



Attendance K-12 Policy

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School Actions	Diocesan Policy: Schools are to ensure their practices are consistent with this policy and supporting procedural documents.
Associated Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Enrolment Policy▪ Pastoral Care Policy▪ Exemption Application Forms▪ Exemption Certificates▪ Referral form to Legal Services▪ Status of student destination unknown form▪ Parent information brochure▪ Maintaining and Keeping School Records Policy

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Inspired by the message and example of Jesus Christ, Catholic schools live out a distinctive educational vision. Supported by the Catholic community of which they are a vital part, they invite students and their families into a faith-filled educational experience.

As a key ministry of parishes and the diocese, Catholic schools encourage and support parents in their responsibility for the faith formation of their children. This formation is supported by prayer and opportunities to participate in the life, mission and liturgy of the broader Catholic community.

Our schools commit to:

- *nurturing each individual's growth in faith and unique potential*
- *offering outstanding educational experiences founded on Catholic values*
- *fostering partnership between parents and staff in the education of their children*
- *creating communities of respect for each other, the wider society and the earth*
- *encouraging active engagement in social justice issues, the service of others and the promotion of peace.*

Catholic schools are part of a long tradition of Catholic education provided by religious and lay teachers in Australia and this diocese for over 180 years. They fulfil parents' rights to choose the schooling for their children which reflects their own values, beliefs and hopes.

ATTENDANCE K-12 POLICY

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1. RATIONALE

Education in NSW is compulsory. All students from six years of age and under the minimum school leaving age of 17 are legally required to attend school. Students of school age (6 to minimum school leaving age) resident in New South Wales are required to be in fulltime attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home schooling, attending shared school settings or are granted an exemption from attendance.

Regular attendance at schools is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership 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 monitor part or whole day absences as part of their duty of care for students' welfare.

The introduction of the new Board of Studies attendance requirements for all NSW schools for 2012 has necessitated the writing of a new CSO Policy with full implementation from January 2012.

Schools are required to have in place effective procedures to ensure regular attendance and a response to non-attendance.

The Attendance Policy is to be implemented consistent with the Diocesan Enrolment Policy.

In a complex enrolment landscape schools and parents are urged to recognise their significant obligations in the best interests of each child.

2. AIMS

- 2.1 Schools are to meet Board of Studies requirements by having in place policies and procedures to:
- monitor the daily attendance/absence of students
 - identify absences from school and/or class(es)
 - follow up unexplained absence
 - notify parent(s) and/or guardian(s) regarding poor school and/or class attendance
 - transfer unsatisfactory attendance information to student files
 - Maintaining a register of daily attendance that includes the following information for a student:
 - daily attendance, which may be recorded by noting daily absences
 - Absences
 - reason for absence
 - documentation to substantiate reason for absence
- 2.2 The responsibilities of the Catholic Schools Office and parents should be clearly articulated and communicated.
- 2.3 To maximise learning opportunities, schools will ensure student attendance is optimised.
- 2.4 The school attendance register (roll) should reflect the highest professional standards and comply with the requirements outlined by the Board of Studies.
- 2.5 Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle will monitor attendance by using the attendance codes approved by the Minister of Education as from the commencement of 2012.
- 2.6 Schools will implement clearly communicated strategies to respond to issues of non-attendance.

- 2.7 Schools will archive the register of enrolments and the register of daily attendance as per the Board of Studies registration requirements.

3. IMPLEMENTATION

Responsibilities

3.1. Parents are responsible for:

- a) enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling;
- b) ensuring that their children attend school regularly;
- c) explaining to the school the absences of their children promptly and within seven days
- d) taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

3.2. School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by:

- a) promoting a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community;
- b) maintaining accurate records of student attendance across the school day;
- c) implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise;
- d) providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

3.3. The principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) students are enrolled consistent with the Diocesan Enrolment Policy;
- b) attendance records are maintained in accordance with the Diocesan approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students;
- c) staff accurately record student attendance;
- d) a system is established for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours e.g. appointments;
- e) all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director of Schools or Assistant Director and to the Board of Studies Inspector;
- f) documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern;
- g) the Director of Schools or Assistant Director is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom school strategies have failed to restore regular attendance;
- h) relevant school policies and procedures address attendance issues including truancy;
- i) structures and procedures are established that support staff in addressing issues of student non-attendance;
- j) school staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised. Staff induction and training remains a recurring priority;
- k) staff, parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements;

