

MATER DEI STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

SOURCE OF OBLIGATION

The NSW Registration Manual requires:

(3.8) the Principal to keep a register, in a form approved by the Minister of the enrolments and daily attendances of all children at the school;

(3.6.2) that a registered non-government school must provide a safe and supportive environment by:

- having in place policies and procedures that provide for student welfare; and
- maintaining a student enrolment and attendance register.

To comply with its obligation Mater Dei School Mater Dei School keeps a register of the daily attendance of all students at the school in electronic form (Synergetic).

The Mater Dei Attendance Register is in a form approved by the Minister for Education, and the New South Wales attendance register codes.

The register of daily attendance records the following information for each student:

- daily attendance;
- absences;
- reason for absence; and
- documentation to substantiate reason for absence.

MONITORING DAILY ATTENDANCE

Mater Dei School has implemented the following systems and procedures in order to monitor the daily attendance of students and identify absences from school:

- Parents/guardians are responsible for ensuring that they notify the school to explain the absence of their children on any particular school day. The preferred method of notification by telephoning the school prior to 9.15am on the day of the absence.
- The Mater Dei Attendance Register (roll) must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events. Pastoral teachers record student attendance on the electronic attendance register at 9.30am. In the case of a casual teacher they will fill out a Daily Absence Note and send it to the Front Office at 9.30am.
- All absences are recorded using the exception method (marking absences only).

FOLLOWING UP UNEXPLAINED STUDENT ABSENCES

Mater Dei School has implemented the following systems and procedures in order to follow up unexplained absences from school:

- Where an absence has not been explained by 9.15am a phone call will be made by a school Admin Assistant after 9.30am to the student's parents/guardians of absent students to enquire about the nature of the absences. The Admin Assistant will record electronically the nature of the student's absence on the electronic roll using the NSW Attendance Register Codes. In the Comment Section the Admin Assistant will enter their name as record of who received the reason of absence.
- If a student is away for 3 consecutive days the front office Admin Assistant, upon phoning home to seek explanation for the student's absence, will remind the parent/guardian that if the student is away for a further day they will need to return to school with a Doctor's Certificate explaining their absence. (Any student who is away for 4 or more days must bring in a Doctor's Certificate to explain their absence).
- An unexplained/unjustified absence MUST be recorded if no notice has been provided by parents/guardians within 7 days of the occurrence of the absence – this CANNOT be altered even if an explanation comes in after the 7 days.
- Where parents/guardians repeatedly fail to inform the school of absences the Pastoral Care Coordinator will contact them directly seeking an explanation and to remind them of their obligation to report absences.
- All information in relation to unsatisfactory attendance is recorded on students' files and information with respect to attendance is provided in each student's school report.

RECORDS OF THE REGISTER OF DAILY ATTENDANCE

School attendance records must include:

- a Register of Enrolments to be retained permanently;
- notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents/guardians. This advice is to be retained for seven years from the date of receipt; and
- an Attendance Register to be retained for seven years.
- In the case of a student who has had an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year in which the student reaches the age of 25.
- The students' record file detailing the number of absences each year must be retained for seven years after the student has left.
- A hard copy of the electronic attendance register is to be generated fortnightly. The CEO/Principal or Assistant principal will endorse this hard copy, certifying its accuracy. Once signed, this hard copy becomes the official record of attendance and must not be amended.

- A hard copy of the electronic record of attendance of individual students will be generated at the end of each term and attached to the student record file.

- Where an alteration is necessary on the hard copy of the electronic attendance register, a line is to be ruled through the existing entry and the correct entry made above. The electronic record must then also be amended. The CEO/Principal or Assistant Principal should initial any changes. Note: Alterations may only apply to errors in roll marking.

- Both the electronic Mater Dei Attendance Register and the hard copy of the attendance register must indicate days in which the school is not open for instruction such as staff development days. Absences on such days are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes.

SECURITY OF ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

- The hard copy of the electronic Student Attendance Register will be stored in the HR Filing cabinet. It must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood.

- At the end of each school year the CEO/Principal or Assistant principal will ensure that the hard copy of the Student Attendance Register is preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.

STUDENT LEAVE

- The CEO/Principal may grant sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness (Attendance Register Code 'S')

- The CEO/Principal may grant an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12month period for any one student (Attendance Register Code 'M') for exceptional domestic circumstances. See Mater Dei Exemption from Attending School Policy.

