



ST MARY'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE
CASINO

ATTENDANCE POLICY

CONTENTS

Rationale
Definitions
School Attendance Records
Procedure – Responsibilities
NSW Official Roll
Appendices

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
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St MARY'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE, CASINO



Attendance Policy

Reviewed February 2019

RATIONALE

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

College staff, as part of their duty of care, are responsible for monitoring part or whole day absences and for ensuring that college attendance records are maintained according to the Diocesan Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Catholic Schools Office of Diocese of Lismore 2016 (Teacher Hub/Administration/Policies & Procedures/CSO Policies).

The college attendance register (roll) must reflect the highest professional standards.

DEFINITIONS

Parent

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

Unexplained absence

A student absence where a parent provides no reason for a student's non-attendance.

Truancy

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

Parent condoned absence

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

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.

Unexplained/unjustified absence

A parent has not provided an explanation of the student's absence within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RECORDS

School attendance records include:

1. The Register of Enrolments which is retained permanently.
2. Notes and records of explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for seven years from the date of receipt.
3. The Attendance Register (roll) which is 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 the year in which the student reaches the age of 25.

The student's record file 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 Teacher Hub/Administration/Policies & Procedures/CSO Policies)

PROCEDURE – RESPONSIBILITIES

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

The Principal will:

1. Ensure this school policy provides clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance through newsletter items and in official school publications including the parent information handbook, prospectus and school website.
2. Implement procedures to address attendance issues in consultation with parents and teachers. Staff members at this school have a responsibility to notify the principal or Assistant Principal when an absence is less than 95% attendance or; 3 consecutive days of unapproved leave; or any 5 days of unapproved leave or any other pattern observed (such as regular Mondays and Fridays away or habitual partial non-attendance).
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 at the end of each week for the preceding fortnight. This responsibility may be delegated to a senior staff member by the principal. At St Mary's Catholic College the delegated person is the Assistant Principal.
5. Inform the CSO Audit and Compliance Office and the designated CSO Service consultant of any attendance problems and issues. This includes providing the appropriate people with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance or persistent truancy is an issue.
6. Grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness.
7. Grant an Exemption from School Attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for anyone student or grant part-day exemptions from school for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student under certain conditions. Staff are to inform parents that any time away from school will require an application to the principal. Family holidays in school time are not exemptions from school and in most cases is considered unapproved leave.

The following procedures apply at St Mary's Catholic College when parents talk to a staff member and request absence from school for their child:

- 7.1. Inform the parent that the request must be made in writing to the principal with all details so a decision can be made. A list of current allowable exemptions are listed in the CSO Diocesan Policy and the appropriate forms noted in Section B are available on the CSO Intranet in the Accountabilities site.
- 7.2. Inform the parent that the granting of the request does not equate to an automatic approval.
- 7.3. If the Exemption from Attendance is granted a letter will be sent to advise family.
8. Grant up to 100 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.
9. Accept or decline as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. 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 that the principal or a senior member of staff brief new and casual staff on school attendance procedures and approved roll marking.

Homeroom Teachers (See Appendix A for flowchart) at St Mary's Catholic College must:

1. Accurately record absences for all students early in the day and on a daily basis.
2. Ensure casual and relief teachers in their classes follow school procedures.
3. Contact parents regarding unexplained non-attendance within (1-3) days of the absence requesting a written or verbal explanation of the non-attendance.
4. If the parent explanation is verbal, note the reason, time the explanation was provided, sign the note and place with other absence notes as per the school policy.
5. Alert the Stage Coordinator when a student's pattern of attendance is of a concern less than 95% attendance or; 3 consecutive days of unapproved leave; or any 5 days of unapproved leave or any other pattern observed (such as regular Mondays and Fridays away or habitual partial non-attendance).

6. Inform the Assistant Principal / 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 school is open for instruction, and there has been no communication with the school. In such circumstances the principal should contact attendance@det.nsw.edu.au using the appropriate D3 Form with a cc to the CSO Audit and Compliance Officer. Prior to reporting the matter, all appropriate checks should be made. See Form D1 in the appendix.
7. Inform parents who raise the possibility of an absence from school that the parent and school must complete prescribed documentation and the matter needs to be discussed with the principal.
8. Be familiar with the range of forms required by regularly accessing the Management of Student Attendance Policy on the CSO intranet site.

