

Student Attendance



Our Vision

'ONE IN CHRIST'

Our Mission

At St Joseph's Primary we will

- Give witness to Christian values
- Respect the dignity and sacredness of each student
- Work with the parents to build up within the child an awareness of the presence of God
- Endeavour to discern and fully develop the potential of each student
- Foster a love for learning
- Create a happy, accepting and enriching environment

Rationale

The Education Act 1990 requires that children of primary school age, who are residents in Australia are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Education Department. Students must commence school by six years of age.

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parent/carers, are responsible for promoting regular attendance of their children. School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

Compulsory School Age

- Between the age of six and seventeen.
- Students who turn six late in the year (ie. after 1st October) can be granted an exemption from enrolment to start school the following year. They must, however, be enrolled in full-time Preschool.

Implementation

Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools (DLCS) Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedure and (DLCS) Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedure will be familiar to staff and adhered to. This document is located on the (DLCS) intranet.

This guideline also implements the ACARA National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting.

Responsibilities

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling;
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly;
- explaining the absences of their children from school promptly and within seven days to the school;
- applying for leave, in advance, if a known period of leave greater than ten days is required. Parent/carers are requested to complete an [Application for Leave Form](#) which is located on St Joseph's Primary website); and
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled consistent with the DLCS Enrolment Policy;
- staff provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community;
- programs and practices are implemented to address attendance issues when they arise;
- clear information is provided to students and parent/carers regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance;
- excellent and improved student attendance are recognised and rewarded;
- attendance records are maintained in a DLCS approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students;
- all official printed and/or digital copies of student attendance are accurate and endorsed as accurate by the Principal or other nominated member of the school executive;
- a system is established for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours;
- all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director of Schools or designated DLCS officer and to the Board of Studies Inspector;

- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern;
- the Director of Schools or designated DLCS officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom school strategies have failed to restore regular attendance;
- relevant school policies and procedures are developed and implemented to address attendance issues including truancy. They should provide strategies for encouraging good attendance and establish structures and procedures that support teachers in addressing issues of student non-attendance;
- school staff are trained to implement DLCS school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised;
- parent/carers and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements;
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented; and
- sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness (refer to DLCS Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedure Appendix A available on the [DLCS intranet](#)).

A Certificate of Exemption is no longer granted for holidays in term time. Families are encouraged to holiday or travel during school vacations. If travel during the term is necessary the following considerations apply:

- If the Principal accepts the reason for the absence, the absence will be marked as 'L'.
- If the Principal accepts the reason for an extended absence, the absence will be marked as 'M'.
- If the Principal does not believe the absence is in the students best interests and does not accept the reason, the absence is unjustified and will be recorded as 'A'.
- If the period of absence exceeds fifty days, the student may be eligible to enrol in Distance Education.

Principals may approve leave for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the Principal (refer to DLCS Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedure Appendix A available on the [DLCS intranet](#)). This may be due to:

- misadventure or unforeseen event;
- participation in special events not related to the school;
- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member;
- attendance at funerals;
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions; or
- travel or holidays.

Principals may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent/carer should be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.

Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged.

Where Principals have ongoing concerns, they can request the parent/carers' 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' (refer to DLCS Student Attendance Standard Operating Procedure Appendix A available on the [DLCS intranet](#)).

Principals may nominate staff to maintain attendance registers (rolls). In such cases, the Principal must ensure that these staff:

- know the procedures in this document before marking the attendance register and following up absences. Staff must understand how an absence should be noted on an attendance register using the approved codes; and
- seek verbal or written advice promptly from parents/carers regarding unexplained full or part day absences.

Parents/carers may not be aware that their child has been absent from school and will expect to be informed promptly if unexplained absences occur. Schools may wish to request this information by telephone and should then:

- retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents/carers. If school staff receive verbal explanations from parents/carers, they should record, sign and date the explanation;
- are aware of their responsibility to alert the Principal or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent/carer; and
- report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the Principal or nominee.

