

*With Jesus Christ as our inspiration and guide, we are called to provide high-quality Catholic education in the Diocese of Bathurst'*

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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### **1. MISSION AND VALUES**

In partnership with the family, parish and community, our schools nurture a relationship with Jesus, celebrate and share the Catholic faith, and educate to enable all to make a positive contribution to the world.

We are therefore committed to:

- The provision of a safe, inclusive and professional learning environment
- The use of a variety of methods, technologies and techniques to enhance learning and teaching
- Recognition of the diverse needs of learners
- Excellence in learning and teaching.

### **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the agreed practices at Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst (CEDB) in relation to Attendance.

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst works with schools to ensure this objective is realised. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff monitor student attendance daily including part or whole day absences, as a consequence of both their duty of care and legislative requirements.

### **3. EXPECTATIONS**

It is expected that all staff, community and students at CEDB and in CEDB schools will adhere to the scope and procedures outlined in this document as these are the agreed practices of CEDB. A local Policy is not required.

#### **Parents are responsible for:**

- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for home-schooling or distance education
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly
- explaining, to the school, the reasons for the absence of their children promptly and within seven days of absence
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children
- working in cooperation with the school to improve student attendance.

#### **The Principal is responsible for ensuring that:**

- attendance records are maintained in a CEDB approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students
- the approved NSW attendance register codes prescribed by the Minister of Education are implemented

- correctly and accurately
- clear information is provided
  - on a regular basis, to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
  - to the Executive Director of Schools or designated Catholic Education Officer about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom school strategies have failed to restore regular attendance
- attendance records
  - are an accurate record of the attendance of students
  - include details of transfers and exemptions
  - are at all times accessible to the Executive Director of Schools, Consultant to Schools, Child Protection Team, designated Education Officer and NESIA Inspector
- school-based procedures are developed in accordance with the Diocesan Attendance Marking Policy that
  - reflect the school's local practices in the administration of the requirements
  - include processes for the school to regularly evaluate and address school attendance
  - support teachers in addressing issues of student non-attendance
  - inform the staff of the casual teacher processes of the school
  - timeframe the marking of rolls
  - clarify the processes for marking rolls off-site
  - include maintenance of accurate official records of attendance for each student. A Principal or delegated school executive must endorse this official record at regular intervals throughout the year. An electronic record is to be generated every 5 weeks as a minimum and endorsed certifying its accuracy. Once endorsed, this copy becomes the official record of attendance and must not be amended. A school must be able to access archived records for individual students at any time
  - interpreters and translated materials, including letters, are available when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English in matters relating to school attendance
- a system is established for signing in students who arrive late and for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours
- school staff are trained to maintain the highest standard of roll marking and
  - know how to interpret and use the approved NSW attendance register codes
  - Mark Attendance Rolls in a timely manner
  - understand their obligations to follow up absences
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and appropriate intervention strategies are implemented to optimise regular school attendance and include
  - the development of documented plans, in consultation with parents, to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern
  - accessing medical certificates, in the case of illness.
  - use of referral and support networks so that students and their families can be connected to relevant services within CEDB and diocesan system and with local external agencies. Appropriate staff members may be nominated to meet with parents, arrange referrals and be the contact points for consultation and coordination of school involvement
  - communication, collaboration and information sharing occurs with other services and agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with students and families
  - any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) are managed consistently within the policies of Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst
- all cases of exemption for periods totaling up to 100 days in a 12 month period are notified to the Consultant to Schools and Executive Director of Schools. The Principal is the signatory on all documentation related to all such exemptions.

**Principals have the authority to:**

- grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness
- grant and sign an exemption from school attendance for periods totaling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student providing specific conditions are met
- accept other explanations of absence

- decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence, or a proposed absence. The parent must be advised that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

**The Executive Director of Schools is responsible for:**

- consulting and approving an exemption from school attendance for periods totaling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student using the NSW attendance register code 'M'
- ensuring schools maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister of Education
- ensuring that regular audits of school attendance procedures takes place and that principals are supported in this activity
- ensuring that plans are implemented for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders
- making recommendations about the prosecution of cases of non-attendance or failure to enrol a child at school, in the first instance to Catholic Schools New South Wales (CSNSW)
- approving the participation of a student in an alternative education program.