- l) all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school, are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented. School processes should define identification and response;
- m) whenever a class is conducted at a site other than the school site, attendance must be recorded. In addition, schools are required to develop their own procedures to monitor attendance during the day. Best practice in a secondary context, would monitor attendance each lesson. There may also be situations due to the nature of the school location or the attendance record of particular students where further attendance monitoring may need to be implemented;
- n) all reasonable measures are taken to contact parents promptly concerning an unexplained absence;
- o) Where unexplained absences are recorded within seven days of the occurrence of the absence, the hard copy roll should reflect that absence;
- p) In the case of students participating in course work or school activities away from the school site (such as work placements), the principal or an authorised person should regularly obtain an accurate record of student attendance at other sites.

3.4. Principals may grant:

- a) sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness;
- b) an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student;
- c) an exemption from school attendance for students wishing to participate in employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite sports events for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student;
- d) Note: For large scale and long running productions applications for exemptions for periods over 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student should be forwarded to the Diocesan Director of Schools ;
- e) part-day exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student (Attendance Register Codes 'M' and 'Pa') (See Section 1.3 of *Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*);

3.5. Principals may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the principal (Attendance Register Code 'L'). Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the principal's discretion. This may be due to:

- a) misadventure or unforeseen event
- b) participation in special events not related to the school
- c) domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- d) attendance at funerals
- e) recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.

3.6. Principals may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent should be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

3.7. Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged.

Where principals have ongoing concerns, they can request the parents' consent to contact the doctor. If the request is denied, or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'.

3.8. Principals may nominate staff to maintain rolls. In such cases, the principal must ensure that these staff:

- a) know the procedures in this document before marking the roll and following up absences. Staff must understand how an absence should be noted on the roll using the approved codes;
- b) seek verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences;
- c) retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. If teachers receive verbal explanations from parents, they should record, sign and date the explanation;
- d) are aware of their responsibility to alert the principal or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer;
- e) report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the principal or nominee.

3.9. The Director of Schools is responsible for ensuring that:

- a) schools are supported to maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister. The Diocesan system should conduct regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to principals in maintaining these documents;
- b) processes are in place to support principals prior to approval being given by the Director for students of compulsory school age participating in alternative education programs involving part day exemption from attendance at school;
- c) recommendations are made about the prosecution of cases of non-attendance or failure to enrol a child at school, in the first instance to the Catholic Education Commission, NSW;
- d) plans are implemented by the school for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders;
- e) all schools implement a system for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours.

3.10. The Director of Schools may grant:

- a) an exemption from school attendance for periods from 50 – 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student. (Attendance Register Code 'M')

School Attendance Records (BOS Requirements)

3.11. School attendance records must include:

- a Register of Enrolments to be retained **permanently**;
- notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for seven years from the date of receipt;
- an Attendance Register Roll to be retained for seven years.

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

- 3.13.** The student's record card 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 card should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.
- 3.14.** Records for Certificates of Exemption from attendance and enrolment must comply with requirements at Statement 1.4 of *Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*.

Attendance Rolls

3.15 Registering the attendance of students

- a) Manual and electronic rolls must reflect the highest professional standards in complying with Board of Studies requirements.
- b) The Education Act (1990) (Section 24) requires that rolls be maintained in a form approved by the Minister. These may be either manual or electronic rolls.
- c) Rolls must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.
- d) The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all schools.
- e) Only the codes listed in the NSW Attendance Register Codes are to be used.
- f) School attendance must be recorded on the roll early in the school day.
- g) Students involved in off-site activities endorsed by the school must not be marked as absent.
- h) Attendance information must be recorded on either an electronic attendance register or approved manual roll, on a daily basis.

3.16 Electronic Rolls

- a) A hard copy of the electronic record is to be generated no less than once a term. The principal or delegated school executive must endorse this hard copy, certifying its accuracy. Once signed, this hard copy becomes the official record of attendance and must not be amended.
- b) A hard copy of the electronic record of secondary students' attendance must be kept.
- c) Absences are recorded on student reports and/or student record cards generated at the end of each term.
- d) In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance code.
- e) Where an alteration is necessary on an electronic roll, a line is to be ruled through the existing hard copy entry and the correct entry made above. The electronic record must then also be amended. The principal or a nominee should initial any changes. Note: Alterations only apply to errors in roll marking.
- f) Codes to be used on electronic rolls are to be found in the NSW Attendance Codes. **Additional codes are not to be used.**
- g) The Attendance Register Code 'B' is to be used where a student is absent from the school site on official school business. This may include work experience, representative sport, and school excursions. 'B' is not an absence code and is not included as an absence for statistical purposes.

