



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Implementing the Stepped Attendance Response (STAR)

Guidance for School Leaders

About

This document provides prompts to help you develop or refine your attendance strategy and embed the STAR. In this context 'attendance strategy' refers to your school's policies, procedures, practices, and plans related to attendance. References to 'parents' include anyone who is a student's parent or legal guardian. These prompts will help you review your current practices, align them with the STAR, reflect on your approach, and identify areas for improvement.

This guidance includes:

- information on the STAR, including its purpose and context
- what an effective attendance strategy looks like
- what to consider when reviewing your current strategy
- the benefits of the STAR, and how it can strengthen your current attendance strategy
- tools to support you to incorporate new activities
- guidance for embedding changes to your practice
- planning for future reviews of your attendance strategy



Context for the STAR

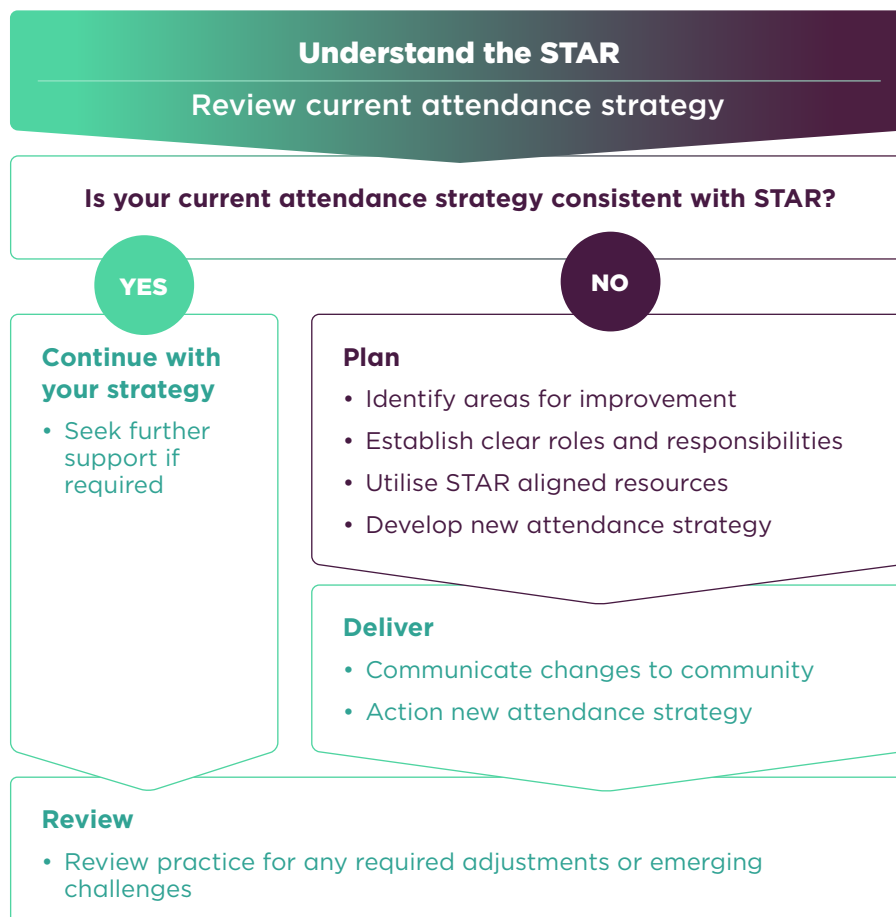
The STAR sets expectations for school, student, parent/guardian, Ministry of Education and broader system responses to student absence. It provides a series of activities that should be considered when students meet absence thresholds.

The STAR and supports for using it, including this, are available on the Ministry of Education's website: [Stepped Attendance Response \(STAR\)](#).

Regular attendance rates have declined in New Zealand over the last decade. The Government has made it a priority to lift attendance in schools with the goal of 80% of students attending 90% of the time by 2030. Lifting school attendance will allow all learners opportunities to learn and to connect with others, setting the foundation for future success.

We encourage you to start using the STAR and adapt it to your needs from Term 1, 2025. It will help provide a model to develop your Attendance Management Plan (AMP) in the future. For most, embedding the STAR will involve making minor changes to your current practices. For some, this change may require support from the Ministry of Education.

Overarching process for updating your attendance strategy



Reviewing your attendance strategy

Principles of good attendance practice

Before reviewing your strategy, it's important to understand what an effective attendance strategy looks like.

In an effective attendance strategy:

1. Everyone knows their role

Parents, school leadership, boards and the Ministry of Education understand their roles in working together to lift school attendance and achieve better outcomes.

2. Attendance is a priority, and everyone knows why

The links between attendance and achieving in schools are clearly communicated, promoted, and understood by all.