**School Staff support the regular attendance of students by:**

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of well being and belonging to the school community
- promoting regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- knowing the procedures in this policy including marking the attendance register and following up absences
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance
- seeking verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise
- providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- retaining records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. If teachers receive verbal explanations from parents, they should record, sign and date the explanation
- alerting 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 within required timeframes
- liaising with external agencies, arranging referrals and coordinating services and agencies working with students.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Abandoned Enrolment or Destination Unknown** is a circumstance where a student of Compulsory School Age has not attended school for 10 consecutive days and no explanation has been provided by the parent/carer.

**Attendance Codes** are codes approved by the Minister of Education for use in recording the attendance of students. Please refer to Appendix 1 for these codes.

**Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP)** is implemented to support a student whose attendance is of concern. This Plan should be developed with the student, parents/carers and any support staff or related organisations so they have ownership over the plan. Please refer to Appendix 7 for Template.

**Attendance Register (Roll)** is a record of the attendance of each student enrolled in a school for the period the student remains enrolled.

**Common Leave Pass** - Catholic systemic 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 and included in the School's Attendance Marking Policy.

**Compulsory Attendance Plan (CAP)** is developed to address attendance when AIPs have not achieved improvement in the attendance of a student. These are a legal requirement as a step after AIPs. Please refer to Appendix 7 for Template.

**Compulsory School Age** is a child the age of six years or above, and below the minimum school leaving age of 17.

**Compulsory School Attendance Conference (CSAC)** is a conference where the Children's Court may require a parent and/or a child to attend with other relevant persons. Please refer to Appendix 7 for Template

**Explained/ justified absence** is an instance where the parent/carer has explained the student's absence and this has been accepted by the Principal. It can be verbal, electronic or written.

**Explained/unjustified absence** is an instance where the parent/carer has explained the student's absence and this has not been accepted by the Principal.

**Full-time student** is a student who attends school on an average of 25 hours per week or more.

**Minimum school leaving age** is the age at which a child/young person completes year 10 or the age of 17 years whichever first occurs.

A child who completes Year 10 of secondary education, but who is below the age of 17 years, is of compulsory school-age unless the child participates on a full-time basis in:

- A. approved education or training, or
- B. if the child is of or above the age of 15 years - paid work or a combination of approved education or training and paid work.

**Part time student** is a student who attends school less than 25 hours per week.

**Partial Attendance** is intended to be a method of maintaining the student in the school environment for a period of time daily so they can attain educational outcomes while meeting their additional needs. Partial Attendance should be reviewed at least twice per term with the aim of increasing student participation at school over time. Partial attendance is a temporary strategy. It cannot be used as a long term solution. In cases where students are unable to participate fully in education an alternate setting may need to be considered.

**Regular Attendance** is a student attending school more than 90% of the time Primary and 85% of the time Secondary.

**Seven day rule** A parent must endeavour to provide an explanation for student absence within seven calendar days of the absence. If this occurs in conjunction with a term break they should provide the explanation before the end of term.

**Suspension** is where a student is absent from school under the care and responsibility of their parent/carer. Suspension is usually a decision made to ensure the safety and well-being of all in the school environment. It has a set time frame around the period of suspension. **Suspension does not occur in school** - this is withdrawal from class.

**Truancy** is the absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent/carer.

**Unexplained absence** is an instance where a parent has not provided an explanation of the student's absence within seven days of the first day of the absence.

**Unjustified absence** is an absence where the parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence but the explanation has not been accepted by the principal. A written notification of this is provided to the parent.

## 5. GUIDELINES

### 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 and Attendance Register (roll) to be retained for seven years

- in a case where a student has an accident, necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years
- the student's attendance record detailing the number of absences each year must be retained on the student's file 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
- records for Certificates of Exemption from attendance and enrolment

#### **Attendance Registers (rolls) must**

- reflect the highest professional standards
- be maintained in a form approved by the Minister
- be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events
- be recorded at the start of the school day - Primaries and at the start of each period - Secondaries
- be recorded for off-site activities. Schools are required to develop their own procedures to monitor attendance during these off-site activities
- record attendance information on an electronic attendance register on a daily basis
- in the case of late arrival or early departure, record the precise times of arrival or departure with the relevant attendance code
- create a Special Circumstances Register if required.

