



# St Mary's Primary School

## LEARNER ATTENDANCE POLICY

### **RATIONALE**

Full attendance is the shared responsibility of learners, parents, staff and the community. Attendance also includes being on time. Research supports learners with regular attendance have greater health outcomes, higher incomes and greater employment opportunities.

The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations (2017) require that children of school age (6 -17) resident in Victoria 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 Director.

Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of topics, causing them to find "catching up" difficult. Absenteeism contributes significantly to learner failure at school.

**Aims:** To maximise learner educational opportunities and performance by ensuring that children required to attend school do so regularly, and without unnecessary absences.

### **Implementation**

#### **Promote**

St Mary's will regularly promote the importance of attendance to all in the community. Through the use of the newsletter, website and school app the importance of school attendance will be emphasised.

#### **Record**

St Mary's records attendance twice daily via SIMON. Families are responsible for informing the school of any valid absenteeism. Families can inform the school via the school app and are asked to do so prior to 10:00am daily.

#### **Follow Up**

Families will be contacted after 10:00am by school administration if absenteeism has not been recorded with the school. Attendance concerns will be followed up by classroom teachers / leadership.

#### **Monitor**

St Mary's will monitor absentee throughout each term. Regular and consistent absenteeism will be reported to leadership for further investigation. St Mary's staff will support families to ensure attendance resumes to ensure the best possible outcomes for learners.

*"It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age. School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young peoples by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set things up for further learning and participation in the community."* **DET School Attendance Guidelines**

#### **Parents:**

- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school
- Parents are required to ensure their child attends school to provide an explanation for their child's absence from school (The principal must be able to determine the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations)
- Parents have a further responsibility to send a School Stream or PAM message to the school explaining their child(rens) absence.
- Parents have a responsibility to notify the Principal via email advising of an extended or upcoming child absence. Refer to Appendix 1

*In general, it is expected that Principals would excuse absences for:*

- Your child is sick
- Late to school because of traffic conditions - accident on the road that has held traffic up
- Medical and dental appointments when out of hours appointments are not possible or not appropriate
- Bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- Cultural observance, if the parent notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Learner Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, learner and parent
- School refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes

*In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absence where:*

- Approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policies
- The learner was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- The conditions of approval have not been met (eg, Learner Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed)
- The parent has provided no explanation for the absences
- Running late for school

#### **Teachers**

- Learner attendance and absences are to be recorded via SIMON both in the morning before 9.30am and in the afternoon before 2.30pm by the classroom teachers
- Specialist teachers are to record attendance and absences when they are responsible for learners at the above times.
- Classroom teachers are required to develop and maintain positive and open relationships with parents around matters concerning non-attendance
- Classroom teachers are required to submit concerns to Principal, Deputy, where a child has missed more than 3 days across the school year with unapproved absences.

- Classroom teachers are required to submit concerns to the Pastoral Wellbeing team meetings regarding absenteeism.

### **School Administration Staff**

- Administration staff must check School Stream / PAM responses daily at 9.30am for learner absent notes and reasons given.
- Administration staff must notify the Principal, Deputy Principal or Leadership Team if absence is unexplained or not considered valid
- Administration staff to check and record late and early departures and record whether these are approved or unapproved according to the criteria in the Learner Attendance Policy. If in doubt, admin staff should discuss the rating of approved or unapproved with the Principal or Principal delegate
- Administration staff will print out learner reports each semester, detailing learner absent figures, as explained and unexplained.

### **Principal and Principal delegates**

- If absence is recorded but no School Stream / PAM absence form has been submitted to the school by the parent, then a follow up SAS message will be sent to the individual parent from the Admin requesting that an absent notification form be submitted
- If there is no response to the follow up SAS message sent to the parent requesting an absence notification then the Principal or Principal delegate will call the parent directly to locate the whereabouts and reason for absence. If contact cannot be made with the primary carers, the school will contact emergency contacts as per enrolment forms.
- Every Monday, the Principal or Principal delegate will review the attendance data via SIMON to see if there are any students who are presenting as non-attenders
- If the Principal or Principal delegate identifies a learner as having missed more than 3 consecutive days with unapproved absences, then the Principal will write a letter requesting a meeting to discuss the issues with attendance.
- The Principal and/or Principal delegate will arrange a meeting time with parents to discuss the issues and possible strategies to improve the learners attendance. Minutes will be taken at this meeting, regarding agreed actions and strategies.
- Attendance meetings with parents and/or learners should be convened following initial contact with the parents when a learners attendance is of concern to the school. The purpose of the meeting is to develop attendance improvement strategies to support the student and to examine why non attendance continues to be a problem.

*Meetings between parents, learners, school leaders, staff and other professionals should focus on;*

- Approaching the conversation with concern and optimism
- Building on the hopes and dreams of families for their children
- Ensuring families and learners are aware of what they miss when learners are absent
- How best to work with the family to get their learner to attend every day, or as much as possible
- Assisting families recognise the importance of monitoring and tracking absences
- Establishing a clear understanding of the situation including identifying reasons for absences and any factors preventing attendance or participation
- Exploring and identifying strategies for improving attendance
- Exploring and identifying the educational and / social implications for the learner

- Exploring and establishing a shared understanding of accountability
- Exploring and identifying appropriate attendance improvement strategies
- Documenting improvement strategies and meeting minutes

*Meeting with parents of students with attendance issues should feel supportive rather than disciplinary, with a focus on the positive and proactive solutions.*

#### **Catholic Education Melbourne / Sandhurst**

- Aggregated attendance data from SAS will be communicated to the Catholic Education Office
- The Catholic Education Office and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records
- Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Catholic Education Office and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.

**Policy Initiated:** 2019

**Reviewed:** Annually