



Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Implementing the Stepped Attendance Response (STAR)

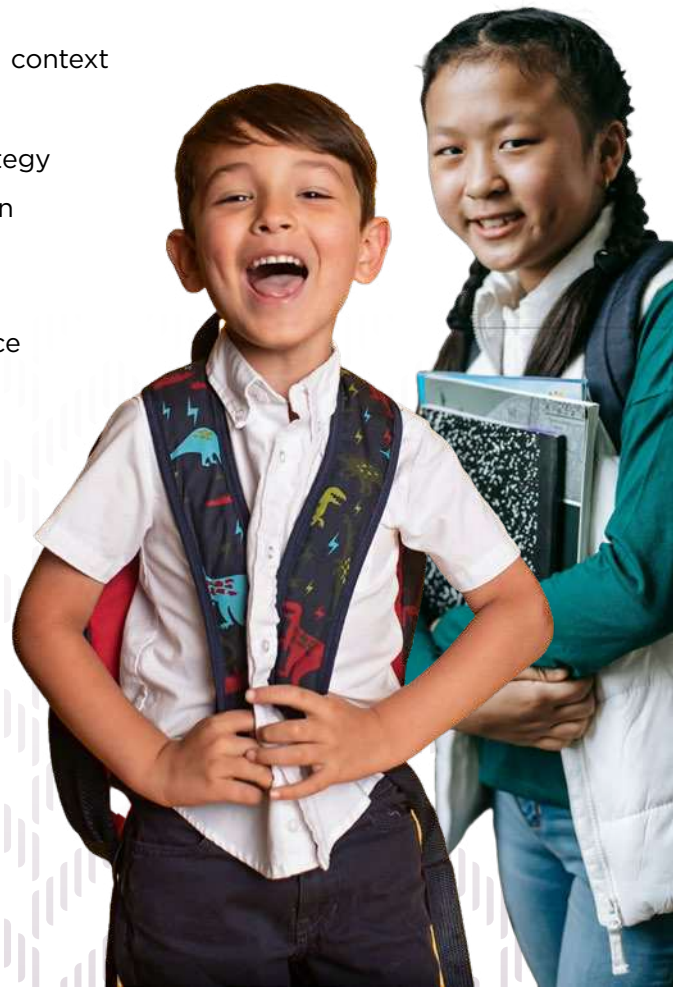
Information for School Leaders

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 assess your current practices, align them with the STAR, reflect on your approach, and identify areas for improvement.

This document 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
- information for embedding changes to your practice
- planning for future reviews of your attendance strategy



Context for the STAR

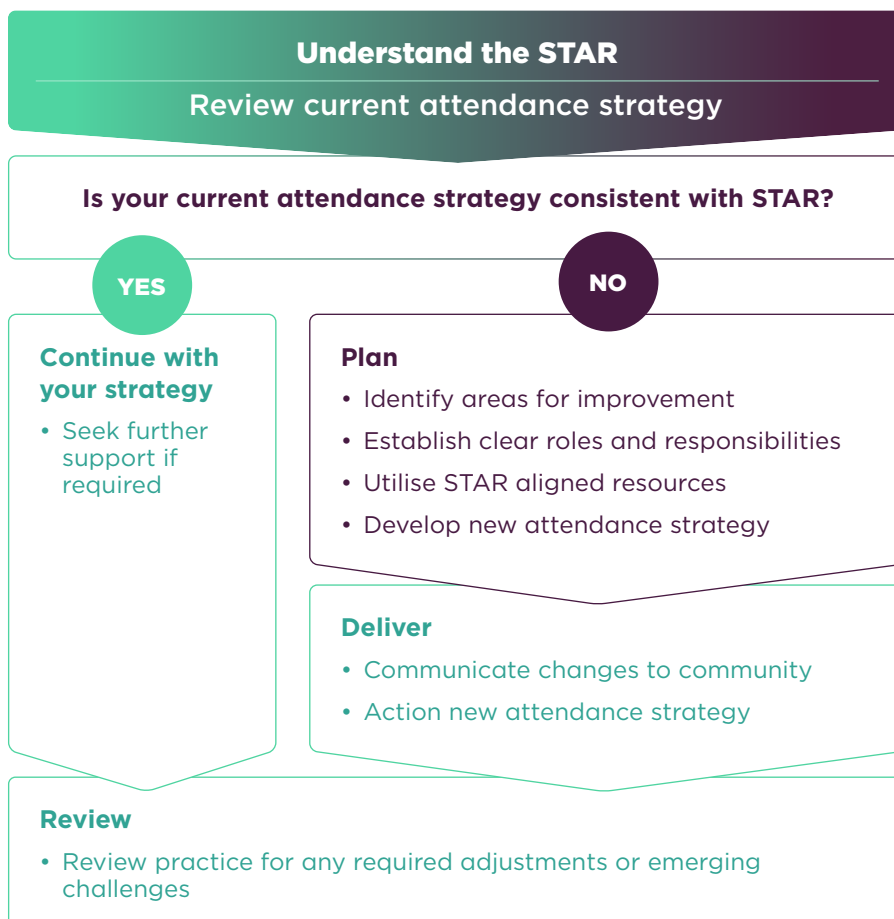
The STAR sets expectations for school, student, parent/guardian, Ministry of Education and broader system responses to student absence. It provides a series of activities that should be considered when students meet absence thresholds.

