



# STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

## RATIONALE

Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if students are to achieve their potential, and increase their career and life options.

Schools in partnerships with parents are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences.

Schools, in providing a caring teaching and learning environment, which addresses the learning and support needs of students, including those with additional learning and support needs or complex health conditions, foster students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.

A separate Standard Operating Procedure for student non-attendance is in place.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children at school (Section 22 Education Act 1990).

School staff, as part of their duty of care, are responsible to monitor part or whole day absences and ensure that school attendance records will be maintained according to the Diocesan Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Catholic Schools Office of Diocese of Lismore 2019 (Intranet/Policies/Student Attendance).

## SCOPE

The school attendance register/roll should reflect the highest professional standards.

## DEFINITIONS

### **Compulsory school age**

As defined in the 21B of the [NSW Education Act 1990](#).

### **Explained/justified absence**

A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has been accepted by the Principal.

### **Explained/unjustified absence**

A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has not been accepted by the Principal.

### **Parent**

Includes a carer or other person having the care or custody of a child or young person.

### **Parent condoned absence**

When a parent or carer causes a student to be absent from school without acceptable reason.

### **Truancy**

The absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent or carer.

### **Unexplained/unjustified absence**

A parent has not provided an explanation for a student's non-attendance.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RECORDS**

School attendance records include:

1. The Register of Enrolments which is retained permanently;
2. Notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for seven years from the date of receipt; and
3. An Attendance Register/roll to be retained for seven years.

In a case where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the end of year in which the student reaches the age of 25 years.

The student's attendance record detailing the number of absences each year must be retained for seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, the record file should be retained until the end of the year in which the student reaches the age of 25 years.

Records for Certificates of Exemption from Attendance and Enrolment must comply with requirements of Statement 11.4 in Section B – Exemptions from Attendance and Exemptions from Enrolment of the Diocesan Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance. Available at CSO website under Policies and on page 6 of this document.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Mt St Patrick College **Parents and Carers** are responsible for:

1. Ensuring their child is legally enrolled at the correct age;
2. Ensuring that their child attends school regularly;
3. Promptly explaining the absences of their child from school;
4. Taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their child.

Mt St Patrick College **Principal** will:

1. Ensure this policy provides clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance through Newsletter items and in official College publications including the Parent Information Handbook, Prospectus and Website.
2. Implement procedures to address attendance issues in consultation with parents and teachers. Staff members at Mt St Patrick College have a responsibility to notify the Principal or Deputy Principal when an absence is recorded for 5 consecutive days without prior notification from the parents.
3. Ensure attendance records are maintained in the Diocesan approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of all students.
4. Endorse as accurate all class rolls each week for the preceding fortnight. At Mt St Patrick College this responsibility is delegated to the Deputy Principal.

5. Ensure that effective strategies are in place to contact parents where there is a pattern of attendance for their child/children causing concern or the parent has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence. This may involve the creation of a jointly developed (school and family) Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP). This process, with appropriate documentation, are outlined in the CSO's Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedure. Copies of each AIP are available to both the School Services Consultant and the CSO Audit and Compliance Officer.
6. Grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness. They may request a Medical Certificate.
7. Grant an Exemption from School Attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student or grant part-day exemptions from school for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student under certain conditions. (Since 2015 family holidays are no longer considered under the Exemption from School Attendance procedures and therefore, as a general rule, Principals should not approve leave for this purpose).
8. Grant up to 15 days Principal Approved Leave in the school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the Principal. This may be due to:
  - 8.1. misadventure or unforeseen event
  - 8.2. participation in special events not related to the school
  - 8.3. domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
  - 8.4. attendance at funerals
  - 8.5. recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions
9. Accept or decline as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided. The Principal may also request a medical certificate when the absence is questionable, frequent or prolonged. Should teachers have information that relates to potentially declining a request for absence they must inform the Principal as soon as possible.
10. Ensure new and casual staff receive a briefing from either the Principal or a senior member of staff on College attendance procedures and approved roll marking.

