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|  | Case Study |

# Carisbrook Primary School

Carisbrook Primary School has an enrolment of 250 students from grade Prep to Year 6. The school has an SFO of 0.6341 and is located in a rural socio-economically disadvantaged area. The children that attend the school come from the township of Carisbrook, surrounding farming areas and the east side of Maryborough.

### The project

The attendance rate at school was low. The school set out to work with parents and students to improve school attendance.

### Key actions

* Attendance was measured as a percentage at the end of each term. Children with days below the target (1/4 of state average) were awarded an attendance wrist band. These bands were printed with attendance slogans on them such as: *It’s not ok to be away* or *School every day is the only way!* Attendance certificates were then introduced to complement the bands and an end of term attendance assembly was introduced to award the bands and wrist bands. Because attendance improved significantly, children achieving 100% attendance in a term were also presented to the school and awarded a small award, for example a pen, eraser or other small stationery item.
* Class attendance was monitored, with each grade’s attendance aggregated and shared in the school newsletter at the end of each week. The winning grade received a certificate presented at assembly. Each grade displayed the certificate and competed with other classes to try to get the most certificates for the year.
* After one year the school introduced an attendance mascot “Right on Redback” – school colours are red and black and the local sporting team is the Carisbrook Redbacks. This mascot is mounted on a trophy and is housed in the winning class from the previous week.
* The school introduced an attendance diary. Daily absences are recorded in the diary, with phone calls made to parents for all unexplained absences. When parents are called, they are reminded of their responsibility to let the school know why their child is absent. Issues such as days off for shopping, and other unapproved absences, are also discussed with the parent over the phone. These calls are made by either the school principal or office administration staff.

### Evidence of success

* Improved whole school attendance by term and year
* Very good attendance rates in the P/1/2 area
* Improved attendance from students who were once major absentees from school. Several won 100% attendance term awards because they wanted to do it!
* All staff and the majority of students and parents now value the importance of high attendance rates
* The majority of parents phone when their child is absent to explain why they are away and when they will be back.
* If a child is going on holidays, parents now call in to collect set work to complete while away.

### Estimated cost of project

Implementing these attendance improvement strategies costs approximately $1000 per year.

### The future

The project will continue at the school, with modifications made on a needs basis. When a better way to do something becomes apparent, a change is made. The school anticipates that the wristbands, certificates, awards, mascot and attendance phone calls/diary will continue because they have seen such an improvement.

### Advice to other schools

*“It’s a major job… but certainly worth it, as no matter how good your teachers are, they can’t teach children effectively if they aren’t at school. A school could have the best teaching and learning occurring, so combine that with high attendance, you have a much better chance of getting improved outcomes for students.”*

*“The area of concern is momentum – you need to keep it fresh in the minds of families, children and staff. The project will only work if it gets regular attention from all parties involved…”*