

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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## 2021



## PASTORAL CARE

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**ST JOHN'S  
DAPTO**



# St John's Catholic Primary School

*Encountering Christ through a love of learning,  
love of others and service to all*

## Attendance Policy

### 1 Rationale

- 1.1 At St John's Catholic Parish Primary School we have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for the students in our care. An accurate record of student attendance is fundamental to this responsibility. Our pastoral responsibilities require us to monitor student attendance and to intervene where appropriate.
- 1.2 Regular attendance at school is essential if our students are to maximise their potential. St John's, in partnership with our parents/carers, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of our students. While parents/carers are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, our school staff as part of our duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

### 2 Legislative requirements

The Education Act 1990 — Part 5 Attendance of children at school contains the following provisions:

- 2.1 Section 21B of the Education Act, 1990 requires students between the ages of six and seventeen to be enrolled at a government or registered non-government school and to attend school whenever instruction is provided.
- 2.2 All students who are enrolled at school regardless of their age are expected to attend whenever instruction is provided.
- 2.3 Compulsory schooling is the duty of parents/carers.
- 2.4 Section 23 of the Act states it is an offence if a parent/carer fails to send their child to school.
- 2.5 Section 24 of the Act requires Principals to maintain an attendance register (roll) in an approved form. The attendance register must be available to authorised officers at all times.
- 2.6 Section 25 of the Act requires Certificates of Exemption to be processed for students not attending school for extended periods of time.

### 3 System requirements

The use of Compass Education allows St John's to meet all Attendance Register compliance requirements, including offsite back-up of data.

As a school in the Diocese of Wollongong Education system, St John's:

- 3.1 Uses Compass Education as an electronic roll marking system.
- 3.2 Uses the attendance module in Compass Education as the official attendance register (roll).
- 3.3 Marks rolls daily and records attendance or non-attendance in Compass Education.
- 3.4 Records all students' declared religion at the time of enrolment.

### 4 Monitoring

The implementation of the Procedures will be monitored through the Principal's Annual Compliance Report — Section 8 Attendance (BOS Manual Section 5.8).

### 5 Explanation of absence

- 5.1 All explanations of absence should occur within seven days of the absence otherwise it is to be recorded as an unexplained absence.
- 5.2 Principals are legally responsible for keeping accurate records of student attendance. The Principal of the school has the right to question parents' or carers' requests for their child to be absent from school. Principals are also responsible for deciding if the reason given for the absence is justified. For this reason, Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences explained by parents/carers as being due to illness. If Principals don't consider an explanation to be satisfactory, they will record the absence as unjustified.

### 6 Non-attendance

- 6.1 Non-attendance is managed in the first instance by the class teacher. Written notes or a note on the Compass Parent Portal from parents/carers are required explaining daily and partial absences. An SMS is generated at midday by Compass Education notifying parent/carer of their child's unexplained absence from school. Requests for written explanations of student absence are issued periodically by the school office to all students who have any unexplained absences. Depending on circumstances, the class teacher liaises with parents/carers and students in terms of adverse effects resulting from repeated absences, typically learning and social implications. Trends of absenteeism, or that of a prolific nature, are additionally addressed by the principal. The school office keeps a daily record of student attendance (as outlined above) as part of the Diocesan system of online daily and partial absence entry.

## 7 Questions and Answers

### **Why is arriving at school on time important?**

Arriving at school and class on time:

- Ensures that your child doesn't miss out on the important learning activities scheduled early in the day when they are most alert.
- Helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine.
- Gives your child time to greet their friends before class and therefore reduces the opportunity for classroom disruption.

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained to the school the same way as other forms of absence.

### **What if my child has to be away from school?**

On occasion, your child may need to be absent from school. Justified reasons for student absences may include:

- Being sick, or having an infectious disease.
- Having an unavoidable medical appointment.
- Exceptional or urgent family circumstance (e.g. attending a funeral).

### **What should I do if my child has to stay away from school?**

If your child has to be absent from school, it is important to tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- Send a written note to the school.
- Create a note on the Compass Parent Portal.

All absences must be explained to the school.

### **What should I do if our family is going on holiday in school time?**

Parents and carers are encouraged not to withdraw their children from school for family holidays. Families should try to arrange holidays during school vacations. If the family holiday is planned during school time, the family need to speak with the Principal in advance and apply for an Exemption from Attendance at School — forms available from the office.

### **What if my child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance?**

It is important to understand that the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities may take further action in cases where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unjustified absences from school. This can include requesting that parents/carers and sometimes their child go to a compulsory attendance conference to help identify the barriers to the child's attendance and implement strategies with parents/carers, the school and other agencies who might be able to assist. If all attempts by schools and systems to improve attendance have been unsuccessful, fines imposed by the Local Court can reach a maximum of 100 penalty points. This is equivalent to a maximum of \$11000.



### How do I apply for exemption for my child?

#### What to do — for periods of less than 50 days

- Collect the Application for Exception Form from the school office.
- Complete the form and include relevant documentation (e.g. Travel itinerary, copies of Airline tickets, etc.) and return to the school office.
- Make an appointment with the Principal to discuss the application.
- If the application for Exemption is granted you will be issued with a Certificate of Exemption (Please keep this as it needs to be included in any later application for Exemptions from Attendance).
- If not granted then you will receive a response in writing from the Principal.

#### What to do — for periods of more than 100 days

If you are going away for a period of greater than 100 school days then the application must be sent to the Minister of Education and Communities via the Catholic Education Office. You need to apply at least six school weeks prior to your leaving for the paperwork to be processed and interviews to be attended.

### 8 Forms available from the school office

- Application for exemption from attendance at school.
- Application for exemption from attendance at school for elite sports.

Date implemented	1 November 2017
Approved by	Andrew Heffernan, Principal
Responsible for review	Matthew Downes, Assistant Principal
Last Updated	20 October 2020
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