

# How to use the Stepped Attendance Response (STAR)



Te Tāhuhu o  
te Mātauranga  
Ministry of Education

## Information for School Leaders

### About

This document provides prompts to help you embed the STAR in your practice. These prompts will help you assess your current practices, align them with the STAR, reflect on your approach, and identify areas for improvement. References to 'parents' include anyone who is a student's parent or legal guardian.

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 \(STAR\)](#).



# 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 five pages.)

It is important when embedding any new strategy, to draw on the relationships and connections your school already has with its community. Develop your strategy to reflect and build on these existing foundations to suit the context of your school and community

## For further support

- Utilise STAR-aligned resources from the Ministry of Education to assist you.
- More resources available here: [education.govt.nz/stepped-attendance-response-star](https://education.govt.nz/stepped-attendance-response-star)
- Contact your local [Ministry of Education regional office](#) for assistance or additional resources.

## ▼ 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"> <li>Set attendance targets and regularly review attendance data</li> <li>Communicate clearly with parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expectations, procedures and follow-up steps the school will take when a student is absent.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <p>Use enrolment forms, newsletters, website or other communication methods to set expectations and provide guidance to parents</p>                                  | <p>School leadership and School board</p>                                                                 |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess attendance history of new students and share attendance history when students move between schools</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             | <p>Contact previous school to request attendance records</p> <p>Identify any issues or trends in attendance history</p>                                              | <p>Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one)</p>                          |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Act early in following up absences to support students to stay engaged</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Have procedures in place (and supporting software) to quickly identify all student absences and communicate these to parents</p>                                  | <p>Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one)</p>                         |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use school-wide strategies, including strong relationships and minimising disruptions to the school day and week</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      | <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> | <p>School leadership</p>                                                                                |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Escalate as needed, develop support plans, involve other services, consider referral to Attendance Services</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                           | <p>Seek more support as needed</p>                                                                                                                                   | <p>School leadership and Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one)</p>  |                                                                       |

## ▼ 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"> <li>Communicate to parents about every absence</li> <li>Maintain contact details of parents</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 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)<br> |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide students with regular updates on their own attendance</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Provide regular reporting via online portals and classroom discussions                                                       | Teachers<br>                                                                  |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report regularly to parents on attendance of their child</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Notify every absence, providing weekly, or term reports through school communication methods                                 | Teachers or Administration team<br>                                           |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attending school</li> <li>to continue learning if unable to attend school every day, including using Ministry approved well-being or transitional plans, or health schools where appropriate</li> <li>to access other education pathways where appropriate</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | 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)<br>                      |                                                                       |

Additional notes:

## ▼ 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"> <li><b>Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning</b></li> </ul>                                   | Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education                                                                                                                          | Teacher or In-School attendance team<br> |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Support students to catch up missed learning where required</b></li> </ul>                                             | <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<br>                              |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counsellor, alternative timetables, PB4L</b></li> </ul> | Make parents and students aware of additional resources and support to access them                                                                                                             | In-School attendance team<br>            |                                                                       |

Additional notes:

## ▼ 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"> <li>• <b>Contact parent to escalate concerns</b></li> <li>• <b>Hold meeting to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop and implement a support plan tailored to the reasons and circumstances around the child's absence</b></li> </ul> | Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education                           | Teacher and/or School leadership and/or In-School attendance team<br> |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers and request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed.</b></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                 | Engage with the Ministry of Education attendance services to find out about options for support | In-School attendance team<br>                                         |                                                                       |

Additional notes:

## ▼ 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"> <li>• <b>Contact parents to inform of escalated response</b></li> </ul>                                                                                             | Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education                                                                                                                               | School leadership<br>                               |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed</b></li> <li>• <b>Participate in multi-agency response</b></li> </ul>                  | Request support from Attendance Services or other agencies<br><br>Support access to services and collaborating with specialists                                                                     | School leadership and In-School attendance team<br> |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maintain implementation and monitoring of support plan</b></li> </ul>                                                                                      | Hold everyone accountable for their part in the plan, and take action quickly where expectations aren't being met                                                                                   | In-School attendance team<br>                       |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Undertake school-led prosecution, or request Ministry-led prosecution, when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up</b></li> </ul> | Engage with Ministry of Education to discuss options available and required steps to take: <a href="mailto:Attendance.Prosecutions@education.govt.nz">Attendance.Prosecutions@education.govt.nz</a> | School leadership and School board<br>              |                                                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unenrol students who will not be returning to school.</b></li> </ul>                                                                                       | Update ENROL as soon as school is made aware a student will not be returning and complete a non-enrolled notification<br><br>Share information with other agencies                                  | School leadership and Administration team<br>     |                                                                       |

Additional notes:



**Te Tāhuhu o  
te Mātauranga**  
Ministry of Education



**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

**education.govt.nz**