3. There are escalating responses that respond to absences early

Responding early and consistently allows for schools and parents to stop attendance issues from turning into bigger problems.

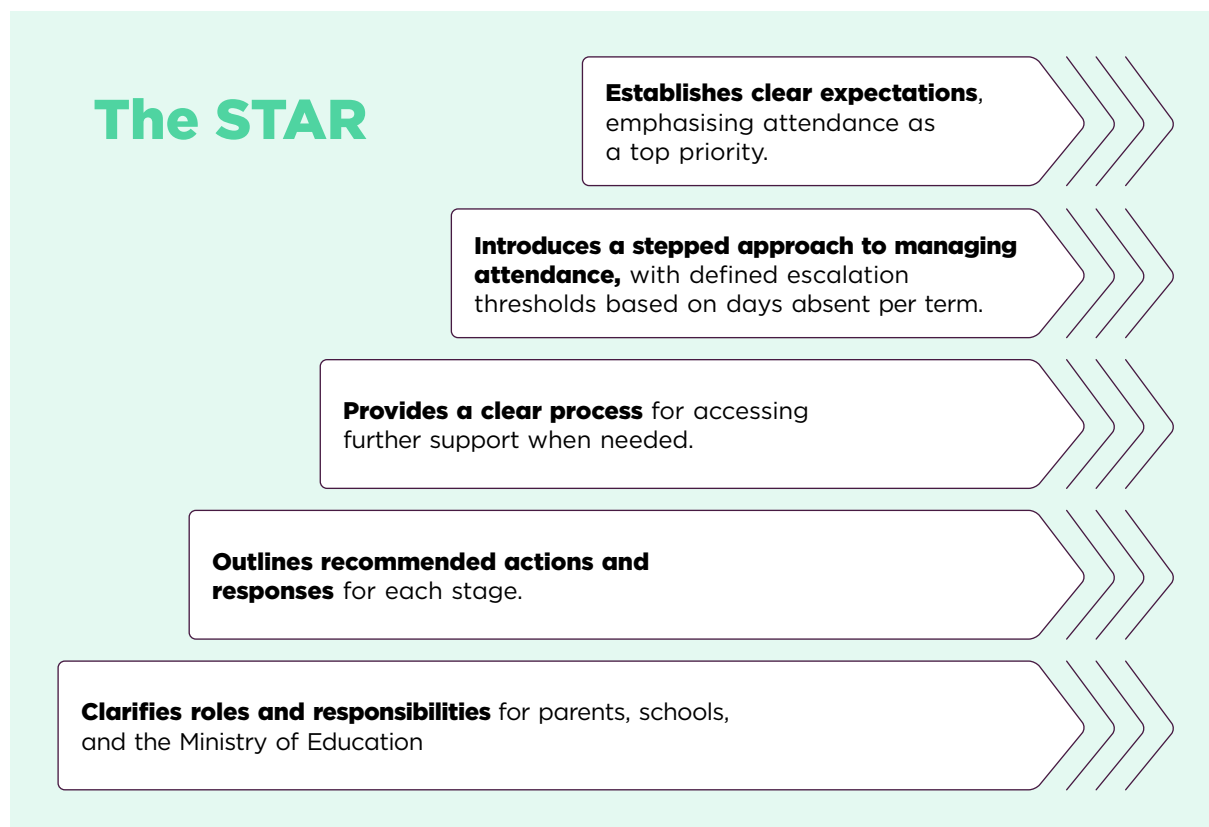
Review your current attendance strategy

Consider the following questions to guide your review:

- When was our attendance strategy created?
- Who did we engage with from our community?
- Is it still relevant and aligned with our current goals?
- When was it most recently updated?
- What prompted the last update, what was changed and what impact did it have?
- Does our attendance strategy reflect the current needs of our school community?
- Have there been significant changes in our community that require adjustments?
- What about our school needs to be reflected in our approach?
- Are our values and the needs of our community clearly represented in the strategy?
- Does our practice reflect what is in the strategy?
- Have we adapted our practices to address emerging challenges or requirements?

Planning changes to your attendance strategy

How the STAR can improve your school's attendance strategy








Identifying opportunities for improvement





Your school may already be using aspects of the STAR. The tables below show examples of activities included in the STAR, what they might look like, and who could be responsible for them. There's also space to take notes and reflect on any actions needed to incorporate activities not yet part of your current practice. (See the tables on the next four pages.)

It is important when embedding any new strategy, to draw on the relationships and connections your school already has with its community. Ensure your strategy reflects and builds on this existing foundation to suit the context of your school and community.




