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|  | Case study  |

# Guthrie Street Primary School, Shepparton

Guthrie Street Primary School is a school of 500 students. The school is located in the south end of Shepparton. The school has students from a range of backgrounds, cultures and socio-economic environments.

### The project

Improving school attendance – when the school started this project to focus on student attendance, students averaged 15 days absence per year.

### Key objectives

Regular attendance at school provides students with the strong foundations necessary to develop academic skills and emotional and social connections.

Guthrie Street Primary School aimed to reduce the average absence days per student to less than 12 days per year.

### Key actions

Key actions in improving attendance at Guthrie Street included:

* Comprehensively focusing on attendance data at a whole of school, cohort, classroom and individual student level
* Regularly monitoring and sharing data with teachers, parents and children
* Brainstorming strategies to improve attendance at the school (see below)
* Setting an attendance target to reduce absence
* Including attendance data goals in teacher Performance & Development Plans
* Celebrating successes
* Creating Action Plans for those with irregular attendance.

### Strategies implemented to improve attendance

* A strong focus on building school connections for students, for example: relationships with teachers, friendships and connections with the curriculum.
* Parents are encouraged to engage and participate in the school, for example: daily morning reading program, special event days (Mother’s Day and Father’s Day breakfasts) and excursions.
* Emotional intelligence is explicitly taught across the school. This contributes to developing an environment where children feel safe and respected.
* Links have been established or strengthened with community health and welfare agencies to support families in need.
* Teachers identify students in their class who have a history of poor attendance and develop strategies to improve their attendance performance (goals are set as part of Performance & Development Plan).
* Teachers take responsibility for following up all absences of greater than one day with a phone call.
* The newsletter is used to regularly communicate the importance of daily attendance at school.
* Goals for attendance performance are set and communicated at a whole of school, classroom and for some students at an individual level.
* Good attendance is recognised and rewarded. Certificates are awarded at the end of each term recognising both 100% and 95% attendance. End of year awards are given for children who have attended school every day.
* The principal meets with parents of students with chronic absenteeism. Discussion at these meetings focuses on the importance of regular attendance and how the school can support the family to achieve this.

### Evidence of success

* Guthrie Street Primary School was able to reduce the average absence rate per student to below 12 days per year.
* Students now strive to receive term certificates and recognise that their attendance at school is valued.
* The 100% Yearly Attendance Award has become a highly respected school award.
* Significant improvements have been made with individual Koorie student data.
* Parents often comment on the eagerness of their children to attend school to achieve the acknowledgement that comes with regular attendance.
* Success with a number of students who had chronic absenteeism.

### Estimated cost of project

The only financial cost is the cost of printing termly certificates and purchasing yearly attendance awards.

The major requirement is time and effort.

### The future

This project is ongoing. The school still has a number of students whose attendance remains a concern. Teachers continue to work with these families to bring about the improvement that is needed to provide the student with the opportunity to reach their academic, social and emotional potential.