Absence Explanations/Records at St Mary's Catholic College

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

1. Insist on absence notes and a response to sms messages from each student when they are away. Persist with this request to develop a school wide culture.
2. Collect and return notes to the office where Schoolworx will be amended and the note filed with the student file.
3. Phone call and text message explanations will be verified by a staff member when entered into Schoolworx. Office staff will also verify and amend records if explanations are provided in person or email.
4. Parents are required to sign the provide explanation for late arrivals or early departures. Precise times are recorded by the office staff in Schoolworx.

PROCEDURE

ROLL MARKING and USING SCHOOLWORX

St Mary's Catholic College uses online roll-marking through the Schoolworx software. The address needed to find the programme is

schoolworx.lism.catholic.edu.au

It is expected that casual teachers mark all rolls, not simply Homeroom rolls. The procedure to complete this is relatively simple. Once you have logged onto the system, you will make your way to Schoolworx. From the homepage, you can use the buttons on the left of the screen to find a class, a teacher, a student, a room etc. The easiest way to mark a roll is to go to the teacher's (who you are replacing for that lesson) timetable and then click on the class whose class roll you are to mark.

To mark the roll, click on the X / v (this is a tick) boxes that are coloured gold and green at the top of the student list. From here, you can individually mark each student, or you can collectively mark the class by clicking on the 'Present' button. You will then need to only mark those who are absent.

When the roll is complete, click the 'Submit Roll' button at the bottom of the list and your roll will be recorded. If a student comes to the class late they should provide evidence that they have signed in at the front office.

A PDF copy of the school roll is to be generated at the end each week for the preceding fortnight. The Official Roll for the first week of Terms 2, 3 and 4 should include the last week of previous term. The Assistant Principal will endorse by signature, name and date a word document before it is saved as a PDF certifying its accuracy. The endorsed PDF copy becomes the official record of attendance and will not be amended. Should a subsequent change be necessary to an Official Roll an amended copy should be created with a note to the reason for the change and saved as a pdf along with the original.

In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance code.

NSW OFFICIAL ROLL

Procedures

The NSW Official roll is generated using the First Class attendance system. The following report is generated at the end of each week for the preceding fortnight allowing 7 days from the last fortnight for correct absences to be recorded and file is electronically stored as indicated below. NSW Official rolls are not amended.

Endorsed outside of school activity

Students absent on official school business for example class excursions, diocesan sport, small group excursions or work experience are marked absent using the symbol 'B'. Make a notation in the roll indicating the nature of the absence.

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 school 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 school 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 school 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 school (out of school suspension) in accordance with Diocesan Policy

The appropriate Attendance Register Code symbol for suspension ('E') is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension out of school. 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 school following the suspension period. In such cases, the student's absence will be unjustified and recorded accordingly. (See Attendance Register Code 'A' at Appendix A:10.2).

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

'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 leaving the school

The College Office needs to be informed of any student departure date with all known details including the parents' forwarding address and the name and address of the new school provided. The School Enrolment register will be completed in full. If the student leaves without notifying the school or without giving appropriate forwarding details the school 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 school, the identity of the caller will be verified. Should the whereabouts of the family remain unknown after these inquiries then attendance@det.nsw.edu.au will be contacted, cc to CSO Audit and Compliance Officer.

Natural Disaster

If school attendance due to a natural disaster is highly problematic and the school is effectively closed then a special circumstance register is commenced for students who may attend.

The school office will maintain a Special Circumstance Register. The Register should:

1. specify the dates and times of the variation
2. indicate the reason for the variation
3. list students attending on that day
4. be signed by the person maintaining the register
5. Be scanned and filed with the attendance registers (rolls)

Students attending specialist educational centres

This is not common but needs to be carefully recorded when it occurs. See the CSO policy for advice. Section 4.4.6

Students Exempted from School Attendance

The principal can exempt students from attending school 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 school (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 school following the exemption period. Teachers are to be aware that different procedures apply for absences 100 days and under and absences of 101 days or more. The absences of students who have been exempted from school 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 parent's 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 parent's 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 school's procedures for managing non-attendance are implemented. Students found to be absent from sport and who have not been marked absent from school shall be notified to the Principal 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 (or other delegated person) will inform the PC teacher of any students who are scheduled to have these conditions applied. Flexible timetable absences must be recorded as **F**. The absence is not included as an absence for statistical purposes.

