



# STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

## SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

*“Those who know your name will trust in you, for you Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.”*

*Psalm 9:10*

## LEGAL CONTEXT

At St Patrick’s School:

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 Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Lismore Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedures and Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedures.

The school 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/delegate

### Explained/unjustified absence

A parent has provided an explanation of the student’s absence which has not been accepted by the principal/delegate

### 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 and to be filed in student record cards.
3. The Attendance Register (roll) to be retained for seven years (weekly hard copy summaries).

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 Sections 16 and 17 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)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

At St Patrick's School:

**Parents and Carers** are responsible for:

1. Ensuring their child is legally enrolled at the correct age
2. Ensuring that their child attends school every day the school is open for instruction
3. Promptly explaining the absences of their child from school preferably on the first day of absence and certainly within seven days from the first day of any period of absence.
4. Working in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school.

At enrolment application stage an immediate notification to the principal must occur if the school becomes aware of a child who turns 6 in the second half of the year and is not enrolled in Kindergarten.

**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 Book 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 delegate when an absence is recorded over five 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, saving an electronic copy each week. At this school the delegated person is the Assistant Principal.
5. Inform the Director of Catholic Schools or the designated CSO consultant and if necessary the Board of Studies Inspector 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 for periods of more than 10 days away from school will require an application to the Principal by completing an A1 form. If the reason is accepted the Principal will complete an exemption form with the original to be sent home to the parents, a copy to be kept on the student's file and a copy kept in the Principal's file. The administration staff will record absence on Schoolworx.
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/delegate. 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
  - 8.6 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). Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.
  - 8.7 In exceptional circumstances parents may complete a *Certificate of 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 *Certificate of Exemption* is issued by the delegated officer and the code 'M' is used.
9. Accept or decline as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The Principal/delegate may 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/delegate as soon as possible.

10. Ensure new and casual staff receive a briefing from either the Principal or a senior member of staff on school attendance procedures and approved roll marking.

11. The Australian Education Regulation, 2013 section 56(c) and 56(d) requires the Principal to report student attendance rate data (known as STATS). The data must be reported for the school, twice a year for the time periods Semester 1 and Term 3. The required data must be provided by sex, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and year level for full-time students enrolled in Years 1 to 6.

**Staff** at St Patrick's School must:

1. Ensure that the class roll is accurate at all times.
2. Accurately record absences for all students by 9:30am each day.
3. Ensure casual relief teachers in their classes follow school procedures.
4. Contact parents regarding unexplained non-attendance within (1-5) days of the absence, requesting a written or verbal explanation of the non-attendance.
5. If the parent explanation is verbal, note the reason in the comments section of the roll.
6. Alert the Assistant Principal when a student's pattern of attendance is of a concern (late to school, absent on regular days), or if no explanation is received from the parent/carer within 5 consecutive days.
7. Inform the Principal and or delegate 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 the Catholic Schools Office Audit and Compliance Officer for advice on further action. Prior to reporting the matter, all appropriate checks should be made.
8. Alert Assistant Principal and/or Principal if a student is about to reach the 15 allowed partial or full justified absence.
9. 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.
10. Be familiar with the range of forms required by regularly accessing the Management of Student Attendance Policy on the CSO intranet site.

### **Absence Notes/Records at St Patrick's School**

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

1. Administration staff will retain all correspondence referring to student absence.
2. Teachers are to forward any absence emails or notes to administration staff for appropriate storage.
3. Administration staff will send out daily SMS to all parents/carers for unexplained absence. These will be stored on Schoolworx.

4. Parents are required to sign the register for late arrivals or early departures. Precise times are recorded by the administration staff.
5. The administration staff will determine the appropriate code for all partial absences using the approved codes. Information is to be entered onto the Schoolworx website by the administration staff.

### **Marking the Roll Electronically**

The roll must reflect the highest professional standards. Teachers are to regard this as a professional responsibility and ensure that the roll is accurately and carefully recorded electronically through the Schoolworx website.

The *Education Act (1990)* (Section 24) requires that attendance registers (rolls) be maintained in a form approved by the Minister.

The roll is marked on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events, preferably before 9:30am and certainly before the first break.

### **Electronic marking at St Patrick's School**

A PDF copy of the school roll is to be generated at the end of each week for the preceding fortnight. The Assistant Principal will endorse by signature, name and date, certifying its accuracy. The endorsed PDF becomes the official record of attendance and will not be amended.