3.17 Manual Attendance Rolls

- a) Codes to be used on manual attendance registers are found in the NSW Attendance Requirement Codes. Additional codes must not be used. Supplementary comments regarding absences may be made in the 'notes' column, if required.
- b) In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant Attendance Register Code.
- c) The teacher or other nominee of the principal, responsible for maintaining a manual attendance register, is required to sign the register each day in the place indicated. The principal (or authorised person) should endorse the register at least once a term.
- d) Where an alteration is necessary on a manual attendance register, a line is to be ruled through the existing entry and the correct entry made above. Correction fluid must not be used on hard copies.

3.18 Special Circumstance Rolls

- a) Attendance registers must be maintained each day the school is open with the exception of:
 - days on which there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers
 - approved staff development days
 - approved special circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Schools
 - days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. Principals should consult with Diocesan personnel prior to deciding that a school is inaccessible.
- b) Special circumstance registers are to be maintained on days as outlined in 3.18.1 they should:
 - specify the dates and times of the variation
 - indicate the reason for the variation
 - list students attending on that day
 - be signed by the teacher maintaining the register
 - be permanently attached to attendance rolls.
- c) For schools maintaining a manual attendance roll, a broken line must be ruled through that day's column and the notation 'Roll not marked - see special circumstance register' recorded within.
- d) Electronic attendance rolls should have the facility to display a 'staff development day' (or similar) message on staff development days. A similar notation must be made on hard copies of electronic attendance registers regarding other reasons for maintaining a special circumstance register (e.g. industrial action or school closure due to fire or flood).
- e) Absences on these days are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes.
- f) Students can attend a specialist education setting separate to a mainstream school on a sessional or full-time basis. Such settings may include TAFE, other school or educational settings, behaviour schools or hospital schools. Where the mainstream school principal verifies that a student is attending a specialist education setting, the mainstream school can mark the attendance register with the Attendance Register Code 'H' to denote student attending a specialist education setting on a sessional or full-time basis.

3.19. Security of attendance rolls

- a) Rolls must be stored in a secure location within the school.

- b) They must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood. Staff must not take attendance registers home.
- c) The loss of an attendance roll is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to the relevant Assistant Director. A new roll should be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to the commencement of the new register must not be included.
- d) A notice signed by the principal must be attached to the new roll. The notice must state the period for which the original roll was a record of student attendance (eg 1 February - 30 March, 2009) and the date from which the replacement roll commences.
- e) At the end of each school year the principal must ensure that the attendance roll and attached special circumstance roll are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.
- f) Back up rolls should be regularly stored off site at regular intervals.

3.20 School sport rolls

- a) School sport is an integral part of the curriculum. Principals must ensure adequate attendance monitoring practices at school sport to ensure the safety of students.
- b) 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 roll. Absentees must be followed up promptly to ensure that the school's procedures for managing non-attendance are implemented.

3.21. Overseas exchange students

- a) Students participating in accredited overseas student exchange programs for periods of up to 12 months are to remain on the school attendance roll. They are not to be marked absent for the duration of their exchange. (Use of the M code).
- b) A note is to be attached to the attendance roll regarding the place and duration of the exchange. For statistical purposes, students on overseas exchange are to be considered present. However for Commonwealth Census purposes, the student is considered absent.

3.22 Senior students participating in flexible timetables

- a) The attendance of senior students participating in flexible timetables must be recorded in the same manner as other students. However, scheduled days or periods of non-attendance must not be marked as absences. The symbol noted in the Attendance Register Codes, 'F', regarding timetabled days or periods of non-attendance should be used.
- b) The scheduled non-attendance of senior students participating in flexible timetables is not recorded as an absence for statistical purposes.

3.23 Students who are suspended from school in accordance with the Diocesan Welfare Policy (2003)

- a) The appropriate Attendance Register Code symbol for suspension ('E') is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension. 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 would be unjustified and recorded accordingly. (See Attendance Register Code 'A')
- b) The absence of students who are suspended are counted as absences for statistical purposes.

3.24. Students who are exempted from school

- a) 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.

- b) The absences of students who have been exempted from school are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.