**Teachers** at Mt St Patrick College must:

1. Accurately record presence and absence of students at morning Administration and the beginning of every lesson/sport.
2. Instruct relief staff taking their classes to follow College procedures regarding roll-marking in every lesson.
3. Contact parents regarding unexplained non-attendance within 3 school days of the absence requesting a written or verbal explanation of the non-attendance. This contact maybe by telephone/SMS or other means.
4. If the parent explanation is verbal, note the reason, time the explanation was provided, sign the note and give it to the Attendance Secretary for filing.
5. Alert the Year/House Co-ordinator when a student's pattern of attendance is of a concern (late to school, absent on regular days), if there is 3 consecutive days of unapproved leave or any 5 day of unapproved leave in 10 days or any other pattern observed such as regular Fridays away. See procedures for late arrival, early departures and partial absence in Staff Handbook.
6. Inform the Principal if a student is of compulsory school age, and has been marked as 'absent' for a period exceeding 10 consecutive school days where the College is open for instruction, for reasons not known to the school, their whereabouts is unknown and the family has not responded to attempts by the school to communicate with them. The school should remove the student from the attendance register and submit a D3 Form 'Enrolment Status of Student Unknown' to

[attendance@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:attendance@det.nsw.edu.au) with a cc to the CSO Audit and Compliance Officer. Prior to reporting the matter, all appropriate checks should be made. The D3 form can be found on the CSO intranet site.

7. Inform parents that any time away from the College will require an application to the Principal. The following procedures apply at Mt St Patrick College when parents talk to a teacher and request absence from the College for their child:
  - 8.1 Inform the parent that the request must be made in writing to the Principal with all details so a decision can be made.
  - 8.2 Inform the parent that the granting of the request is not automatic.
  - 8.3 Advise the parent to make arrangements to secure an interview with the Principal.
  - 8.4 Inform the parent of the location of the required forms on the College website so they can prepare prior to the meeting.
8. Homeroom teachers are to follow the Deputy Principal's instructions on how attendance information is transferred to the student report issued at the end of each semester.
9. Be familiar with the range of forms required by regularly accessing the Student Attendance SOP on the CSO intranet site.

### **Absence Notes/Records** at Mt St Patrick College

Absence notes must be collected and retained as part of the attendance record. Teachers are to follow the procedure below:

1. Insist on parent responses to SMS messages regarding absence or written parental notes from each student when they are away. Persist with this request to develop a College wide culture.
2. Send notes to the Attendance Secretary for filing in student's individual files in the staff study.
3. Phone verification notes will be signed by the staff member who took the call and handed to the Attendance Secretary for filing.
4. Students are required to sign the register for late arrivals or early departures at the Front Office.

### **Marking the Attendance Roll**

The *Education Act (1990)* (Section 24) requires that a school's attendance registers (rolls) be maintained in a form approved by the Minister. At the College attendance records are maintained in a designated electronic format and are an accurate record of student attendance. The roll is marked in strict adherence to the method and codes at the end of this policy.

The roll is marked on all days on which the College is open for instruction, including College sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events. On a normal school day the roll is marked during morning administration and at the beginning of every lesson/Sporting activity.

### **Security of attendance register/rolls**

A pdf copy of the Attendance Record is to be generated at the end of each week for the preceding fortnight. The Principal or delegated member of the school executive (at MSPC this is the Deputy Principal) must endorse this pdf copy, certifying the accuracy. Once endorsed, this pdf copy becomes the official record of attendance and **must not be amended**.

At the end of each school year the Principal or delegate must ensure that the authorised attendance register/roll and attached Special Circumstance Registers are preserved as a complete record of students' presence/absence for that year.

The attendance register/roll must be archived in pdf format, independent of electronic software for legacy purposes. A school must be able to produce past records of attendance no-matter what software is being used.

### **Endorsed outside of school activity**

For students absent on official College business the attendance register/roll code 'B' is to be used. Official school business may include work experience, school sport (regional and state carnivals), and school excursions. 'B' is not an absence code and is not included as an absence for statistical purposes. The 'B' code is not used when the whole school attends a different venue for all, or part of, the day as is the case with attending Mass and Sports Carnivals. It is not used for regular weekly school sport off site as a sports roll has been created in advance.

### **Unendorsed educational activity in school hours**

Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the College or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities will usually be limited to outside school hours.

Where attendance at a private lesson outside the College during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, the principal may use discretion in justifying the absence.

If parents withdraw their children from College for private lessons when permission to do so has been refused, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.

### **Students who are suspended from the College (external suspension)**

The appropriate Attendance Register Code symbol for suspension ('E') is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension out of College. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the suspension and must not be applied to students who fail to return to the College following the suspension period. In such cases, the student's absence would be unjustified and recorded accordingly. (See Attendance Register Code 'A' on page 9 of this document).

The absences of students who are suspended are counted as absences for statistical purposes.

Internal or 'In School' suspensions are to be treated differently in the roll. Students are not to be marked absent as they are at school. A notation regarding the suspension is to be made in the comments section of the roll.

### **Students Withdrawing from the College**

The College office needs to be informed of a student's enrolment withdrawal departure date with all known details including the parents forwarding address and the name and address of the new school. The College Enrolment register needs to be completed in full. If the student leaves without notifying the College or without giving appropriate forwarding details the College must make every effort to discover the new school and whether the student has actually enrolled at the school.

