



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 Diocesan Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Catholic Schools Office of Diocese of Lismore v8 (Intranet/Policies/Student Attendance).

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 any one 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. The following procedures apply at St Patrick's School when parents talk to a teacher and request absence from school for their child:
 - 7.1. Inform the parent that the request must be made in writing to the principal with all details so a decision can be made.
 - 7.2. Inform the parent that the granting of the request is not automatic.
 - 7.3. Inform the parent that they will be provided with an application for exemption to be completed and returned to the school as soon as possible.
 - 7.4. Principal to review circumstances behind the application and grant or refuse the application using the appropriate form.
 - 7.5. If granted or refused, the Principal will complete an exemption certificate. Original is sent home, one copy in Principal's file and one copy in student file.
 - 7.6. If approval given, 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.

Teachers 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 using only the approved codes. *See Appendix 1*
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 Education Consultant 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. Complete Appendix 7 and hand to Assistant Principal. The resolution of attendance difficulties will begin.
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. Insist on absence notes from each student when they are away if no verbal notification was received.
2. Collect and retain notes for the term in a plastic sleeve of the roll book. Ensure the family surname is clearly on the note along with a date.
3. At the end of the year, the notes will be transferred to the student's file in the administration office by the classroom teacher.

4. Phone verification notes will be signed by the staff member who took the call and handed to the class teacher to place in the roll.
5. Parents are required to sign the register for late arrivals or early departures. Precise times are recorded by the administration staff.
6. 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 in strict adherence to the method and codes in the appendix to this policy. If you are unsure of what code to use see the Assistant Principal before any is recorded.

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 will complete a hard copy roll which is 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 student's' 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 software is being used.

Endorsed outside of school activity

Students absent on official school business for example class excursions, diocesan sport or small group excursions are marked absent using a small 'a'. The symbol 'B' is included above in these situations. Make a notation in the comments section of the roll indicating the nature of the absence.

Unendorsed educational activity in school hours

Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities will usually be limited to outside school hours.

Where attendance at a private lesson outside the school during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, the Principal may use discretion in justifying the absence.

If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons when permission to do so has been refused, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.

Students who are suspended from school (out of school suspension) in accordance with Diocesan Policy

The appropriate Attendance Register Code symbol for suspension ('E') is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension out of school. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the suspension and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the suspension period. In such cases, the student's absence would be unjustified and recorded accordingly. (See Attendance Register Code 'A' at Appendix A).

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 the DEC Home/School Liaison officer needs to be contacted. The CSO Education Consultant will advise.

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.

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).

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

This policy was last ratified by St. Patrick’s School Board in... reviewed in...	June 2012 July 2013 March 2016
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Appendix 1

Attendance Register Codes

<i>Note</i> The symbol X is to be used for the first and last day that the student attended for each term.	
Symbols to be used where students are absent from school	
Symbol	Meaning
a	The student was absent on that day.
Pa	The student was late or was absent for part of a day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded.
Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence.	
<i>Note following symbols should be recorded above the a or Pa symbol as appropriate.</i>	
Symbol	Meaning
A	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no notice has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of the absence.
B	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work experience - school sport (regional and state carnivals) - school excursions.
E	The student was suspended from school.
F	Year 11 or 12 student participating in flexible timetable not present because they are not required to be at school; or Student who has completed Year 10 but is below the age of 17 years participating in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - approved education or training, or - 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.
H	The student is attending two or more education settings for a period of time (shared enrolment). This symbol is recorded where a student accesses a specialist educational setting on a sessional or full-time basis in line with Diocesan Policy. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tutorial centre and programs , behaviour schools , juvenile justice, hospital schools. <p><i>Note:</i> In most cases this code will only be used by Department of Education and Communities schools, with the exception of students from non-government schools attending hospital schools.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> For Catholic Schools use 'F' not 'H' for students attending external tutorial centres and programs that are school authorised.</p>
L	Principals (2.2.7) 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. Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the principal's discretion. This symbol is recorded where a student's absence is due to reasons accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - misadventure or unforeseen event - participation in special events not related to the school - domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member - attendance at funerals - recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.