3.25 A student's name must be removed from the roll if:

- a) the student enrolls in another school;
- b) advice has been received from parents that the student is enrolled in another registered school, or is registered with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling. Principals who are concerned about information provided to them by parents should request the name of the other school or evidence of home schooling, so that a check can be made;
- c) the student has been expelled or excluded from the school in accordance with Diocesan Pastoral Care policy;
- d) the student is of compulsory school age, and has been marked as 'absent' for periods exceeding a total of 10 consecutive school days over a three week period, where the school is open for instruction, and is believed to have left the school. The school should report the matter to the Diocesan office for advice or further action. Prior to reporting the matter all appropriate checks should be made;
- e) the student is no longer of compulsory school age, their whereabouts are unknown, and the student has not attended school for fifteen consecutive school days for reasons not known to the school.
- f) If a student's name has been removed from the roll because 'their whereabouts are unknown', absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included as absences for statistical purposes. The roll should be amended to reflect this.

Enrolment and Attendance

3.26 Students may attend a NSW Catholic systemic school if they are:

- enrolled at that school or
- attending in the short-term.

3.27 Requirements and procedures for enrolling students in NSW Catholic systemic schools are located in the Diocesan Enrolment Policy.

3.27 Short-term attendance of students

- a) Students may be enrolled in one school only at any given time. However, for a variety of reasons, a student enrolled at a NSW Catholic systemic school may need to attend another school for a short period of time.
- b) Short-term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.
- c) Prior to agreeing to the short-term attendance of a student, the principal of the host school should gather the necessary information to permit a risk assessment to be conducted. The objective of the assessment should be the maintenance of a safe learning environment for staff and students.

Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

3.28 Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents, will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. 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.

- 3.29** 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.
- 3.30** Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:
- a) student and parent interviews;
 - b) reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program;
 - c) development of a school-based attendance improvement plan;
 - d) referral to the school counsellor or outside agencies;
 - e) support from school - based personnel.
- 3.31** If a range of school - based interventions has been unsuccessful, support may be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Schools Office in the first instance who may then advise the Chief Legal Officer NSW Department of Education and Communities Legal Services.
- a) During school hours, an authorised person or police officer may approach a student who is apparently of compulsory school age, and who is apparently not in attendance at school. They may request the student's name and home address and the name and address of his/her school. They may approach a student who is accompanied by an adult.
 - b) A police officer or authorised person, in the company of a police officer may accompany the student to his or her home, or to the school, to verify the information provided.
 - c) Under this authorisation, police have no power of arrest, detention or physical restraint.

Common Leave Pass

- 3.32** Secondary Catholic schools must implement a leave pass system for students who wish to leave school premises during normal school hours. The procedures for granting a leave pass to students are to be managed by the school.

Exemption from Attendance at School

See *Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*.

- 3.33** In the case of students of compulsory school age, applications for student leave can be considered as applications for exemption from school attendance.
- a) Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory education requirements of the Act may be granted by a delegated officer when it has been clearly demonstrated by the applicant that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term and that alternatives to exemption have been considered. For example, in some cases, application for Distance Education may be more appropriate than seeking an exemption from school attendance.
- 3.34** Exemption should only be granted where conditions exist which make it necessary or desirable that a certificate of exemption be granted. Under Section 25 of the Education Act (1990), the Minister may grant a Certificate of Exemption. This power is delegated, subject to these Guidelines, to:

- a) Diocesan Directors, in relation to granting of an exemption from school attendance totalling over 50 days in a 12 month period;
- b) Principals, in relation to granting of an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student. Over 50 days is then referred to the Director of Schools.

3.34 Principals and Diocesan Directors may grant a certificate of exemption from enrolment at school to students for the sole purpose of completing their education through undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship before they have completed Year 10. If such permission is granted, the principal should also grant a certificate of exemption from schooling subject to the completion of the contract of training.

Students Attending Lessons Outside School during school hours

3.36 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.

3.37 Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, principals may use their discretion in justifying the absence. This provision must not be used on a regular basis.

3.38 If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.

3.39 This section of the document does not apply to School Certificate or Higher School Certificate courses conducted outside school or participation in work placement or TAFE based courses.

4. BUDGET

The Catholic Schools Office will allocate an appropriate budget to support the system initiatives associated with supporting the attendance K-12 policy.

5. EVALUATION

The process for evaluating this policy will be ongoing, and adjusted according to participants' comments, or as the need arises. It is expected that this policy will be formally reviewed in 2017.

GLOSSARY

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 acceptable 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.

Compulsory School Age: {See Section 21B of the Education Act (1990)}