# Operational Policy: Homai Campus School Attendance (NAG 6)

## Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ

## Statement of Intent:

Every child has the right to an education – from the age of six years there is a legal requirement for ākonga to attend school. Parents and schools have an obligation to ensure ākonga are enrolled in and are attending school. Ākonga who are present and engaged at school learn and achieve.

The Education Act 1989 ("the Act") and the Education (School Attendance) Regulations 1951 ("the Regulations") impose legal obligations on school boards of trustees, principals, teachers, and parents that relate to ākonga enrolment and attendance at school.

Every person who is required to be enrolled at a registered school must attend the school whenever it is open unless they are exempted from attendance in accordance with the Act.

The Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) will take all reasonable steps to follow Section 25 and Section 31 of the Act in terms of making sure ākonga attend school when it is open.

## Policy Requirements:

1. The Homai Campus School will take pro-active steps to increase ākonga attendance and will make all attempts to work with families to support their child’s attendance at school.

2. Ākonga attendance will be recorded twice daily on the School’s Student Management System (Etap); together with the reason for any absence.

3. Lateness will be recorded in the Student Management System as well as the time the ākonga arrived at school.

4. Parents/caregivers will be contacted as soon as is practicable in relation to any unexplained or unjustified absence.

5. Protocols will be developed on the recording of ākonga attendance and on the steps which the school will take in order to maximise ākonga attendance. The protocols will include an outline of which kinds of absence are considered as ‘justified’, together with steps to be taken in the case of ‘unjustified’ absences.

6. Stand-down, suspension, exclusion and expulsion procedures will be undertaken following the guidelines in the Ākonga Support Handbook.

## Supporting Documents:

Attendance Register within the Student Management System (can be accessed through

Etap).

[Managing student attendance – Education in New Zealand](https://www.education.govt.nz/school/managing-and-supporting-students/managing-student-attendance/)

[Legal responsibilities and national guidelines for schools on attendance – Education in New Zealand](https://www.education.govt.nz/school/managing-and-supporting-students/managing-student-attendance/legal-responsibilities/)

Approved: 

Date: 7 July 2021

Next Review: 2024

# Procedure / Protocols

## Recording attendance

1. Ākonga attendance will be recorded electronically by the class teacher (whether that be the class teacher or a different teacher – eg a relieving teacher) using the school’s Student Management System in the classroom two times a day, at the beginning of morning school, and at the beginning of afternoon school.

2. For ākonga who are absent, the class teacher will record the code for the absence, “P” if present, “l” if late, “?” if absent.

3. The teacher will record lateness to school, as well as the time the ākonga arrived at school and any authorised or unauthorised intermittent periods of absence during the school day.

4. Whenever possible, parents/caregivers will be encouraged to advise the school of an impending absence ahead of time. When this is not possible, then parents/caregivers will be asked to inform the school as soon as possible (e.g. by phone on the day of a child’s illness).

5. The following methods of explaining ākonga absences, either before or after the event, will be accepted from parents/caregivers to the class teacher, senior teacher or coordinator school programmes:

a) a phone call

b) a face-to-face explanation

c) a note

) a text message

e) an email message

6. Half an hour after the start of morning and afternoon school, the School and Residential Administration staff will use the SMS to identify the ākonga who are absent. In the case of those for whom no explanation has been received by the school, they will contact a parent/caregiver by phone. If an explanation is received this will be recorded as the reason for the absence in the SMS, using the Attendance Codes 2011. All contacts and attempted contacts will be recorded in Etap.

7. If the absence remains unexplained when the ākonga returns to school, the class teacher will seek to obtain an absence note through the home/school notebook or contact the parents/caregivers by phone. If no satisfactory explanation for an absence has been received by the school within a week of the return to school then the class teacher will record the ākonga as having been truant. (If a satisfactory explanation is subsequently received, then the coding of the absence will be changed by the class teacher – and the change shown in the register.)

8. Once each term, the Senior Manager School will review the school’s attendance/ absence statistics and where there is a concern, will discuss it with the relevant class teacher with a view to agreeing on a strategy to deal with the concern. This may be delegated to the Coordinator School Programmes.

* If there are a number of unexplained absences a reminder will go home to provide an opportunity for the family to provide the reason for the absence.

(Stage 1)

* If concern continues a meeting with the family will be requested to work with the family to improve absence. The legal obligations of the family will be outlined also at this meeting. (Stage 2)
* If the unexplained absences persist a warning letter will be sent that indicates that other agencies may be involved e.g. Attendance Services, Ākonga Teams. (Stage 3). This and the previous 2 stages may occur more than once.
* If despite all the above the attendance does not improve discussion will be held with the Principal and Board of Trustees Chairperson and a formal warning letter will be sent that indicates legal action. It will still offer the opportunity for discussion. (Stage 4)

9. Information on attendance requirements and absence protocols will be given to parents/caregivers as part of the school’s Enrolment Pack. This information will also be placed on the school’s website and a reminder notice will be put in the school newsletter at least once a year.

10. In order to comply with the requirements of a roll audit paper returns will be completed for five days around 1 March and 1 July and retained (ie for the two school days prior to the date in question, on that date, and for the two school days immediately after that date). On these days, in addition to recording ākonga attendance and absences in the SMS as usual, the class teacher will also record this information on printed class lists, which they will sign. These lists are to be stored centrally and may be asked for during a roll audit.

11. In the case of ākonga who is engaged in learning that is taking place not under the direct supervision of the school, the Senior Manager School will use their discretion to decide as to whether the ākonga will be marked as present or absent from school. Each case will be taken on its merits.

### Examples of Justified Absences

Cultural or sporting representation (regional or national)

Bereavement

Force majeure – road closure, flooding, bus breakdown, car accident, fire, earthquake

Exceptional family circumstance

Illness

Appointment other than medical / dental

Exam leave

Bullying – if being followed up at school

Medical or dental appointment

Internal school activity

### Examples of Unjustified Absences

No explanation – truancy

Holiday in New Zealand

Holiday overseas

Sleeping in

Recovering from weekend’s activities

Sales/shopping/birthday

Cat run over

Babysitting (could possibly fit into exceptional family circumstances)

Mother sick – child had to cook and clean

Waiting for a service person to call

Visiting an ill relative

Taking the dog to the vet

Moving house, packing, unpacking

Working early morning – always late

Travel and attending sporting event or concert.