- The CEO/Principal may grant part-day exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student (Attendance Register Codes 'M' and 'Pa'). See Mater Dei Exemption from Attending School Policy

- The CEO/Principal may approve leave for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the CEO/Principal (Attendance Register Code 'L'). Acceptable explanations for leave may include:

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

A request for student leave for 10 or more consecutive days from school shall be made according to the Mater Dei Student Extended Leave (Travel or holiday) Policy.

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

- The CEO/Principal 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. Where the CEO/Principal has concerns about medical certificates being produced for absences, they can ask the parent/guardian to request that the doctor write on the certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.

Where the CEO/Principal has ongoing concerns, they can request the parents/guardians consent to contact the doctor. If the request is denied, or if the CEO/Principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as 'unjustified'. (Attendance Register Code 'A')

SUPPORTING THE REGULAR ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS AT SCHOOL

- Parents/guardians are primarily responsible for the regular attendance of students at Mater Dei. It is the responsibility of the CEO/Principal and nominated staff members to remind parents/guardians of their legal obligations under the Education Act (1990).

- The CEO/Principal is responsible for the identification of students who display poor attendance patterns and in determining whether their lack of attendance raises safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns requiring a report to be made to Community Services or contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit. (In accordance with the Mandatory Reporter Guide, Neglect Education – Habitual Absence is defined as "The child/young person is of compulsory school age (6 years to current leaving age) AND is habitually absent". "Habitually absent is a minimum of 30 days absence within the last 100 school days. However, this is context/age dependent")

- 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/guardians promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this.

- Resolution of attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:

- advising parents/guardians in writing of the attendance concerns (see Mater Dei Habitual Absence or Mater Dei Habitual Lateness letters);

- parent/guardian interviews;

- devising and implementing Compulsory School Undertakings (see Mater Dei Compulsory School Undertakings letter)

- reviewing the appropriateness of the student's educational program;

- development of a school-based attendance improvement plan;
- referral to the school psychologist or outside agency; or
- support from school based personnel.

•If a range of school-based interventions has been unsuccessful, Mater Dei may gain support by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Education Commission, NSW. The CEC, NSW manages the process of informing NSW DET. Police officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act (1990).

•In situations where all attempts at resolving poor school attendance have failed to rectify the problem the CEO/Principal should give consideration to the legal recourse by way of either prosecution in the Local Court or by seeking legal redress through legal processes in the Children's Court. (see School Attendance. Legal Action Guidelines CEO Sydney)

RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children attend school regularly;
- explaining the absences of their children from school promptly and within seven days to the school;
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

The CEO/Principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- students are enrolled consistent with the Mater Dei Enrolment Policy;
- attendance records are maintained in a Ministerial approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students;
- staff record accurately the attendance of each student each day;
- 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 Board of Studies Inspector;
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern;
- relevant school policies and procedures address attendance issues and provide strategies for encouraging good attendance;
- Mater Dei staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised;

- parents/guardians are regularly informed of attendance requirements;
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.
- students at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns are identified and that appropriate strategies are implemented in response.

The CEO/Principal may nominate staff to maintain attendance registers. In such cases, the CEO/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;
- seek verbal or written advice promptly from parents/guardians regarding unexplained full or part day absences;
- retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents/guardians. If verbal explanations for absence are received from parents/guardians, the staff member receiving the explanation should record, initial and date the explanation;
- are aware of their responsibility to alert the CEO/Principal or Pastoral Care Coordinator responsible for monitoring attendance when a student's pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or guardian; and
- report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the CEO/Principal or Pastoral Care Coordinator.

School staff are responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community;
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance;
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance;
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise; and
- providing clear information to parents/guardians regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;

- Effective communication and incident notification procedures;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

RELATED POLICIES/STATEMENTS/DOCUMENTS

Mater Dei Child Student Extended Leave (Travel or holiday) Policy

Mater Dei Child Exemption from Attending School Policy

The Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy (2010)

ACARA National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting

Compulsory School Attendance – NSW Dept of Education and Communities

Procedures for Student Attendance NSW Catholic Systemic Schools – CEO Sydney

School Attendance Legal Action Guidelines – CEO Sydney

Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance NSW Catholic Systemic Schools – CEO Sydney

NSW Education Act 1990

NSW Attendance Register Codes

Guidelines for Supporting Student Attendance NSW DET 2011

Mater Dei Electronic Attendance Register Procedures

Mater Dei Habitual Lateness letter

Mater Dei Habitual Absence Letter

Mater Dei Compulsory School Undertakings Letter

How to Mark the Class Roll Using Synergetic

Recording Student Absences in Synergetic

Approved at Leadership Team YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Approved at Board YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Staff Briefed YES / NO	Signed	Date
Review Date February 2018		