The Head of School is to ensure that parents of compulsory school aged students (5 to 16 years) are to be informed of their legal obligations with regards to their son/daughter's regular school attendance every beginning of the scholastic year.

2.1.4

Parents are to be informed about the procedures which are to be followed in case of absences and the consequences faced if these procedures are not adhered to Appendix 2. It is being suggested that the non-attendance procedures are published in school diaries, newsletters, school websites and other platforms. It is to be made clear that there will be zero tolerance to unauthorised absences from school.

2.1.5

A Medical Certificate Record Card (MCRC) is to be provided to each student. Parents are to take the MCRC when they visit the general practitioner (GP) who will issue a medical certificate to be submitted to the school when student is sick. The GP is to fill in the MCRC (Appendix 3). The parent is to submit the medical certificate together with the MCRC to the school within the stipulated time frame (Clause 3.2). Hence, parents have the responsibility for the proper use of the MCRC. If lost the MCRC will be replaced only once each scholastic year. Upon receipt a school staff member will sign the MCRC as well as input the date of receipt.

2.1.6

Schools are to ensure that they have updated contact details of students. Parents are to inform the school immediately when any details change.

2.1.7

It is good practice to promote a culture of school attendance amongst pupils attending kindergarten classes (up to age 5) as regular attendance from a very young age will promote healthy development and good performance in later years in school. For this reason parents with children up to age 5 are to be educated in the importance of schooling and in ensuring that their child attends school regularly.

2.1.8

During parents' day an attendance report is to be part of the agenda discussed with the parents.

2.1.9

It is the responsibility of the Head of School to detect at the earliest, issues related to non-attendance. Even in justified absences, the Head of School should reflect about the meaning of such absences and may refer to the Education Psycho-Social Services for consultation and intervention as necessary.

2.2

The Responsibility of the Social Worker

2.2.1

To initiate contact with the student and his family after student is referred by the school if their attempts did not result in bringing back the student to school.

2.2.2

To assess and identify the sources leading to absenteeism.

2.2.3

To formulate an action plan to target sources leading to absenteeism in collaboration with the SMT and other professionals within and outside the Education Directorates.

2.2.4

To create a link between the student, his family and the school.

2.2.5

To support the school with queries related to these procedures.

03

ELECTRONIC REPORTING OF ATTENDANCE

3.1

Attendance is to be inputted on the E1 platform before 10am on a daily basis so that parents receive the SMS notifying them of their child's absence on time.

3.2

In the case of a student who is sick, a Medical Certificate is to be presented within three days from the actual date that the student returns to school and the student should be marked on the E1 Platform under the heading 'Medical'. If the student is sick for more than 5 consecutive school days, the medical certificate has to be handed in by the end of the fifth day. If the student is sick for more than 5 consecutive days, the first medical certificate has to be handed in by the end of the fifth day when in primary and on the first day the student returns to school if he attends a middle or secondary school'.

3.3

Students who do not attend school without justification should be marked as 'Absent'. If a student is present in the morning but leaves later in the day this needs to be noted on the E1 platform.

3.4

If parents inform the school that a student is sick she/he is marked as excused on the E1 platform for the first 2 days and absent from the 3rd day onwards, until and if a medical certificate is provided within the stipulated timeframe (clause 3.2).

3.5

If a student was originally marked as 'Absent' and a medical certificate is presented within the stipulated time as indicated in Clause 3.2, the data on the E1 Platform is to be updated immediately.

3.6

Parents can phone or send a note to the Head of School to explain their son/daughter's absence. It is at the discretion of the Head of School to accept or reject the parents' explanation and parents are informed accordingly. If parents inform the school by phone, a written note should be forwarded to the school. If the Head of School deems the explanation to be reasonable the student should be marked as 'Excused'. The reasons include family health issues, hospital visits, death of family members, funerals, severe weather conditions and trips abroad of less than 3 weeks (for medical or other serious family reasons, like funerals, weddings, cultural and educational trips etc.). If the Head of School is not satisfied with the explanation given, students are to be marked as 'Absent' and is to inform parents. The Head of School should not, in any circumstance, ask parents to produce a medical certificate to justify absences unless the student was reported sick.

3.7

The SMT shall fill in and send the SEWO7 form to parents of students who fail to attend school for more than three (3) days during a particular month and report them to the Education Social Work Service within

the Student Services Department, Hamrun (DSS) by the 12th day of the following month if the parents do not provide a valid justification within the stipulated timeframe indicated in the form.

3.8

Such reporting is to be registered through the appropriate school absentee forms (SEWO7 and SEWO7B forms) as approved by the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) which are to be duly filled in and signed by the Head of School or his/her delegate.

3.9

If the Head of School notes that a student is habitually absent even if this long term absence is covered by medical certificates, s/he is to refer the student to the Social Worker based in the respective College by filling in the appropriate referral form.

3.10

Functions organized by the school and approved by the DES where students are requested not to attend school are to be noted on the E1 Platform.

3.11

A student is considered in attendance at school when involved in an outside curriculum program or other educational activity organised by the school or Directorates, or where the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions and the educational plan for the student.

04

SPECIFIC RECORDING PROCEDURES ACCORDING TO THE LEVEL OF SCHOOLING.