The Director of Schools and DLCS officers are responsible for ensuring that:

- schools are supported to maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister. The Diocesan system should conduct regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to Principals in maintaining these documents; and
- plans are implemented for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders.

Attendance Records

- Register of Enrolments – to be retained permanently.
- When a student of compulsory school age leaves the school, a record of communication with parents/carers regarding the destination school must be retained. If no communication is received, a record of report to the Department of Education and Children must be retained.
- Rolls – to be retained for 21 years after the student leaves school.
- Absence notes/emails and written records of verbal explanations – to be retained for 21 years after the student leaves school.
- Individual Student Record File – to be retained for 21 years after the student leaves school.
- If a student has an accident requiring an Accident Report – all attendance records pertaining to that student to be kept until the end of the year in which that student turns 25 years of age.
- Must be marked using the Exception Method (marking absences only).
- Must be marked at the start of the school day and on all days that the school is open for instruction, including sports carnivals, excursions etc.
- Precise times of Late Arrival or Early Departure must be recorded with the relevant code.

To monitor student attendance at St Joseph's Primary the following actions will be undertaken:

- Teachers will mark the roll at the beginning of the school day electronically. The default position for students is 'present'. Teachers will mark absences.
- An SMS message will be sent to parents/carers of students who are absent at approximately 9:30am. Parents/carers can respond via SMS the reason their child is absent which will be automatically recorded by the attendance software. No further explanation is required.
- Office Staff will record partial student absences and record the relevant codes for both partial and full absences.
- Students who are absent for part of the day will be signed in and/or out by a parent/ carer/ emergency contact at the Office.

- Students will bring a laminated card to class to indicate they have arrived late and have been signed in through the Office.
- Parents/carers will inform the school of the reason for student absence in writing, on the students return to school.
- Parent/carers will be sent a courtesy email or letter if the child's absence remains unexplained on the Monday of the following week, seeking an explanation for the absence.
- Absences unexplained after seven days or unjustified will be marked as an 'A' Absent - Unexplained.
- Teachers or their nominee will make a courtesy telephone call to the parent/carer of a child who has been absent from school for five days without explanation.
- In consultation with the classroom teacher, the Principal, Assistant Principal or teacher will contact parents/carers of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences. This will occur every five weeks. Staff will record actions in the student's Compass profile that ensure good student attendance.
- Ongoing unexplained absences, or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance, will result in a formal attendance conference being organised which may include the relevant DLCS officer.
- All student absences are recorded on the student's Compass record and communicated to relevant authorities as required.
- The exit destination of children leaving the school will be recorded in Compass.
- All school business that occurs 'off premises' (eg. camps, sports days and other excursions) is to be recorded on the electronic roll.
- In the case of emergency evacuation, or when 'off premises', the electronic roll is accessible via a mobile device.

School Action For The Management Of Habitual Non Attendance

Students may be absent due to sickness. A student may be absent for the following reasons which have been explained by a note from their parent/carer:

- Misadventure/unforeseen event.
- Domestic necessity.
- Participation in non-school special event.
- Recognised religious festival or ceremonial occasion.
- Travel or holidays.

Leave Is Only To Be Approved By The Principal Or Their Delegated Nominee

When absences are not explained within seven days or are unjustified the following steps may be taken:

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

If at any time a teacher is concerned about a student's pattern of attendance, they are to notify the Principal and contact the parent/carer by telephone or by sending home a courtesy email or letter and print out of the electronic roll. Teachers are to make a note of this action in the students Compass profile.

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

- Second phone call to parent/carer to discuss unexplained/unjustified absences. Action recorded by class teacher in the students Compass profile.
- Registered letter and/or phone call to parent/carer regarding attendance requesting a meeting between school and the parent/carer to discuss at fifteen days unexplained or unjustified absences. Teachers to make note of this action and include a copy of the letter in the students Compass profile.
- Inform the DLCS Consultant.