The school's sign in and sign out procedures apply to students on Flexible timetables and are listed below:

1. Students are required to sign out at the front office. Students will be issued with a slip indicating time of departure and on return are required to sign in at the office. Students will again be issued with a slip indicating time of return.
2. These slips are to be given to PC teacher at next PC time.

Students representing the school in sporting events

Students representing the region, diocese or state in sporting events will be marked as absent on any day they away from the official roll marking period. Code **B** shall be applied and will not count as an official absence for record keeping purposes. Students representing the school in sporting events shall be marked in the same way that other school excursions are recorded.

Students attending work experience

Work placement is not the same as work experience. Both of these activities are to be considered separately. Work experience is school business and will be recorded as for a school excursion **B**. Students will be marked absent on each day and the relevant code used. The absence is not included in the absence return for statistical purposes.

The school's management procedures for these programs are:

1. St Mary's Catholic College, Leader of Careers and University transition, will advise PC teacher and front office to ensure correct attendance information for any student participating in a work experience program. These programs are required to be approved and specific paperwork is completed on behalf of the student.
2. This documentation must be completed by the student and presented two weeks prior attending work experience.

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

This will be recorded in the same manner as per students attending other educational settings. These times will not be counted as official absences for record keeping purposes. Mark **H**.

Students who leave school before the official leaving age

Where a student fails to attend school 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 should be made to the principal and then to attendance@det.nsw.edu.au via the appropriate D3 Form with a cc to the CSO Audit and Compliance Officer within 10 days.

If the student is completing Year 10 at TAFE and the school subsequently becomes aware the student is not attending TAFE, the principal will contact the parents and point out they are in breach of the law and the student should return to school if the TAFE option is not to be continued.

Procedures when attendance is an issue

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

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.

Processes outlined in the CSO Non Attendance SOP should be adhered to with the resolution of student attendance difficulties requiring a range of additional school based strategies including:

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

If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support will be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Schools Office in the first instance. Police Officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act (1990).

Form D1 is an appendix in this policy and provides guidance on how to act in such cases.

Appendix 1

Attendance Register Codes

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

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

| Attendance Register/Roll Codes: symbols to be used for explanation of student absence | |
|--|--|
| <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">- work experience- school sport (regional and state carnivals)- school excursions- student exchange. |
| 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">- HSC Pathways Program- Best Start Assessments- Trial or HSC examinations- VET courses. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <p>H^[1] [2]</p> | <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tutorial centre and programs - behaviour schools (CSO approved) - juvenile justice - hospital schools - distance education. |
| <p>L</p> | <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"> - 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. |
| <p>M</p> | <p>The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.</p> |
| <p>S</p> | <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"> - a medical certificate is provided or - the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. <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> |

- [1] **Note: In most cases this code will only be used by Department of Education and Communities schools, with the exception of students from non-government schools attending hospital schools.**
- [2] **Note: For Catholic Schools use 'F' not 'H' for students attending external tutorial centres and programs that are school authorised.**

Appendix 3

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Use the CSO produced two page information brochure in all relevant publications including new parent information packs, parent handbooks and newsletter inserts. The College notify parents in Term one of each school year via the newsletter of relevant updates to the Attendance Policy. The College will also place relevant policy on the College website.

Additional information that can be used in newsletters or letters to parents

Family holidays and extended time away from school: What do we do when we know we'll be away for consecutive days?

From time to time parents/caregivers may approach the school to seek permission for their child to travel during school term for periods of time. From the beginning of 2015, family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the *Exemption from School Procedures* and therefore as a general rule, principals should not approve leave for this purpose. Parents should be advised of this and if they choose to proceed, the absence should be recorded using the code 'A' (Unjustified Leave) and a *Notification of Extended Leave Form A4* should be completed when the leave is for three or more days. Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.