#### **Electronic Attendance Registers (rolls)**

- All schools in the Diocese of Bathurst use Electronic Attendance Registers (rolls).
- Codes to be used on attendance registers are found at Appendix 1. Additional codes must not be used.
- Supplementary comments regarding absences may be made in the 'notes' column, if required
- Schools must have an Attendance Marking Policy containing appropriate procedures to maintain accurate official records of attendance for each student.
- A school must be able to access archived records for individual students at any time.
- 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 an alteration is necessary on an electronic attendance register, alterations can be noted by using the 'comment' box. In hard copies a line should be ruled through the entry and the correct entry made above and the principal should initial any changes. Note: Alterations only apply to errors in roll marking.

#### **Special Circumstance Registers (rolls)**

- 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
  - other days in which all students are not expected to attend
  - on days which the I.T. network is unavailable
  - days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural disasters such as fire or flood. Principals must consult with Consultant to Schools prior to declaring a school inaccessible.
- Special circumstance registers are to be maintained for circumstances listed above. 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 the main attendance registers (rolls).
- Electronic attendance registers have the facility to display a 'staff development day' message on staff development days. A similar notation must be made on a special circumstance register (e.g. industrial action or school closure due to natural disaster)
- Absences on these days are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes

#### **Specialist Education Setting**

- Students can attend a specialist education setting separate to a mainstream school on a sessional or full-time basis:

- Such settings include CEDB approved behaviour schools, juvenile justice and hospital schools
- This does not refer to private coaching or tutoring even when it is delivered at a 'centre'
- Where the duration of attendance at a specialist education setting is more than four days in duration, the specialist education setting should use a special circumstance register to record student attendance. The special circumstance register should be returned to the student's mainstream school, preferably weekly.

#### **Flexible timetables**

- The attendance of 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 scheduled non-attendance of students participating in flexible timetables is not recorded as an absence for statistical purposes.
- 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 obtain an accurate record of student attendance at other sites at the conclusion of each school week.
- In the case of a student requiring partial attendance a flexible timetable can be generated to address their specific needs. See Appendix 11.

#### **Security of Attendance Registers (rolls)**

- Registers (rolls) must be stored securely electronically ( CEDB manages this), and if a paper copy is retained this must be secure.
- The loss or damage to an Attendance Register (roll) is a serious issue and must be reported immediately to the School principal and relevant Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst personnel.
- At the end of each school year the principal must ensure that paper Attendance Register (roll), endorsed rolls and Special Circumstance Registers are preserved securely
- A school must be able to produce past records of attendance

#### **Overseas exchange students**

- Students participating in accredited overseas student exchange programs for periods of up to 12 months are to remain on the school Attendance Register (roll). They are not to be marked absent for the duration of their exchange. In general, students on overseas exchanges are to be considered present. Schools should use the attendance code 'B' – 'The student is absent from school on official school business'
- An Application for Exemption is NOT required
- A note is to be included in the Attendance Register (roll) regarding the place and duration of the exchange. For statistical purposes, students on overseas exchange are to be considered present.

#### **Staggered Date start**

- Where students have a 'staggered start' to the school year, the following advice is provided regarding marking the Attendance Register (roll). This advice does not apply when an entire grade commences school on the same date.
  - The Roll Code 'F' would be used for days where the Principal has informed parents that the students are not required to attend school

#### **Students who are suspended from school**

- The Attendance Register Code for out-of-school suspension is 'E'. This is to be used for the duration of the suspension. Students who fail to return to school following the suspension period are Absent and 'A' code is used.
- Students who are removed from class temporarily but are at school, are withdrawn and counted as present.
- Students who are on out-of-school suspension are counted as absences for statistical purposes.

#### **Students who are exempted from school**

- The Attendance Register Code for exemption is 'M'. This is to be used for the duration of an exemption. Students who fail to return to school following the exemption period are Absent and 'A' code is used.
- Students who have been exempted from school are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.
- The register code 'M' is NOT to be used for travel within Australia or overseas.