This could include requesting information from friends or other family of the student, phoning the parents or phoning the new school. Before any information is divulged by the College caller the identity of the person being called should be verified. If the family or student are missing (or their destination is unknown) and there are concerns for their safety, welfare or wellbeing, seek advice from the Schools Services Consultant and if needs be report the matter to the local police.

Prior to the student's name being removed from the attendance register/roll a number of actions need to be confirmed by the Principal and up until this point the students should be marked absent.

The Schools Service Consultant or designated CSO Officer will assist in lodging a notification with the relevant DEC personnel using Form D3 Enrolment Status of Student Unknown.

## **Natural Disaster**

A Special Circumstance Register is used on the days on which the College is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. The Principal should consult with diocesan personnel prior to deciding that the College is inaccessible.

The Electronic attendance register/rolls at the College have the facility to indicate when the College is not open eg. Staff professional learning days, industrial action or closure for fire or flood.

Absences on these day are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

## **Students attending specialist educational centres**

This is not common but needs to be carefully recorded when it occurs. See the CSO SOP for advice at Section 4.1.XVI

## **Students Exempted from School Attendance**

The Principal can exempt students from attending the College under certain circumstances. A special form is required before exemption can be granted (see CSO policy Form B1). The appropriate symbol for exemption is to be used when the absences are the result of students being exempted from attending the College (see Attendance Register Code 'M'). This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the exemption and must not be applied to students who fail to return to the College following the exemption period. Teachers are to be aware that different procedures apply for absences 50 days and under and absences of 51 days or more. The absences of students who have been exempted from the College are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.

## **Students involved in Elite Sports or the Entertainment Industry (51 days and over)**

Teachers are advised that there are special conditions applying in both circumstances where the event is over 51 days and should parents request leave for their child's participation in these types of events please refer the matter directly to the Principal. The CSO web site has the forms required for these circumstances.

If participation in the event is for 50 days or less, the principal will make a determination, following the parents Application for Exemption for Attendance.

## **Overseas Exchange Students**

Students involved in approved overseas exchange programs for periods up to 12 months are to remain on the roll. They are not to be marked absent for the duration of the exchange. A note is to be placed in the attendance register indicating the nature, duration and any other detail of the exchange. For statistical purposes they are to be considered present.

## **Sport Rolls**

Specific sports rolls must be marked at the beginning and conclusion of each sports session. Attendance information contained on sports rolls must be transferred to the attendance register (roll). Absentees must be followed up promptly to ensure that the College's procedures for managing non-attendance are implemented. Students found to be absent from sport and who have not been marked absent from the College shall be notified to the Deputy Principal and or Sport Co-ordinator and or House/Year Co-ordinator immediately.

## **Students on flexible timetables**

From time to time, some senior students may have a flexible timetable applied. In these instances it may be permitted for a student to have a scheduled late start, early finish or to attend only on certain days. The Principal will inform the homeroom teacher of any students who are scheduled to have these conditions applied. Flexible timetable absences must be recorded as aF. The 'a' is not included as an absence for statistical purposes.

## **Exam Blocks**

Students in Years 11-12 involved in exam blocks where they are not required to be in attendance, are not to be marked absent. The actual exam period is block marked to indicate the dates. A note is made in the roll indicating the exam period. The College will make it very clear to parents through the Newsletter and other forms of communication the hours of instruction and what is required for this period of exams. The College's procedures in this matter are listed below:

- Year Co-ordinator inform parents by letter of the dates and times of the examination assessment block.
- Parents acknowledge receipt of the letter via a return slip.
- Details of the exam timetable are published in the Newsletter.

## **Students representing the College in sporting events**

Students representing the region, diocese or state in sporting events will be marked as absent on any day that they are away from the official daily roll marking times. Code [B] should be applied and will not count as an official absence for statistical purposes. Students representing the College in sporting events should be marked in the same way that other College excursions are recorded.

The College's procedures in these situations are:

- Names of students who are attending school approval events away from the College, are displayed on the Staff Noticeboard.
- Homeroom teachers are required to check the names of students absent against those on the "Excursion List".

## **Students attending work placement or work experience**

Work placement is not the same as work experience. Both of these activities are to be considered separately. Work placement is part of a pattern of study and therefore should be recorded as for a student on a flexible timetable (F). Work experience is College business and will be recorded as for a College excursion (B). Students will be marked absent on each day and the relevant code used. The absence is not included in the absence return.

