Stepped Attendance Response – STAR

Responding to all absence

The Government's target is for **80% of students to attend regularly,** that is to attend school more than 90% of the time

Good chance of success	Less chance of success	Hard to make progress	Very hard to make progress
GOOD ATTENDANCE	**WORRYING ATTENDANCE**	**CONCERNING ATTENDANCE**	**VERY CONCERNING ATTENDANCE**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15+

Less than 5 days absence in a term	**Up to 10 days absence** in a term	**Up to 15 days absence** in a term	**15 days or more absence** in a term

Stepped Attendance Response – STAR

Responding to all absence

The Stepped Attendance Response (STAR) sets expectations for school, student, parent/guardian, Ministry of Education and broader system responses to student absence.

From Term 1, 2026, schools must have regard for the STAR when developing their Attendance Management Plan. It is important schools use this direction to develop their own school specific response to attendance at the set absence thresholds.

How to use the STAR

The STAR outlines actions at absence thresholds and promotes school-wide approaches to:

› strengthen attendance culture

› improve data quality and use

› enable timely support and escalation

› identify what works well and areas for improvement to support student attendance

When responding to absences, schools should consider:

› the student's learning aspirations and whānau context

› reasons for absence and likelihood of reoccurrence

› the student's attendance history, and prior interventions

› requesting support from Attendance Services for students with chronic absence

Regional and National teams work alongside schools to support them improve attendance.

Ongoing Responsibilities

Day-to-day attendance management activities

Schools

› Set attendance targets and regularly review attendance data

› Communicate clearly with parents: expectations, procedures and follow-up steps the school will take when a student is absent

› Act early in following up absences to support students to stay engaged

› Escalate as needed, develop support plans, involve other services, consider requesting support from Attendance Services

› Assess attendance history of new students and share attendance history when students move between schools

› Use school-wide strategies, including strong relationships and minimising disruptions to the school day and week

Ministry of Education

Attendance Services – local catchment providers

› Build enduring relationships with schools in catchments

› Support chronically absent/non-enrolled students and their families

› Address barriers, develop and monitor plans with schools

› Provide advice and support directly to schools with the aim of reducing the need for requests for support in the future

Regional and National teams

› Provide targeted supports and services to schools including assistance with:

› Understanding attendance data and trends

› Support development of attendance policies and procedures, including Attendance Management Plans

› Provide access to specialist services and alternative pathways where needed

› Whānau and community engagement

› Attendance leadership and governance

› Attendance barriers arising from factors in the wider community

Individual Student Attendance activities

Individualised student responses to absence thresholds

Less than 5 days absence
in a school term

Parents/Guardians

› Ensure student attends every day they are able
› Reinforce good attendance habits
› Support other parents to reinforce good attendance habits
› Open communication with school
› Follow school attendance management plan and associated policies and processes

Schools

› Communicate with parents about every absence
› Maintain contact details of parents
› Provide student with regular updates on their own attendance
› Report regularly to parents on attendance of their child
› Support student:
  › 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

Up to 10 days absence
in a school term

Parents/Guardians

› Return student to regular attendance
› Contact school to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning
› Support student to catch up on missed learning
› Engage in supports offered

Schools

› Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning
› Support student to catch up missed learning where required
› Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counsellor, alternative timetables, PB4L

Up to 15 days absence
in a school term

Parents/Guardians

› Return student to regular attendance
› Participate in meeting with school to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan
› Implement strategies at home

Schools

› Contact parents 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
› Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers and request support from other agencies as needed

15 days or more of absence
in a school term

Parents/Guardians

› Return student to regular attendance
› Engage in support plan
› Participate in regular meetings

Schools

› Contact parents to inform of escalated response
› Request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed
› Participate in multi-agency response
› Maintain implementation and monitoring of support plan
› Undertake school-led prosecution, or request Ministry-led prosecution, when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up
› Unenroll if student will not be returning to school

Ministry of Education

Attendance Service

› Work with chronically absent and non-enrolled students and their families to identify and address barriers to attendance. This includes:
  › agreeing changes to be made,
  › addressing some unmet basic needs impacting on attendance, and
  › referring students to other services as necessary
› Collaborate with schools so that
  › they remain engaged as plans are developed and implemented, and
  › they can continue to provide support as the student increases their attendance at school, and the additional Attendance Service support is withdrawn

Regional and National teams

› Facilitate involvement of other agencies
› Support schools to access other education pathways for a student where appropriate
› Consider system-wide initiatives for high-risk attendance
› Reprioritise regional support resources to where most needed/effective
› Undertake Ministry-led prosecution when considered appropriate if supports are offered and not taken up, when requested by schools