4.1 Kindergarten

4.1.1

Attendance of Kindergarten students is to be inputted on the E1 Platform whereby only the “Absent” code is used if a student is absent for any reason.

4.1.2

Absent notes are to be sent to parents only if the school is concerned about the habitual absenteeism of the student concerned. Heads of School are encouraged to provide support services to families.

4.1.3

No medical certificate is required.

4.1.4

At the end of the 3rd term, the last day that attendance is recorded on the E1 Platform for Kindergarten Students should coincide with the last day of exams taken by Year 4, 5 and 6.

4.1.5

Students who turn 5 years of age in Kindergarten are legally obliged to attend school every day, in which case the procedures mentioned in the General section and in the Primary School Section, will begin to apply.

4.2

Primary Schools (Years 1 to 6)

4.2.1

Attendance of students in Primary Schools has to follow the official school calendar as issued by the DES at the beginning of each scholastic year.

4.2.2

The last day for each term that is recorded for attendance purposes should follow the above calendar.

4.2.3

At the end of the third term the last day that attendance is recorded even for year 1, 2 and 3 students should coincide with the last day of exams that are taken by Year 4, 5 and 6.

4.3

Middle and Secondary Schools (Years 7 to 11)

4.3.1

Years 7 to 10:

4.3.1.1

Attendance of students in Middle and Secondary Schools has to follow the official school calendar as issued by the DES at the beginning of each scholastic year.

4.3.1.2

The last day for each term that is recorded for attendance purposes should follow the above calendar.

4.3.1.3

At the end of the third term the last day that attendance is recorded on the E1 Platform should coincide with the last day of annual examinations for students in Years 7 to 10.

4.3.1.4

On those days when examinations are not held, students are to be recorded under 'Excused'.

4.3.2

Year 11:

4.3.2.1

Attendance still has to be inputted on a regular basis as with other grades, till the end of the second term. However, in the case of students sitting for the MATSEC Examinations the following procedure is to be followed:

- (i) Prior to the commencement of the MATSEC written examinations, students will be allowed a one week study period. Within this one week study period, students are marked under 'Excused'.
- (ii) Students sitting for practical/oral MATSEC examinations not within the time frame of the one week study period, are to be exempted, on presentation of the official MATSEC notification/Time-table, from attending school on the day of the practical/oral examinations and should be marked under 'Exempt'.
- (iii) Parents will be informed that students can avail themselves of a one week study period prior to commencement of the written MATSEC examinations and they are to sign a proforma acceptance form as approved by DES.

4.3.2.2

Students turning 16 years after the beginning of Year 11 are still legally obliged to complete the scholastic year. Hence, these students' attendance is to be inputted and absenteeism reported accordingly.

4.3.2.3

The attendance of students following the Alternative Learning Programme will be inputted on a regular basis as with other forms, till the end of the term. At the end of the third term the last day that attendance is recorded on the E1 Platform should coincide with the last day of annual examinations for students in Years 7 to 10.

05



CHANGES TO THE GUIDELINES

5.1

Any changes to procedures that are deemed necessary with regards to these guidelines will be communicated through a letter circular issued by the Directorate for Educational Services.

06

APPENDIX 1

VALID MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

What constitutes a 'valid' medical certificate?

A Head of School shall only accept a certificate of illness if such certificate contains the following information:

- (a) the name, surname and registration number of practitioner;
- (b) the name of the student;
- (c) class and school of the student;
- (d) the date of the examination or the date of issuing of the certificate of illness - the school shall not accept a medical certificate that does not show the date of issue or consultation;
- (e) the exact period of recommended absence from school due to illness. Certificate must be renewed after a period of 7 consecutive days;
- (f) the certificate is submitted by not later than 3 days after the student returns to school. Nonetheless, if the student is sick for more than 5 consecutive school days, the certificate has to be handed in by the end of the fifth day when in primary and on the first day the student returns to school if he attends a middle or secondary school

APPENDIX 2

Information to Parents

Justified absence

- / If a student is absent only one day, a written justification from a parent to the Head of School will be enough. If the child is sick and visits a doctor, the note can be replaced by the medical certificate. In each instance, the Head of School will inform the parents if the justification was accepted or not. If the justification is not accepted, student will be marked as absent.
- / When a student is sick for more than 3 days a medical certificate is then required.
- / A student is also excused with justified absence if the Head of School is presented with valid documentation (examples: in case of emergency family travel abroad, musical exams falling on school days, students representing the nation in activities abroad, bereavement, etc...).

Unjustified absence

- / A student is habitually absent if he/she is absent for 3 or more days without any justification. In the interest of the student, the Head of School may not accept the justification by the parent and ask for a formal medical certificate when a child is sick.
- / When a student has been absent for 9 days (cumulative) without any justification, the Education Psycho-Social Services Personnel will intervene to address the problem at an early stage.

Child Benefit Supplement

MEDE and MFSS agreed on the proposed way forward:

- / MEDE will pass on data of school attendance for the students in the child benefit scheme to MFSS at each end of the scholastic year.
- / Justified absence will be considered as part of the 95% attendance. Only unjustified attendance will be noted as absent.

APPENDIX 3

Medical Certificate Record Card

For a printable version of the Medical Certificate Record Card see page 16 & 17