The College's management procedures for these programs are:

- The names of students who are attending school approved events away from the College, are displayed on the Staff Noticeboard.
- Homeroom teachers are required to check the names of students absent against those of the "Excursion List".

## **Students who are placed into juvenile justice, behaviour school or hospital schools**

This is rare but should be recorded in the same manner as per students attending other educational settings. These times will not be counted as official absences for statistical purposes. Mark 'H'.

## **Students who leave school before the official leaving age**

Where a student is marked 'absent' for a period of ten consecutive school days and is under the required age for leaving and where official exemption from attendance or enrolment has not been granted, the student will be marked as absent (unjustified) [A]. Notification will be made to the Principal.

Prior to the student's name being removed from the attendance register/roll a number of actions need to be confirmed by the Principal and up until this point the students should be marked absent.

The Schools Service Consultant or designated CSO Officer will assist you and if need be lodge a notification with the relevant Department of Education personnel using Form D3 Enrolment Status of Student Unknown.

If the student is completing Year 10 at TAFE and the school subsequently becomes aware the student is not attending TAFE, the Principal should contact the parents and point out they are in breach of the law and should return to the College if the TAFE option is not to be continued. TAFE authorities will make all reasonable attempts to follow up on absences.

### **Procedures for Addressing Student Non-Attendance**

The College takes its attendance responsibilities seriously and will support parents with their son or daughter's attendance issues. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the **Education Act (1990)** the welfare of the student must be the focus of this consultation.

Please refer to School Action Plan – Non Attendance, which can be found on the CSO intranet, that provides a simplified model of the procedures for addressing student non-attendance.

It is the responsibility of class teachers/home room teachers to monitor the attendance of students in their class and discuss concerns and possible actions with an identified staff member in their school, for example Deputy Principal or Year/House Co-ordinator.

The ongoing monitoring of attendance data should be the responsibility of the school Pastoral Care/ Wellbeing team. Non-attendance can be turned around if data is used to identify and connect the school with the family as early as possible so as to engage the student in support that motivates them to attend school and address challenging barriers.

CSO staff assist schools in the monitoring of non-attendance.

We believe that the most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this.

Resolution of student attendance difficulties may require a range of additional College-based strategies including:

1. Student and parent interviews
2. A review the appropriateness of the student's educational program
3. The development of a College-based Attendance Improvement Plan
4. A referral to the College counsellor or outside agency
5. Further support from College-based personnel

If previous measures have been unsuccessful in improving student attendance, the matter may be referred to the Department of Education via the CSNSW for an application to be made to the Children's Court for a School Attendance Order and/or a Compulsory Schooling Conference Order.

Continued non-attendance may result in prosecution by the Department of Education against either the family or student in the Children's Court or Local Court.

An earlier referral to the CSNSW can be considered particularly when Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) issues to the student are observed by the school or other agencies and reported to the school

Form D1 is an appendix in this policy and provides guidance on how to act in such cases. This form can be found on the CSO intranet.

## Roll marking Symbols – Attendance Codes

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

- I. Explanation of student absence; and/or
- II. Variation in student attendance.

<b>Note: The symbol x is to be used for the first and last day of the student's enrolment at the school.</b>	
<b>Symbols to be used where students are absent from school</b>	
<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
a	The student was absent on that day.
Pa	The student was late or was absent for part of a day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded.
<b>Attendance Register/Roll Codes: symbols to be used for explanation of student absence</b>	
<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
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.
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work experience</li> <li>- school sport (regional and state carnivals)</li> <li>- school excursions</li> <li>- student exchange.</li> </ul>
E	The student was suspended from school.
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"> <li>- HSC Pathways Program</li> <li>- Best Start Assessments</li> <li>- Trial or HSC examinations</li> <li>- VET courses.</li> </ul>
H <sup>1 2</sup>	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"> <li>- tutorial centre and programs</li> <li>- behaviour schools (CSO approved)</li> <li>- juvenile justice</li> <li>- hospital schools</li> <li>- distance education.</li> </ul>

L	<p>An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the Principal. This may be due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- misadventure or unforeseen event</li> <li>- participation in special events not related to the school</li> <li>- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member</li> <li>- attendance at funerals</li> <li>- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.</li> </ul>
M	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
S	<p>The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a medical certificate is provided or</li> <li>- the absence was due to sickness and the Principal accepts this explanation.</li> </ul> <p>Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.</p>

POLICY DATES			
<i>Formulated</i>	2017	<i>Adopted</i>	2017
<i>Implemented</i>	2017	<i>Reviewed</i>	3rd February 2020
<i>Next Review Due</i>	2020		
POLICY AUTHORISATION			
<i>Principal</i>	Paul Clohesy	<i>Signature</i>	