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

Where a genuine error is identified the Assistant Principal should amend the appropriate register/roll. The Principal or Assistant Principal will initial any changes. Note: Alteration only applies to errors in roll marking.

Procedure for electronic marking by teachers:

1. The roll is marked by 9:30am each school day. You are asked to establish a class routine to ensure the pattern is known to the students.
2. Teachers log on to the Schoolworx website with their username, password (<https://schoolworx.lism.catholic.edu.au>)
3. Teachers click on the Roll Class Teachers tab and choose the homegroup required.
4. Teachers mark student present or absent.
5. Once the roll has been marked the class teacher submits the roll.
6. Casual relief teachers may complete online roll marking if they can log into the Schoolworx website using their own name. If no access, casual relief teachers will complete a hard copy roll which is to be given to the administration staff by 9:30am. The administration staff will enter this data onto the Schoolworx website.

### **Checking and security of attendance registers (rolls)**

At the end of each school year the Principal must ensure that the authorized attendance register/roll and attached special circumstance registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.

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

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

Students absent on official school business for example diocesan sport or small group excursions are marked absent using a small 'a'. The symbol 'B' is included above in these situations. A notation is made in the comments section 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 would be unjustified and recorded accordingly.

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 and recorded in the student's details in SAS data base.

### **Students leaving the school**

The school 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 Admission Register needs to 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 on our part, the identity of the caller should be verified. Should the whereabouts of the family remain unknown after these inquiries then:

- Contact the parent by phone, letter and/or email
- Contact those named as emergency contacts for the student
- Speak to the student's peers
- Contact other organisations who may have been working with the family
- If required meet child protection mandatory reporting requirements by reporting the matter to the Child Protection Helpline on 133 627

If unable to locate the student/s after the above investigation advise the Department of Education and Communities via the email address [attendance@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:attendance@det.nsw.edu.au) using the Enrolment Destination Unknown template.

### **Natural Disaster**

If school attendance due to a natural disaster is highly problematic and attendance at school is affected, then a special circumstance register is commenced. Absences on these days are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

The school will provide teachers with a Special Circumstance Register. This will be placed in the Attendance Folder on the Google Drive. 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 teacher maintaining the register
5. be permanently retained with the Attendance Folder

### **Students attending specialist educational centres**

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

### **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 (101 days and over)**

Teachers are advised that there are special conditions applying in both circumstances where the event is over 101 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 100 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.

### **Students representing the school in sporting and other sanctioned events**

Students representing the zone, diocese or state in sporting events or offsite school events such, as enrichment or leadership, will be marked as absent on any day they away from the official roll marking period. Code [aB] 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.

The school's procedures in these situations are:

1. The Sports Coordinator or the person responsible for an offsite school activity will give a list of names to the administration staff.
2. The administration staff will record the absence on the Schoolworx website.

### **Managing Applications for Extended Leave - Travel or Holiday**

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. Family holidays and travel are not considered under the Exemption from School Procedures and the Principal will record this as unapproved leave. Parents will be advised of this through the newsletter, Parent Information Handbook and Parent Information Nights. If parents choose to proceed, the absence shall be recorded as Unjustified Leave and a Notification of Extended Student Attendance Leave Form A4 is to be completed by the parents/caregivers when the leave is for three or more days. When the Principal receives the notification form, it is to be filed in the Student's File and Principal's file. (The Attendance Leave Form A4 can be found on the school's website, under the parent tab.)

### **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 record keeping purposes. Mark 'aH'.

### **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 should 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.

Resolution of student attendance difficulties may require 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 may be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Schools Office in the first instance, which then advises the Catholic Education Commission, NSW. The CEC, NSW manages the process of informing NSW DEC. Police Officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act (1990).

This policy was last ratified by St. Patrick's School Board in... reviewed in...	June 2012 July 2013 March 2016 August 2019
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## Reflective Materials

- Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedures - CSO Policy February 2019
- Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedure - CSO Policy August 2019
- NSW Education Act 1990
- Child Protection Policy and Procedures - CSO Policy
- St Patrick's Macksville Privacy Policy 2014
- Student Record Policy - CSO Policy
- Suspension and Expulsion Policy - CSO Policy