#### **Completion of Education under Special Circumstances**

A child between the ages of 6 and 17 may leave school only after they have completed Year 10 of secondary education. One of the ways of completing Year 10 of secondary education is to complete education through a special circumstance approved by the Minister for Education and Training. These approved special circumstances generally are:

- through enrolment in home schooling
- through completion in another state
- through completion of a TAFE Certificate II (see Form A3.1)
- through full time employment in an apprenticeship or traineeship (see Form A3.2)
- through a combination of full time employment and training with an RTO (see Form A3.3)

Applications for Approval of completion of education under special circumstances must be made using the appropriate forms and with relevant documentary evidence to support the application.

### **Yr 12 Student Attendance Roll Marking**

- Year 12 students are considered to be enrolled as a student until they have completed their last HSC exam. Therefore, the last exam date for each student is the last date of each student's enrolment.
- The Attendance Register (Roll) must be kept for each student until the completion of each student's last HSC exam.
- During the period when students are on approved study leave – and during the HSC exam period – the Roll would be marked with Attendance Code 'F'. Students are participating in a flexible timetable and are not present because they are not required to be at school.
- In the case of a student not attending school on the date when required to be present for a HSC exam, then the appropriate Roll Code would be marked to replace Code 'F' e.g. 'S' or 'A'.

### **A student's name must be removed from an attendance register (roll) if:**

- The student enrolls in another school.
- Parents inform the school that the student is enrolled in another school, or is registered with NESAs for home-schooling or distance education. Principals should request the name of the other school so that a check can be made. The status of the student should not be changed until confirmation of enrollment is received from the enrolling school.
- The student has been expelled from the school.
- Students are still of compulsory schooling age and have successfully completed Year 10, and there is documented evidence that they are engaged in full-time study, employment or a combination of both.
- Students have moved out of New South Wales and have not applied for a cross-border enrolment in New South Wales.
- Students have moved out of New South Wales and the school has received an Interstate Student Data Transfer Note from the student's new school.
- 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. This would then be treated as an Abandoned Enrolment (destination unknown).
- A student is no longer of compulsory school age and has not attended school for more than 15 consecutive school days where the school is open for instruction, and there has been no communication with the school. This would then be treated as an Abandoned Enrolment (destination unknown).
- 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 for statistical purposes. The roll should be amended to reflect this.

### **Short-term attendance of students**

- 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
- Short-term attendance arrangements should not disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.
- Prior to agreeing to a 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.

### **Non-Acceptance of explanation for an absence**

- 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.
- Where frequent absences are explained as being due to illness, consultation with parents must occur regarding the health care needs of the child.
- Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged. Medical certificates are not sacrosanct documents. Principals with concerns can ask the parent to request that the doctor write on the certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.
- 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' using code 'A'.
- The Principal can use Information Exchange processes to gather information to assist the school in improving student attendance. Please see Safeguarding in relation to the use of these processes. Please note significant non-attendance is considered Educational Neglect.

### **Students Attending Lessons/Training Outside School During School Hours**

- Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, sports training (excepting Elite Sports and Elite Arts) conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive 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 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. The code to be used is 'L'.
- If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons or training, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.
- This section of the policy does not apply to RoSA or HSC courses conducted outside school, or participation in work placement or TAFE based courses.

### **Role of the Police**

- Police are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the *Education Act (1990)*
- During school hours, an authorised officer 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.
- A police officer or authorised officer, 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
- Under this authorisation, police have no power of arrest, detention or physical restraint
- Police and Department of Education personnel conduct regular Joint Anti-Truancy initiatives (JATS) targeting truancy.

## **6. PROCEDURES**

Attendance Procedures can be found in the Appendices of this Policy for

- Management of students with Abandoned Enrolment (Destination Unknown)
- Management of Habitual Non-Attendance
- Managing Exemptions from Enrolment
- Managing Exemptions from Attendance
- Managing Leave Applications

## **7. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

*NSW Education Act (1990)* (the 'Act') Section 22 and Section 24

*The Registration Systems and Member Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual* NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)



## 8. RELATED POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

*Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools CSNSW*

*Attendance Marking Policy Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst*

*Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) Policy Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst*

## 9. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

This policy has been ratified by the Executive Director of Schools and will be reviewed periodically, or in the event of any information or incident that indicates the need for a review, or following relevant legislative or organisational change.

It is the responsibility of anyone accessing this document to ensure that the current version is downloaded from CEDB website.

Date of Implementation	2011
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Date for Next Review	2022
Responsible for Review	Leader; HR, Risk, Legal, WHS