In exceptional circumstances parents may complete a *Form A1 Application for Extended Leave – Travel* for consideration explaining why an absence for extended leave is in the best educational interest of the student. The principal may decline or accept this application. If accepted a *Form A2 Application for Leave Approved* is issued by the delegated officer and the code 'L' is used.

Travel is considered to be domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reasons.

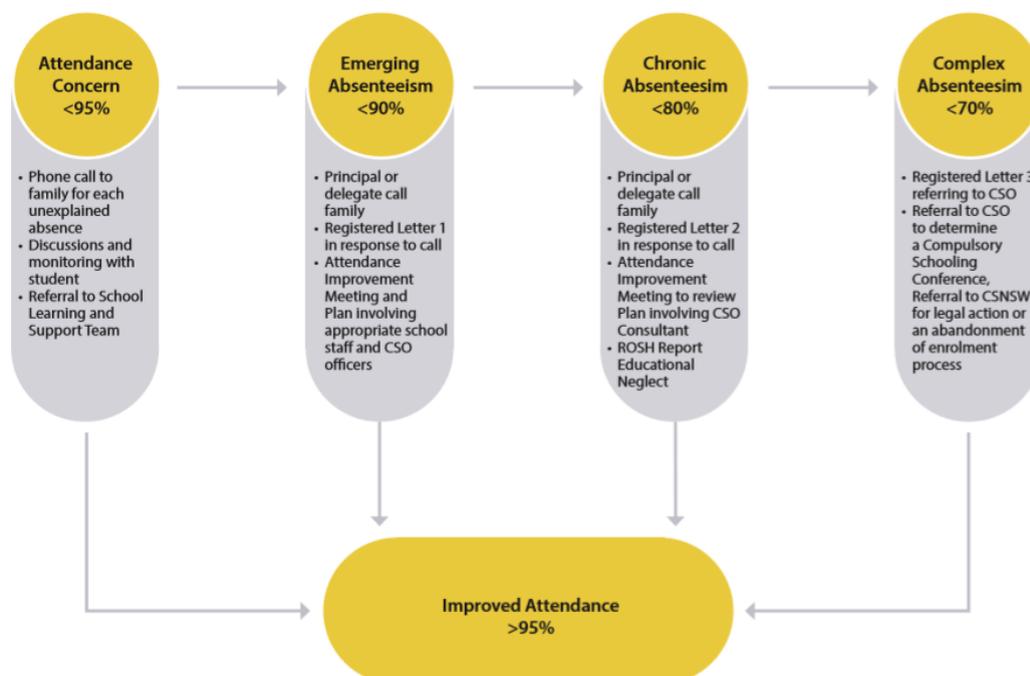
A *Certificate of Extended Leave -Travel* should not be issued where the principal is aware that the student has been the subject of a child protection report made to Family and Community Services and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.

Principals should consult with parents about the intention of the travel and in the case of family holidays, encourage parents to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.

Appendix 4 School Action Plan - Non Attendance
For further details please refer to the CSO Non Attendance SOP



SCHOOL ACTION PLAN - NON ATTENDANCE



APPENDIX 5

Student Attendance

- Students who are marked absent from the College will be contact on that day (via SMS) by the **Front Office** staff. The student's parents / carers have the option to reply to that text to ensure the absence is explained. If they fail to respond, the parent / carer will need to make contact with the school using means other than SMS to explain the absence. They have 7 school days to do this or the absence remains unexplained.
- If a student is absent for more than three days, the **Homeroom Teacher** is expected to make contact with the family in an attempt to seek information about the student's absence. They will make note of this contact in their planner and then report this to the **Stage Coordinator**.

- If the student's absence continues beyond 5 days, the Stage Coordinator should contact the family seeking information regarding the students' progress. The Stage Coordinator will then pass this information onto the **Assistant Principal** who will then liaise with the family.
- If there is concerns about the long-term absence of a student, the Assistant Principal will then work with the **Police Liaison Officer** to rectify the situation.

FLOW CHART – Student Unexplained Absence Accountability

