

APPLICABLE TO	All schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
DOCUMENT OWNER	Director of Schools
APPROVAL DATE	20 December 2019
APPROVED BY	CSO Leadership Team
SCHOOL ACTIONS	System policy: Schools are to ensure their practices are consistent with this policy. A local policy is not required.
LAST REVIEW DATE/S	February 2012
NEXT REVIEW DATE	February 2023
RELATED DOCUMENTS	Attendance Management Procedures Handbook 2019 (DRAFT) Enrolment Policy School Community Code of Conduct Records Retention Schedule for Schools Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Procedures Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy

Purpose

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) is committed to ensuring its schools meet NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) attendance requirements and have in place policies and procedures to ensure regular attendance and a response to non-attendance.

The Attendance Management Procedures Handbook 2019 articulates the associated procedures, guidelines and forms required to implement this policy in regards to

- attendance and leave
- a safe and supportive environment
- maintaining a student enrolment and attendance register and records

Policy Statement

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) who are residents 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 school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents/carers, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents/carers 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.

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

Scope

The Attendance Policy K–12 and associated procedures, support documents, forms and guidelines apply to all schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.

Guiding Principles

NESA requires schools need to

- Maximise learning opportunities by ensuring student attendance is optimised.
- Have 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/carer(s) and/or guardian(s) regarding poor school and/or class attendance
 - transfer unsatisfactory attendance information to student files
- Maintain a register of daily attendance (roll) 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
- Ensure the school attendance register reflects the highest professional standards and complies with the requirements outlined by NESA and attendance codes approved by the Minister of Education.
- Implement clearly communicated strategies and records to respond to issues of non-attendance.
- Archive the register of enrolments and the register of daily attendance as per NESA registration requirements.
- Maintain records of the exercise of the Minister's delegation under section 25 of the *Education Act* (exemptions).

Refer to the Attendance Management Procedures Handbook 2019 for procedures, forms, tools and templates to be used in the implementation of this policy.

1. Responsibilities

1.1 PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with NESA for home schooling.
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly.
- explaining to the school the absences of their children promptly and within seven days. In diocesan schools, parents/carers have the option to explain absences through the Compass platform.
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

1.2 SCHOOL STAFF

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

- promoting a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance across the school day through the Compass platform.
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

- providing clear information to students and parents/carers regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

1.3 PRINCIPALS

1.3.1 Enrolment and Attendance

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled consistent with the Diocesan Enrolment Policy.
- attendance records are maintained in accordance with the Diocesan approved format, Compass, and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.
- staff accurately record student attendance.
- a system is established for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours e.g. appointments.
- all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director of Schools or Assistant Director, COSI validators and to the NESA Inspector.
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern.
- 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.
- relevant school policies and procedures address attendance issues including truancy.
- structures and procedures are established that support staff in addressing issues of student non-attendance.
- 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.
- staff, parents/carers and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements.
- 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.
- whenever a class is conducted at a site other than the school site, attendance is recorded. In addition, schools are required to develop their own procedures to monitor attendance during the day. It is mandatory in a secondary context to 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.
- all reasonable measures are taken to contact parents/carers promptly concerning an unexplained absence.
- unexplained absences are recorded within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.
- 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.

1.3.2 Leave and Exemptions

Principals may grant:

- sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as by due to illness.
- an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student.

- 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 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student.
- Note: For large scale and long running productions applications for exemptions for periods over 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student should be forwarded to the Director of Schools.
- part-day exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student (refer to Compass Codes 'M' and 'Pa').

1.3.3 Absences

- Principals must record leave for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the Principal (Code 'L'). Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the Principal's discretion. This may be due to:
 - 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
 - recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
- Principals may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent/carer should be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.
- Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent, prolonged or unjustified
- Where Principals have ongoing concerns, they can request the parent/carer's 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'.

1.3.4 Delegation of Roll Maintenance to Staff

Principals nominate teaching and administrative staff to maintain rolls. In diocesan schools it is expected that classroom teachers will mark the roll. Administrative staff may amend the roll in the case of a discrepancy.

The Principal must ensure that their staff:

- know the CSO attendance management procedures before marking the roll and following up absences. Staff must understand how an absence should be noted on the roll using the approved codes.
- seek verbal or written advice promptly from the parent/carer regarding unexplained full or part day absences.
- retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents/carers in Compass. If staff receive verbal explanations from the parent/carer, they should record, sign and date the explanation in Compass.
- 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/carer.
- report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the Principal or nominee.

1.4 DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS

1.4.1 Enrolment and Attendance

The Director of Schools is responsible for ensuring that:

- schools are supported to maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister. The diocesan system will conduct regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to Principals in maintaining these documents through COSI processes.
- 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.
- 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 Assistant Director, then Catholic Schools NSW.
- Attendance Improvement Plans including compulsory school conferences, are implemented by the school for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders.
- all schools implement a system for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours.

1.4.2 Exemption

The Director of Schools may grant an exemption from school attendance/enrolment for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student (Attendance Register Code 'M').

Budget

The Catholic Schools Office will allocate an appropriate budget to support the system initiatives associated with supporting the Attendance K–12 Policy.

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 2023.

Legislative/Professional Guidelines

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

Education Act 1990 (NSW)

Education Act 2013 (Cth)

NESA Registration Systems and Member Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual September 2019

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards