



CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE DIOCESE OF SALE



St Mary's Primary School Bairnsdale SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic.) (the Act) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.), school attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted.

Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of parents/guardians, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents, students, the school and the wider community.

School attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks.

2.0 PURPOSE

To ensure active support for full student attendance and retention until the completion of Year 12 or its equivalent and respond to individual student circumstances when regular attendance is not consistent. Schools within Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Ltd (DOSCEL) maintain attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain student attendance.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Attendance

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.

3.2 Parent/guardian

Includes "a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cwlth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides".

3.3 School Attendance Officers

In the context of attendance, School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices and Infringement Notices.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Parent/guardian

Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless exemption from attendance has been granted. For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

4.2 Students

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled during normal school hours every day of term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment.

4.3 Principal

The principal must ensure:

- Daily attendance of each student enrolled at the school is recorded at least twice a day in primary schools and for every class in secondary schools.
- Any absences of a student from school, including classes, are identified.
- Reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded in writing.
- Explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act.
- Follow up any unexplained absences of a student by contacting the *parent/guardian of the student as soon as practicable on the same day*.
- Parents/guardians are notified promptly regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. If, upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).
- If contact cannot be made with the parent, contact should be made with the emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.
- Information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes is recorded on their student file.
- Parents/guardians are informed of their responsibilities around attendance and initiatives aimed at promoting parental awareness of the importance of children attending school every day are implemented.
- Attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development, including an Attendance Student Support Group, Personalised Learning Plan, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan.
- Strategies for supporting attendance of students in out-of-home care, experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families, overseas students, students with disabilities, students with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and newly arrived families are implemented.
- DOSCEL is advised where a referral to a School Attendance Officer is required because the student has been absent from school on **at least five full days** in the previous 12 months without reasonable excuse for absences.
- Referral processes are implemented to Child FIRST or Child Protection, DOSCEL and the School Attendance Officer where required.

4.4 DOSCEL

- Ensure Schools within DOSCEL maintain attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain attendance in accordance with Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic.) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.).
- The Deputy Director Catholic Identity, Leadership, Learning and Teaching in conjunction with the school principal may authorise an exemption and provide written approval for student attendance or attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time.

5.0 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Schools within DOSCEL actively support student attendance and retention.
- Schools within DOSCEL maintain attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences, and develop procedures to support and maintain attendance.

6.0 REFERENCES

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
- School Attendance Guidelines - 2018 issued by The Hon. James Merlino MP, State Minister for Education
- Department of Education and Training Policy Advisory Guide – Attendance

7.0 RELATED POLICIES

- CEOSale Catholic Schools Enrolment Policy
- CEOSale Pastoral Care Policy
- CEOSale Child Protection Policy
- CECV Whole-School Approach to Supporting Positive Student Behaviour
- CEOSale A Whole School Approach to Positive Behaviour Support
- CECV Intervention Framework

8.0 REVIEW

Last Updated: June 2020

Review Date: June 2021