

School Newsletter Article:



New Education Act Commences

The new *Education Act 2016* commenced during the school holidays and parents may notice some changes beginning in schools during Term 3 and 4 this year.

The first update of the Education Act in more than 20 years is the result of extensive consultation with educators and parents. The Act now provides schools with an up-to-date legislative framework that better supports us to provide your child or young person with high quality teaching and learning.

The staged approach to implementation of the Act allows time for parents and schools to become familiar with the changes and to be involved in updating their school's policies and practices.

Lowering the voluntary school starting age is yet to be approved by both Houses of Parliament. Other aspects of the new Education Act were passed by the Parliament last year and have now begun with changes to rollout from now through to 2021.

Below are key changes from 10 July 2017 for parents to be aware of:

Attendance:

- **Daily attendance:** Attending school regularly is essential to learning and keeping students engaged in school. To help increase school attendance there is a new limited set of circumstances in which a student can be authorised to be absent from school.
- **Part-time attendance:** To make sure that approval for a student to attend school part-time is in their best interests, there is an updated process for parents or independent youths to apply to the Department of Education Secretary for part-time attendance.

Enrolment:

- **Flexible enrolment:** Recognising that flexible enrolment options may be required to support a student's learning outcomes, there are increased and more flexible school enrolment options including:
 - Part-time enrolment of home educated students as part of their home education program
 - Dual enrolment for students with disability enrolling at more than one school (both a specialised support school and another school)
 - Year 13 enrolments.

- **Exemption from enrolment:** To make sure an exemption from enrolment is in the best interests of a student, there is an updated process for parents or independent youths to apply to the Minister for Education and Training for exemption from enrolment.
- **Leaving requirements:** With evidence clearly demonstrating that students who stay at school have much better employment and life outcomes, students must continue to participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 17 years of age (whichever occurs first). The minimum leaving age increases to 18 in 2020, which means that current students in Year 8 and earlier school years will need to participate in education and training for longer or achieve a higher qualification.

Managing behaviour to support a safe school environment:

- **Requesting third-party information:** To support a child's access to education and support students who may behave in a way that leads to a risk of harm to themselves or others, schools can request information about a student's behaviour to enable the development and maintenance of strategies to better support the student. This includes requesting information from parents at enrolment and consulting the parent and child if the school intends to request information from a third-party.
- **Suspension:** To ensure students can continue to learn, Principals must arrange and ensure that any student who is suspended is provided with appropriate educational activities during the period of suspension. Suspension will remain a last resort to be used when student's pose a risk to themselves or others.

Compulsory Conciliation Process:

- Recognising that the reasons for non-attendance can be complex, the Office of the Education Registrar has been established to help resolve issues associated with continued non-attendance at school. Schools can refer to the Registrar to begin the new compulsory conciliation conference process. Under the process, students, parents and Principals discuss and agree what needs to happen to support the child to attend school.

School Associations:

- School Associations have automatically become incorporated under the Act with existing constitutions and administrative requirements able to apply until a new proposed constitution is adopted and approved by the Minister before the end of 2017.
- School Associations undertaking specific activities will need to apply to the Secretary before the end of 2017. This includes; employing persons, holding or dealing with property, borrowing or loaning money or entering into contracts of more than \$5000. This reflects that under the Act they will have protection from legal liability.

Further information:

Further information about what the changes mean for schools, parents and students is being made available with updated parent fact sheets, school newsletter articles and information on the DoE website and Facebook pages. If you have any questions your school can help answer them with the Department providing schools with support to implement the new Act.