



St Joseph's P - 6 School

As a dynamic P to 6 Catholic school, St Joseph's strives for excellence within a Christ-centred community and contemporary environment

Attendance Policy

Purpose

To clarify the responsibilities of St Joseph's School in encouraging attendance, reporting and dealing with absenteeism as determined in the *Education Act 2004* (the Act).

To clarify the statutory obligations of parents under the Act.

To ensure that attendance data is credible and accurate.

Attendance records may be required as proof of a student's enrolment and attendance for a variety of purposes, such as eligibility for Youth Allowance or matters being dealt with by the Family Law Court.

Policy

This policy outlines the responsibilities of St Joseph's School regarding student enrolment and attendance.

Definitions

Attendance records

Any and all hard copy documents or electronic records, which in some way record both the attendance and non-attendance of a child at school, scheduled sessions at the school and / or an approved educational course.

Authorised person

A person appointed by the Chief Executive of ACT Department of Education and Training (ACT DET) under section 119 of the Act.

Compulsory school age

A child is of compulsory school age if the child is at least 6 years old and under the age that the first of the following happens: the child completes Year 12 or the child is 17 years old.

Exemption Certificate

Is a certificate issued by the Chief Executive exempting a child from the requirement to be enrolled with an education provider or registered for home education or the full-time participation requirement.

The System's record keeping system

The computer application and database used in the System to record details of student enrolments and related matters. This is currently known as MAZE.

Parent

A person having parental responsibility for a child under the *Children and Young People Act 1999* including a person who is a carer under the *Children and Young People Act 1999*, section 5 ie. a person who provides regular and substantial care for the child or young person.

Strict liability offence

An offence that does not require proof of negligence or intent. It applies irrespective of a person taking reasonable care.

Student

A person who is enrolled as a student in a school in accordance with section 100 of the Act.

Procedures

1. Enrolment Procedures

At the time of enrolment of the child, proof of residency, in the form of an electricity account, tenancy agreement, current driver's licence or similar, must be shown to the Principal of the school, or the Principal's delegate. Proof of age and identity (e.g. a birth certificate or passport and immunisation records) must also be shown to the Principal, or the Principal's delegate, at the time of enrolment.

Parents/carers will be asked to update student residential data at the beginning of each year.

2. Unique Identification Numbers

All schools will be allocated a block of unique identification numbers (ID numbers). These ID numbers must be used by the school when enrolling a child.

The unique identification number will also be used when a child is provisionally registered or registered for home education.

This identifying number will remain the same throughout the child's education in the ACT even when the child changes schools, moves between the government and non government sectors or is home educated at any point.

3. Keeping of registers and records of enrolments and attendances

When a student has been absent from school, parents are requested to send a note to the school to explain the absence. Written, signed notes must be handed in to the class teacher on the day the student returns to school.

It is essential that the following details are recorded in the note received: student's full name, date of absence, reason for absence, and parent/guardian's name and signature.

Notes received must be signed and dated by the class teacher.

Telephone calls are considered a courtesy however they do not replace the written note.

Should a note regarding absence not be received within a week of the absence, teachers are to forward the *Student Absence Form* to the child's parent/guardian for completion.

Daily attendance is to be marked in the Class Roll in accordance with the regulations listed on the pages immediately inside the front cover.

Marking of Rolls

- All teachers will be issued with a Roll at the beginning of the school year. At the end of the year, the Rolls will be archived by the school.
- All teachers will mark the class roll twice each day.
- Roll marking procedures will be followed as outlined in the 'Instructions for Teachers', which can be found at the front of the Roll. Daily attendance is marked with a cross.
- If students attend school after 10:30 am this is considered partial attendance. If a student leaves school before 2:00 pm this is also deemed partial attendance and the Roll will be marked accordingly.
- Information regarding contact details and addresses will be provided by the Front Office and must be entered into the class Roll.
- The Roll is to be stored in the teachers' drawer for ready access by relief staff.

Absences

- If a student is absent a written explanation from the parents/carers is required. Teachers are to collect, sign and date these notes and write the appropriate symbol in the Roll. At the end of each year, these notes are to be sent to the Front Office, in clearly labelled term envelopes to be archived by the school.
- Unexplained absences will be followed up once by teachers with a form that will be sent home with the student. After that an 'A' will be entered on the Roll to reflect unexplained absences as per instructions in the Roll.
- Parents who notify absences by phone will have their message relayed to the class teacher. The parents/carers are still required to send in a written absent note.
- When a student is on a graduated return to school (after an absence due to illness or for other reasons), s/he should be marked present for the time spent at school and absent with parental approval for the time not at school.
- The status of the child as a child on graduated return should be recorded on the child's file held by the school.