M	The student was exempted from attending school. (See Section B – Exemptions from Attendance and Exemptions from Enrolment)
S	<p>The student’s absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical appointment. In these cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a medical certificate is provided or - the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. <p>Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted or the duration of the absence is more than four days.</p>

Appendix 2

Student Absence Phone Verification

<u>STUDENT ABSENCE PHONE VERIFICATION</u>	
NAME OF STUDENT: _____	
CLASS: _____	TEACHER: _____
DATE(S) OF ABSENCE: _____	
REASON FOR ABSENCE: _____	

PARENT/CARER NOTIFYING: _____	DATE: _____
STAFF MEMBER’S SIGNATURE: _____	

Appendix 3

Student Absence Notification Form

<u>STUDENT ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM</u>	
NAME OF STUDENT: _____	
CLASS: _____	TEACHER: _____
DATE(S) OF ABSENCE: _____	
REASON FOR ABSENCE: _____	

SIGNATURE OF PARENT: _____	DATE: _____

Appendix 4

Letter for repeated late arrival (Ensure a copy is kept on file)

Date

Dear

The number of days your child arrives late for school is presenting some concern. Our records show that _____ has been late on _____ days.

The morning session is an important part of the day as directions and routines for the day are set up.

When your child arrives late, it means they will miss out on important part of the day’s learning. The bell for the start of the day rings at 8.50 am. If being on time presents a problem to your family will you please make contact with the school office.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher

Principal/Assistant Principal

Appendix 5

**Children Whose Attendance is of Concern
Record Summary of the Term**

Name of Student			
Term/ Year			
Number of days absent			
Number of days unexplained absence			
Number of partial absences			
Letters sent home	<input type="checkbox"/> Please tick	Date	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Please tick	Date	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Please tick	Date	
Class teacher		Date	
Principal/Assistant Principal		Date	
Others (please specify)		Date	
<i>Please place this completed form in the child's Record Card in the Administration Office</i>			

St Patrick's School
ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Use the CSO produced two page information brochure in all relevant publications including new parent information packs, parent handbooks and newsletter inserts.

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

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

Shorter term

As part of the implementation of the National Standards, holidays taken by students outside of school vacation periods are included as absences. A Certificate of Exemption is not granted for this purpose.

Families are encouraged to holiday or travel during school vacations. Leave of 10 or more school days will require the completion of an Application for Leave Form A1. A copy of the application can be downloaded from the school's website under the 'Parent' tab- Holiday Leave Application Form & Student Exemption From Attendance Form

Longer term

The school acknowledges that sometimes families will ask for extended student leave from school in term time for personal reasons. It is assumed families have given this option considered thought. Parents must be aware that the request is made in writing using the correct form (Form B1) found of the school's web site. Mostly this will involve travel. If so, documentation is required (copies of any itinerary, air tickets etc). The lack of documentation will slow or prevent approval. Principals can grant up to 50 days leave in a 12 month period for this purpose (that's one school term). Requests for more time away from school than this must go to the NSW Minister of Education through the Catholic Schools Office. When parents are aware that this will occur at least one full term's notice is required.

Please be aware that these requirements are legislated by the State government. This is not unique to our school and we are following our registration obligations.

Form D1
Proposed School Action for the Management of
Habitual Non Attendance

Step 1 5-10 days unexplained/unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)

- (i) Phone call to parents and notify Assistant Principal
- (ii) Follow-up with letter/email to parents requesting meeting with parents to discuss

Step 2 11-20 days unexplained /unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)

- (i) Phone call to parents on each subsequent day of unexplained/unjustified non-attendance after 1st 10 days
- (ii) Registered letter to parents re attendance requesting meeting between school and parents to discuss

Note: Refer to 4.13 in *Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Lismore Diocesan Schools System*

Step 3 21-30 days unexplained / unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)

- (i) Daily phone call/sms text message to parents on each day of unexplained/ unjustified non attendance
- (ii) Registered letter to parents re attendance
- (iii) Consult with Principal/Assistant Principal
- (iv) Inform the CSO Child Protection Officer

Step 4 Above 30 days unexplained / unjustified absence within last 100 days

- (i) Registered letter to parents
- (ii) Daily phone call to parents on each day unexplained/ unjustified non attendance
- (iii) Consult with CSO Child Protection Officer on whether it is appropriate to report to Community Services (C.S.) If so, Principal makes report to C.S. and informs Schools Consultant.
- (iv) Stay in constant contact with the CSO Child Protection Officer.

Step 5 Above 30 days unexplained / unjustified absence and no improvement from Step 4

- (i) CSO Child Protection Officer and the Principal make schooling arrangements with parents/carers that include a written undertaking with respect to compulsory schooling (a Compulsory Schooling Undertaking).