Step 3

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

- Phone call to parent/carer at twenty days unexplained/unjustified non-attendance by Teacher, Principal or Assistant Principal. Second attendance meeting with parent/carer, teacher and Principal held. Action Plan for attendance developed and committed to by parent/carer. Inform the DLCS Consultant. Teachers to make note of this action and include a copy of the letter in the students Compass profile.
- Phone call/Registered letter to parent/carer regarding attendance requesting meeting with DLCS Consultant and Principal after twenty five days unexplained or unjustified. Third attendance meeting with parent/carer, teacher, Principal and DLCS Consultant held.

Step 4

Above 30 days unexplained/unjustified absence within last 100 days

- Daily phone call to parent/carer on each day unexplained/unjustified non attendance by Assistant Principal.
- Consult with the DLCS Child Protection Officer on whether it is appropriate to report to Community Services (CS). If so, the Principal makes a report to the DLCS and informs the DLCO Consultant.
- Referral by DLCS Consultant to Risk Manager for possible further action.

Step 5

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

- Risk Manager and Principal make schooling arrangements with parents/carers that include a written undertaking with respect to compulsory schooling.

Guide issued August 2023

Review date August 2026

Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance - August 2023
Summary for Teachers

Rolls

- Student Attendance is monitored closely and teachers play an important role in ensuring good rates of student attendance and that absences are explained within seven days by written communication.
- Must be marked using the exception method (marking absences only).
- Marked first thing in the morning and on all days that the school is open for instruction, including sports carnivals and excursions.
- Precise times of Late Arrival or Early Departure must be recorded with the relevant code. The Office staff are responsible for this. Children who have been signed in will arrive to class with an orange slip. You do not need to access the roll, simply take the slip and return it to the Office during the day.

Granting Leave

- Parents/carers must provide a written explanation to explain absences within seven days of the child returning to school. Teachers are to remind children to return a note.
- Absences unexplained after seven days will be marked with code 'A' Absent - unexplained.
- Student absences that are explained by note or phone call as the result of sickness or medical appointment are to be recorded as 'S' Absent - sick/illness.
- Students who know that they will be away for greater than ten school days are requested to fill in an Application for Leave Form and lodge it with the Principal.
- The Principal will notify the teacher if that leave has been approved and the absence recorded as 'L' Absent - leave approved.
- For students who are absent and the note or phone call indicates another pressing reason for being absent from school such as a funeral, unforeseen event/misadventure, participation in a non-school special event or domestic necessity, then the absence is recorded as 'L' Absent - leave approved by the Office staff. The Principal may approve leave for holidays or travel during term time, however this is discouraged.
- Students who are absent from the school on official school business such as school excursions and sport are recorded as 'B' Present - school business.

Attendance Records

- Rolls will be retained for 21 years after the student leaves school.
- Individual Student Records will be retained for 21 years after the student leaves school.
- Absent Notes will be recorded in Compass.
- The precise times of Partial Absences are to be recorded by the Office staff.
- Teacher action to ensure student attendance such as a phone call or meeting are to be recorded in the students Compass profile.
- Parents/carers will be provided with information educating them about their responsibilities in ensuring student attendance and justifying absences at least twice a year through the school Newsletter and on enrolment.

Concerns about Student Attendance

- If at any time a teacher is concerned about a student's pattern of attendance they are to refer to the school action plan in the DLCS Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedure and notify the Principal and/or the Assistant Principal.
- A courtesy phone call is made to the parent/carer of any child who has been absent from school for five consecutive days without explanation to check on the child's welfare. The Office staff may make

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this welfare check on the request of the teacher. Teachers will record this action in the students Compass profile. However, if there are concerns about a child's ongoing pattern of attendance, the teacher is to refer to and follow the school action plan. All actions taken by the teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal will be recorded in the students Compass profile.