▼ Day-to-day operations

Activities included in the STAR	What this may look like in practice	Who within your school might be responsible	Note any actions your school may need to incorporate these activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set attendance targets and regularly review attendance data Communicate clearly with parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expectations, procedures and follow-up steps the school will take when a student is absent. 	Use enrolment forms, newsletters, website or other communication methods to set expectations and provide guidance to parents	School leadership and School board 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess attendance history of new students and share attendance history when students move between schools 	<p>Contact previous school to request attendance records</p> <p>Identify any issues or trends in attendance history</p>	Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Act early in following up absences to support students to stay engaged 	Have procedures in place (and supporting software) to quickly identify all student absences and communicate these to parents	Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use school-wide strategies, including strong relationships and minimising disruptions to the school day and week 	<p>Utilise trauma informed practices or PB4L and regular PLD opportunities</p> <p>School boards and school leadership prioritise school hours to be for learning</p>	School leadership 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escalate as needed, develop support plans, involve other services, consider referral to Attendance Services 	Seek more support as needed	School leadership and Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one) 	



▼ For students with less than 5 days absence in a school term

Activities included in the STAR	What this may look like in practice	Who within your school might be responsible	Note any actions your school may need to incorporate these activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate to parents about every absence Maintain contact details of parents 	Have procedures in place (and supporting software) to quickly identify all student absences and communicate these to parents	Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with regular updates on their own attendance 	Provide regular reporting via online portals and classroom discussions	Teachers 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report regularly to parents on attendance of their child 	Notify every absence, providing weekly, or term reports through school communication methods	Teachers or Administration team 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attending school to continue learning if unable to attend school every day, including using Ministry approved well-being or transitional plans, or health schools where appropriate to access other education pathways where appropriate 	Communicate to parents the supports available to assist them to get their children to school and alternatives	In-School attendance team (if your school has one) 	






▼ For students with up to 10 days absence in a school term

Activities included in the STAR	What this may look like in practice	Who within your school might be responsible	Note any actions your school may need to incorporate these activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning 	Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education	Teacher or In-School attendance team 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support students to catch up missed learning where required 	<p>Identify missed learning objectives and providing notes or activities to bring student back up to speed</p> <p>Support students reintegrate into life of school and restore friendships</p>	Teacher 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counsellor, alternative timetables, PB4L 	Make parents and students aware of additional resources and support to access them	In-School attendance team 	

▼ For students with up to 15 days absence in a school term

Activities included in the STAR	What this may look like in practice	Who within your school might be responsible	Note any actions your school may need to incorporate these activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parent to escalate concerns • Hold meeting to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan • Develop and implement a support plan tailored to the reasons and circumstances around the child's absence 	Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education	Teacher and/or School leadership and/or In-School attendance team 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers and request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed. 	Engage with the Ministry of Education attendance services to find out about options for support	In-School attendance team 	

▼ For students with 15 days or more absence in a school term

Activities included in the STAR	What this may look like in practice	Who within your school might be responsible	Note any actions your school may need to incorporate these activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parents to inform of escalated response 	Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education	School leadership 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed • Participate in multi-agency response 	Refer to Ministry of Education attendance services or other agencies Support access to services and collaborating with specialists	School leadership and In-School attendance team 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain implementation and monitoring of support plan 	Hold everyone accountable for their part in the plan, and take action quickly where expectations aren't being met	In-School attendance team 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake school-led prosecution, or request Ministry-led prosecution, when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up 	Engage with Ministry of Education to discuss options available and required steps to take: Attendance.Prosecutions@education.govt.nz	School leadership and School board 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unenrol students who will not be returning to school. 	Update ENROL as soon as school is made aware a student will not be returning and complete a non-enrolled notification Share information with other agencies	School leadership and Administration team 	

Using your updated attendance strategy

Embedding changes to your practice

Set a date where your changes in practice will come into effect and communicate this with your staff and school community. Follow the plan you have agreed on.

Embedding changes may take time. Consider what supports you might need to identify and manage any issues. This might include channels for staff and students to let you know what isn't working as intended.

As well as designing your attendance strategy it may also be helpful to schedule a review to make any adjustments or address any emerging challenges.

Planning future reviews

Reviewing your strategy regularly will help to identify areas for improvement. It will also ensure your strategy continues to meet the needs of your community.

In preparing for future reviews, you may want to consider:

Item	Key Considerations	Notes
Frequency of reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How frequently will reviews take place?	
Responsibility for reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who is responsible for ensuring these reviews happen?	
Scope of the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What will the review cover?How will it focus on implementation, adherence, or the effectiveness of the overall strategy?	
Data for reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What data will be used to support the review process?	
Participants in the review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who will be involved? Consider school leaders, parents, and the Attendance Service.	
Measuring effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How will you determine if the attendance strategy is working?	
Triggers for additional reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are there specific triggers for conducting reviews outside of the regular review cycle?	

For further support

Contact your local [Ministry of Education regional office](#) for assistance or additional resources.



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