



St Patrick's Parish School

School Attendance Policy

Rationale

St Patrick's Parish School has a responsibility for the care and safety of its students. In addition to this responsibility, there is also the legal requirement to meet guidelines set out by legislation. *It is the duty of the State to ensure that every child receives an education of the highest quality and it is the duty of parents to comply with the compulsory education requirements of the Education Act 1990 (General Principles 1.1.2).* We are, therefore, committed to the development of a clear set of procedures and practices for attendance of students at school.

The school has a responsibility for encouraging attendance, accurate record keeping, reporting and dealing with absenteeism as determined in the *Education Act 1990* (the Act).

Requirements

In New South Wales, 'compulsory school-age' means that all children from six years of age are legally required to be enrolled at and attending school or to be registered for home schooling. After they complete Year 10, and until they turn 17 years of age, students then have the following options. They may also be in: full-time further education and training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship); full-time, paid employment of an average of 25 hours per week; or a combination of both of the above.

Under Section 22 of the Act, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that a child who is of compulsory schooling age is enrolled at a school and attends:

- the school on every day, and during the times on every day, when school is open for attendance;
- every activity of the school (including attendances at an approved educational course) that the school requires the child to attend.

Parents must have a reasonable excuse for not complying with the compulsory attendance requirements in the Act. If parents do not have a reasonable excuse they are liable under the Act and guilty of an offence.

A child is considered to have an unsatisfactory school attendance when they have:

- regular absences without explanation (despite follow-up from the school)
- regular absences and explanations provided by parents are not accepted by the principal, or
- extended periods of absence without an explanation or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. An extended period of absence may be consecutive or irregular patterns of non-attendance.

In the event that the School becomes aware of a student or parent wilfully not undertaking the compulsory schooling requirements, the school must inform the Catholic Education, prepare relevant documentation and make a notification to the DET Regional Office Manager Home School Liaison about the attendance issue.

Definitions

- **Attendance Records:** Any and all hard copy documents or electronic records, which in some way record both the attendance and non-attendance of a child at school, scheduled sessions at the school and/or an approved educational course
- **Authorised Person:** A person authorised by the Minister of the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) under section 119 of the Act
- **Compulsory School Age:** A child is of compulsory school age if the child is at least 6 years old and under the age that the first of the following happens: the child completes Year 12 or the child is 17 years old
- **Exemption Certificate:** Is a certificate issued by the School Principal or the NSW Minister for Education exempting a child from the requirement to be enrolled with an education provider or registered for home education; or the full-time participation requirement
- **The System's record keeping system:** The computer application and database used in the System to record details of student enrolments and related matters. This is currently known as MAZE
- **Parent:** Includes a guardian or other person having the custody or care of a child
- **Student:** A person who is enrolled as a student in a NSW school in accordance with the *Education Act 1990*

Guidelines for Attendance Records

To ensure consistency in the keeping of attendance records, all schools must employ the codes outlined by the NSW Minister for Education when recording absences and the reason for absences: Appendix A

Attendance records provided to a class teacher must be marked by the teacher (not a student) for each scheduled session as per below:

- Primary school, the morning session and the afternoon session
- Secondary school, each timetabled class or activity

When a child is on a graduated return to school (after an absence due to illness or for other reasons), s/he must be marked present for the time spent at school and absent with parental approval for the time not at school

The status of the child as a child on graduated return must be recorded on the child's file held by the school.

Parents are required to provide written explanation for the reasons for their child's absence from school within seven (7) days of the first day of absence. Rolls cannot be adjusted after this period of time. After that time, the absence remains marked as 'unexplained'.

If a student is absent for ongoing or prolonged periods a school representative will contact parents or caregivers to arrange an interview with the Principal and possibly the Wellbeing Support Person or Campus Coordinator.

The class teacher or Homeroom teacher:

- promotes regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students
- maintains accurate records of student attendance
 - marking absence only
 - using black pen,
 - with daily signature
- may delegate this authority to a relieving teacher who must follow the same procedure
- amends or adjusts a roll, using a line through the incorrect entry and writing above the correct information (No liquid paper is permitted.)
- transfers information from sports rolls to the attendance roll when there is a sporting event
- records a student to be late if he/she is not present at the start of the normal class or Homeroom period
- must undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents within two days of an unexplained absence
- is responsible for ensuring that frequent absences due to illness have supporting medical certificates and that there is consultation with parents to address learning and support needs
- consults with the Principal on any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) consistent with the Mandatory Reporter Guide (<http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au>)
- inspects the electronic version of the roll each month and advises Office Manager of any discrepancies
- accurately records attendance on student reports.