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 is 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.

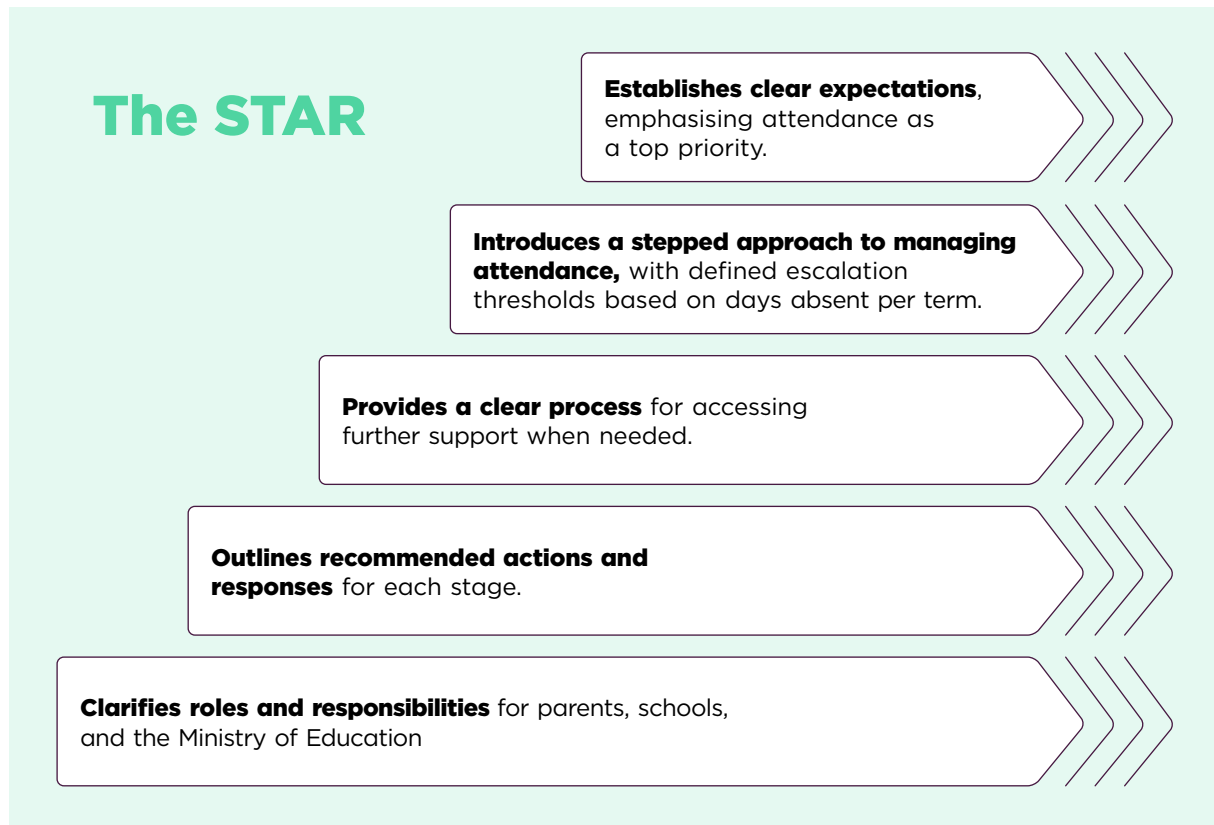
Review your current attendance strategy

Consider the following questions to guide your review:

- When was our attendance strategy created?
- Who did we engage 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






Before making any changes it is important to draw on the relationships and connections your school already has with its community. Your strategy should reflect and build on the existing foundation to suit the context of your school and community.






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.)