Late arrival

- Students who arrive late to school must report to the Front Office and be signed in.

Collection by parents during the day

- Parents wishing to collect or drop off children during the day must report to the Front Office to sign the Students in/out Register before collecting, and at the time of dropping off their children. In normal circumstances, a note to the teacher outlining the reason and time for collection or drop off should be provided in the morning.

Concerns about attendance

- If teachers are concerned about a pattern of repeated unexplained or suspicious attendance of students, the teacher will notify the Principal who will make contact with the parents/carers.

- If the principal is unable to make contact, the family will be referred to the Catholic Education Office for action.

While the responsibility for attendance lies with parents, staff at St Joseph's encourage students and parents to have full participation in school life. Concerns about patterns of absence are reported to the Principal and discussed with parents. If necessary, the school will contact the appropriate agencies and support providers and work with all involved with a child to encourage regular attendance at school. The strategies for such encouragement will be negotiated in light of each individual case.

Students who take extended leave during term time are not required to be given work. This is at the discretion of the teacher after discussion with parents. Parents are to be advised of school events, including assessment, which will be missed during such leave.

4. Name under which a child is enrolled

The entry of enrolment on the System's record keeping system must indicate the birth certificate name of the student. This is the name under which the student is officially enrolled.

If, however, one of the following conditions apply, a Principal can enrol students under an alternative name or change existing records to indicate the new name:

- a signed consent from both parents indicating approval to use the new name is provided
- a court order is provided authorising the use of the new name
- a statutory declaration is provided by the enrolling parent indicating that the child has had no contact with the other parent for a period of five years and his or her whereabouts is unknown
- a signed consent from one parent and proof that the other parent is deceased. (This can take the form of a statutory declaration by the enrolling parent or a death certificate)
- a birth certificate issued in the new name
- proof of adoption.

Where one of the above conditions cannot be met, no change of name is to be made and the parent requesting the name change is to be informed that no change will be made until one of the conditions can be met.

If a parent raises a concern about their child being known under another name with a Principal, the parent should be advised that a further change would only be made if there is a court order or written agreement of both parents.

5. Management of records

Principals have a responsibility to ensure that records of all enrolments and attendance are made in accordance with Division 2 of the *Territory Records Act 2002* which outlines agency responsibilities in relation to record management by making and keeping records and ensuring accessibility of information.

All records pertaining to enrolment and attendance must be available for inspection by an authorised person, on production of an authorised person's card. This is a legal requirement under Section 101(1) of the *Education Act 2004*. The Principal must comply with such a request, as failure to do so is a strict liability offence and may incur a fine. Other action may also be taken e.g. disciplinary action.

Section 101(3) of the Act states that an authorised person may make copies of the register of enrolments and attendances or any part of that register.

Principals are required, under Section 101(4) of the Act, to take reasonable steps to assist the authorised person in exercising his/her functions in regard to the inspection of registers of enrolment and attendance. Failure to do so is a strict liability offence and may incur a fine.

6. Compulsory attendance of school age children

It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that a child who lives in the ACT, is of compulsory school age and is enrolled at a school attends:

- the school on every day, and during the times on every day, when school is open for attendance, and
- every activity of the school (including attendances at an approved educational course) that the school requires the child to attend.

Parents must have a reasonable excuse for not complying with the compulsory attendance requirement in the Act. If parents do not have a reasonable excuse, they are liable under the Act and may be fined. This is a strict liability offence.

Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' for a child's absence might include:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- family holidays or extended visits overseas
- attendance at a wedding
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings
- participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school
- participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event or equivalent
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families.

7. Encouraging school attendance

Parents / carers are encouraged to send their children to school through

- receiving information about attendance requirements at the beginning of each year
- introducing them to a supportive and welcoming atmosphere
- highlighting the open - door policy for the classrooms and for the Principal and Assistant Principal that exists at the school
- contact with the Principal when a pattern of absenteeism is first recognised
- support for their child re-entering school.

Students are encouraged to attend school by

- being involved in worthwhile, meaningful and rewarding educational experiences
- being supported in all aspects of school life

- working with parents / carers and teachers to set attainable goals to ensure school is a safe and happy place.

The Principal will assess regular school attendance on a case by case basis having due regard for the individual circumstances of each child, making contact with the parents / carers to discuss the circumstances of the student's absenteeism.

The Principal will refer parents and children to support services when school procedures encouraging attendance are not successful.

References

CEO Attendance at School (ACT) Policy

Forms

Student Absence Form

Approved by: School Board

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