School attendance records must include:

- a Register of Admission to be retained permanently that includes the following details will be maintained for each student:
 - Name, age and address
 - The name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
 - Date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination
 - For students older than 6 years, previous school or pre-enrolment situation
- student daily attendance that is recorded in both print and electronic form in accordance with the NSW Attendance Register Codes
- written notes, records of verbal explanations and records of electronic explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for two years from the date of receipt
- an Attendance Register (roll), to be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years
- in secondary school, a record of the attendance at each lesson, to be retained until the end of the school year
- information detailing a student's absences each year, kept on the student's file until seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, the record should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years

Extended absences

As part of the implementation of the National Standards, **holidays taken by students outside of school vacation periods will now be included as absences**. A 'Certificate of Exemption' can no longer be granted for this purpose. Families are encouraged to holiday or travel during school vacations.

Parents are required to seek permission for their child if they wish for them to not participate in compulsory schooling for a period of time. The reason for this may vary, as may the length of the absence required. Both of these circumstances impact on the learning of the student.

The Principal is allowed to approve absences of up to 100 days in a 12 month period.

Principals may grant permission for absence due to:

- Exceptional circumstances such as health reasons where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not possible or appropriate;
- Employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite sporting events for short periods of time.

The parent applies to the Principal for permission using the current Application for Exemption from Attendance at School (NSW) form. If the permission is granted the school issues a notification and records this on the student's file.

Principals must not give permission for any student to be absent who has an outstanding child protection issue, without first consulting the CEO Child Protection Officer, Human Resource Services. A risk assessment of the leave must be discussed before decision can be given.

Application for absence for longer than 100 days must be forwarded to the Catholic Education Office, to be sent to NSW DET for Ministerial approval.

Other absences

The school will issue a leave pass to students (Years 7 -10) who have permission to leave school premises during normal school hours. This will be co-signed by a member of the Leadership Team.

Flexible attendance (eg for Kindergarten assessments, during examination periods or pathways programs) should have Code F marked on the roll.

Supporting Documents

- Policy for *Attendance at School* – NSW Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn 2013
- Policy, information and brochures:
<http://www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au/dbpage.php?pg=view&dbase=programs&id=47>
- New School Leaving Age: <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/leavingschool/index.php>
- Keep Them Safe: <http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/home>
- *Education Act 1990*
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/fullhtml/inforce/act+8+1990+FIRST+0+N>

- *Registration Systems and Member Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual*
http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/pdf_doc/reg-sys-member-non-gov-manual-14.pdf
- *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001*
<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/inforcepdf/2001-80.pdf?id=ed105126-d892-e0ec-9f3a-e0c7c00620c5>

Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed in 2016 by the Leadership Team.

Appendix A

Changes to the codes commencing 2015 School Attendance

Changes from 2015

The Minister for Education has approved changes to the use of the Attendance Register codes for 2015. The changes implement the ACARA National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting. ACARA developed the National Standards to establish nationally consistent parameters for the collection and reporting of student attendance data.

School Attendance Register Codes 2015

2015 Attendance Register Codes

Definitions

Only the following attendance register codes **must** be used to record the:

- explanation of student absence, and/or
- variation in student attendance.

Attendance Register Codes Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence	
Symbol	Meaning
A	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.
S	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- a medical certificate is provided or- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.
L	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- misadventure or unforeseen event- participation in special events not related to the school- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member- attendance at funerals- travel in Australia and overseas- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
E	The student was suspended from school

Attendance Register Codes Symbols to be used to record a variation in attendance (not counted as an absence for statistical purposes)	
Symbol	Meaning
M	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
F	The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required to be at school. This could include participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HSC Pathways Program - Best Start Assessments - Trial or HSC examinations - VET courses
B	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work experience - school sport (regional and state carnivals) - school excursions - student exchange
H¹	The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tutorial centre and programs - behaviour schools - juvenile justice - hospital schools - distance education