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
▼ Day-to-day operations			
<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>	<p>Administration team or In-School attendance team (if your school has one)</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey students and parents to support effective teaching practice and engagement 	<p>Prompt parents and students to share their thoughts on teaching practices and engagement during parent-teacher interviews</p>	<p>School leadership</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Leadership and Boards actively minimise disruptions to the school day and week e.g. use callback days, parent teacher meetings held after school 	<p>School boards and school leadership prioritise school-hours to be for learning.</p>	<p>School leadership and School board</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support students to continue learning if unable to attend school every day, including using Ministry approved well-being or transitional plans, or health schools where appropriate. 	<p>Set alternative activities (such as worksheets or online learning) for students who cannot be at school on a short-term basis</p>	<p>Teacher and/or In-School attendance team</p> 	

-  Principal / School board
-  Administration team
-  In-School attendance team
-  Teacher


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
<p>▼ For students with less than 5 days absence in a school term</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication to parents on attendance expectations on enrolment, at the start of school year, and each term • Communicate to parents what steps the school will take in the event their child is absent from school • Communicate good attendance habits to students and parents 	<p>Use enrollment forms, newsletters, website or other communication methods to set expectations and provide guidance to parents</p>	<p>School leadership</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor attendance • Communicate to parents about every absence • Maintain contact details of parents 	<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</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with regular updates on their own attendance 	<p>Provide regular reporting via online portals and classroom discussions</p>	<p>Teachers</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report regularly to parents on attendance of their child 	<p>Notify every absence, providing weekly, or term reports through school communication methods</p>	<p>Teachers or Administration team</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students getting to school 	<p>Communicate to parents the supports available to assist them to get their children to school</p>	<p>In-School attendance team</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use school level approaches to promote good social and learning environment 	<p>Utilise trauma informed practices or PB4L and regular PLD opportunities</p>	<p>School leadership</p> 	

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
▼ For students with up to 10 days absence in a school term			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send formal notification and contact parent/guardian to discuss reasons for absence 	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 	Identify missed learning objectives and providing notes or activities to bring student back up to speed	Teacher 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counselor, 2nd hand uniform shop, 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			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send escalated formal notification to parents Hold meeting to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan Develop and implement a 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 Ministry or other agencies as needed 	Engage with the Ministry of Education attendance services to find out about options for support	In-School attendance team 	

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
▼ For students with 15 days or more absence in a school term			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send warning notice and make contact to arrange meeting with parents 	<p>Utilise templates and resources provided by the Ministry of Education</p>	<p>School leadership</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalate to multi-agency response • Participate in multi-agency response 	<p>Refer to Ministry of Education attendance services or other agencies</p> <p>Support access to services and collaborating with specialists</p>	<p>School leadership and In-School attendance team</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and monitor improvement plan 	<p>Hold everyone accountable for their part in the plan, and take action quickly where expectations aren't being met</p>	<p>In-School attendance team</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to the Ministry to consider action, including prosecution, when supports are offered and not taken up 	<p>Engage with Ministry of Education to discuss options available and required steps to take</p>	<p>School leadership and School board</p> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When criteria is met, follow prescribed processes to unenroll the student 	<p>Update ENROL as soon as school is made aware a student will not be returning and complete a non-enrolled notification</p> <p>Share information with other agencies</p>	<p>School leadership and Administration team</p> 	


The example below illustrates how you could structure roles and responsibilities within your school. Use as a guide and tailor to the needs of your school and community:

DAY TO DAY ABSENCES




SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- Clear communication to parents on attendance expectations on enrolment, at the start of school year, and each term
- Communicate to parents what steps the school will take in the event their child is absent from school



ADMIN


- Monitor attendance
- Maintain contact details of parents
- Communicate to parents about every absence



TEACHER


- Provide students with regular updates on their own attendance
- Monitor attendance patterns, discuss concerns with students, communicate with parents, and escalate issues.

RESPONDING TO ABSENCES




ADMIN

- Send formal notification
- Contact parent/guardian to discuss reasons for absence



TEACHER


- Support students to catch up missed learning where required



IN-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TEAM


- Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers e.g. counselor, 2nd hand uniform shop, PB4L and trauma informed practices

ESCALATING ABSENCES




ADMIN

- Send warning notice




IN-SCHOOL ATTENDANCE TEAM

- Hold meeting to diagnose reason for absence and to collaborate on a support plan
- Develop and implement a plan tailored to the diagnosis and circumstances around the child's absence
- Implement and monitor improvement plan



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- Escalate to multi-agency response
- Participate in multi-agency response
- When criteria is met, follow prescribed processes to unenroll the student



MINISTRY ATTENDANCE SERVICES, MULTI-AGENCIES, ORANGA TAMARIKI, ETC.,

- Coordinate regional response where required
- Consider system-wide initiatives for high-risk attendance
- re-enrol students who are not enrolled

Tools to support you to incorporate these activities

Utilise STAR-aligned resources from the Ministry of Education to assist you. More resources available here:

education.govt.nz/stepped-attendance-response-star

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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