

**ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
TWEED HEADS**



**SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY AND
PROCEDURES**

2012

LEGAL CONTEXT

At Saint Joseph's Primary School – Tweed Heads:

Parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children at school (Section 22 Education Act 1990).

The 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 2011 (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

Explained/unjustified absence

A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has not been accepted by the principal

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
3. The Attendance Register (roll) to be retained for seven years

In a case where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the end of 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 Statement 11.4 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 Saint Joseph's Primary School – Tweed Heads:

Parents and Carers are responsible for:

1. Ensuring their child is legally enrolled at the correct age
2. Ensuring that their child attends school regularly
3. Promptly explaining the absences of their child from school
4. Taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their child

At Saint Joseph's 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 handbook, prospectus 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 in his absence the Assistant Principal when an absence is recorded over 5 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 at the end of each term throughout the school year. This responsibility may be delegated to a senior staff member by the principal. 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 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student or grant part-day exemptions from school for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student under certain conditions (family holiday, etc.). Staff are to inform parents that any time away from school will require an application to the principal. The following procedures apply at Saint Joseph's 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. Advise the parent to make arrangements to secure an interview with the principal.
 - 7.4. Inform the parent of the location of the required forms on the school website so they can prepare prior to the meeting.
 - 7.5. All completed exemption forms are to be filed in the Principal's office.
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. 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
9. Accept or decline as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided. The Principal may also 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 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 Saint Joseph's must:

1. Ensure that the class roll is accurate at all times.
2. Accurately record absences for all students early in the day and on a daily basis using only the approved codes.
3. Ensure casual and 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, time the explanation was provided, sign the note and place with other absence notes as per the school policy.
6. Alert the 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 days.
7. Inform the principal 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. See Form D1 in the appendix.
8. 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.

9. Follow school instructions on how attendance information is transferred to the student report card issued at the end of each semester. In this matter teachers are to:
 - 9.1. Calculate the number of Absences for the semester and clearly mark the total on the report card.
 - 9.2. Record term absences on the student record card at the end of each term.
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 Saint Joseph's Primary School – Tweed Heads

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. Persist with this request to develop a school wide culture.
2. Collect and retain notes for the term in a plastic sleeve at the back of the roll book. Ensure the note is signed by the parent or guardian and dated.
3. At the end of the year all absence notes along with the corresponding roll book will be collected and archived.
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 teacher in the notes column.

Marking the Roll Book

The roll must reflect the highest professional standards. Teachers are to regard this as a professional responsibility and take pride in the accuracy and state of the class roll.

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 Principal or Assistant Principal before any mark is made in the roll book.

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.

The roll is marked early in the school day, before the first break. You are asked to establish a class routine to ensure the pattern is known to the students.

Checking and security of attendance registers (rolls)

The class roll books are collected for checking by the Assistant Principal at the end of each term and are stored in the archive room at the end of each school year for security and retention. All staff must ensure their individual responsibilities are in order and the roll is ready checking at the end of each term and for collection at the end of the year.

Roll books are not to be removed from the school premises unless the removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as a fire or flood. Teachers must not take attendance registers home. Should removal of the roll books from the school premises be required a directive will be issued by the principal.

The loss of a roll book is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to the principal. A new roll will be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to the commencement of the new register is not to be included. The principal will attach a note to the new roll stating the period for which the original register was a record of student attendance (e.g. 1 February - 30 March, 2009) and the date from which the replacement register (roll) commences.

Endorsed outside of school activity

Students absent on official school business for example class excursions, diocesan sport, small group excursions or work experience are marked absent using a small 'a'. The symbol 'B' is included above in these situations. Make a notation in 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:10.2).

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.

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 School Enrolment 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. Contact your CSO Education Consultant for advice.

Natural Disaster

If school attendance due to a natural disaster is highly problematic and the school is effectively closed then a special circumstance register is commenced. Teachers should rule a broken line through that day's column and the notation 'Roll not marked - see special circumstance register' recorded within. 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. Place this in the roll book. 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 attached to attendance registers (rolls)

Students attending specialist educational centres

This is not common but needs to be carefully recorded when it occurs. See the CSO policy for advice. Section 4.4.6

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 50 days and under and absences of 51 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 (51 days and over)

Teachers are advised that there are special conditions applying in both circumstances where the event is over 51 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 50 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 events

Students representing the region, diocese or state in sporting events 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.

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'.

Students who leave school before the official leaving age

Where a student fails to attend school and is under the required age for leaving; and where official exemption from attendance or enrolment has not been granted, the student will be marked as absent (unjustified) [aA]. Notification should be made to the principal and then to the Education Consultant within 10 days.

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 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.

APPENDICES and RESOURCES

Appendix 1: Attendance Register Codes

Appendix 2: Late Arrivals

Appendix 3: Partial Absence

Appendix 4: Student Absence Phone Verification

Appendix 5: Letter requesting absence information

Appendix 6: Letter for repeated late arrival

Appendix 7: Children's Whose Attendance is of Concern: Record Summary of the Term

Appendix 8: Attendance Information for Parents

Appendix 9: Form D1

Appendix 1

Attendance Register Codes

Note 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.

Note following symbols should be recorded above the a or Pa symbol as appropriate.

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.
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	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- a medical certificate is provided or- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. 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.

Appendix 2

Late Arrivals

Date	
Child's name	
Class	
Time of arrival	
My child was late to school today because (state reason):	
Parent/Guardian signature	

Appendix 3

Partial Absence

Date	
Child's name	
Class	
Time of arrival	
This child has permission to leave the school at	
Time	
Due to (state reason)	
Parent/Guardian signature	

Appendix 4

Student Absence Phone Verification

Name of Student			
Class		Teacher	
Date (s) of absence			
Reason for absence			
Parent/Carer notifying		Date	
Staff member's signature		Date	

Appendix 5

Letter requesting absence information

Date

Dear

Your child [name of child] in class [class name] was absent from school on [date]. We are obliged by law to request a reason for this absence so that our records can be kept in accordance with our legal requirements. Please send in a letter of explanation at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher

Appendix 6

Letter for repeated late arrival

Date

Dear

The number of days your child arrives late for school is presenting some concern. Our records show that [name of child] has been late on [number of days] 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 8.45 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

Appendix 7

**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	
Please place this completed form in the child's Record Card in the Office			

Appendix 8

ADDITIONAL INSERTS FOR PARENT AND STAFF HANDBOOKS

Appendix 8

(School name] 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

The school acknowledges that sometimes families will ask for student leave from school in term time for personal reasons. It is assumed families have given this option considered thought before applying for leave. Parents must be aware that the request is made in writing to the principal.

The principal has two choices in these cases depending on the nature of the request. A principal can grant 'Leave', with no form completion required (up to 15 days in any 12 month period for such purposes) or decide that the request will need to be processed using Form B1 (Exemption from Attendance).

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 1 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 terms 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 School Counsellor
- (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 School Counsellor
- (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 / sms text message 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 or Counsellor 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).