

Question on Notice

No. 1398

Asked on 8 October 2008

Mr Moorhead asked the Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts (Mr Welford) —

QUESTION: Will he inform the house of initiatives to address absenteeism in Queensland schools?

ANSWER:

There is a clear relationship between attendance at school and student achievement. The recent national literacy and numeracy tests reveal that lower rates of attendance at school are associated with lower levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy.

To ensure we continue to provide the best opportunities for Queensland students to achieve, I recently launched the statewide *Every Day Counts* campaign. This campaign targets schools, parents, students and the broader community to promote the importance of being at school all day, on every school day.

My department has produced materials to support the *Every Day Counts* messages, including brochures, posters, postcards and a website (education.qld.gov.au/everydaycounts/). There is also specific material for use by schools in Indigenous communities.

This *Every Day Counts* campaign is supported by a range of Departmental policies and guidelines to help schools further improve attendance including a Roll Marking in State Schools Policy and Guidelines to address chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy (which were released earlier this year).

This campaign will make schools and teachers more aware of the early warning signs for children at risk of chronic absenteeism. These include many unexplained absences, including children arriving late or leaving early, and children experiencing learning difficulties or health issues.

Schools are required to follow up unexplained absences with parents as soon as possible but must do so within at least three days of any unexplained absence. Schools use a range of strategies to follow up absences with parents including:

- sending SMS messages to parents
- making referrals to guidance officers if necessary
- linking families to local support services
- if required, offering flexible schooling arrangements.

Education Queensland schools and districts also work closely with the Queensland Police, other government departments and local non-government organisations to support students and their families to improve school enrolment and attendance.