



St Mary's Primary School

Student Attendance Policy

Policy Statement

The purpose of this Policy is to define the school's method of monitoring student attendance and reporting processes. St Mary's School acknowledges that daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure that their social, emotional and educational development is not compromised. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance from an early age.

Rationale

In accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, schooling is compulsory for all children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption has been granted.

Responsibilities and Implementation

The School's Responsibilities:

In accordance with the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requirements and the school's obligations to ensure the safety and welfare of students under its care, the staff at St Mary's must:

- Record every child's attendance twice per day via our online school management system, SIMON. This will be completed by the classroom teacher and/or relevant specialist staff prior to 9:30am and prior to 2:30pm.
- Record reasons for absence, and record the absence as "unexplained" if no reason has been provided (update the records once a reason is established).
- Advise parents/guardians of unexplained absences, on the same day, as soon as practicable
- Determine if the explanation provided for a student's absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. The Principal (or delegate) will use their discretion in making this decision.
- Determine if the reason for the student's absence is acceptable and any follow up is needed to support the child's education and wellbeing.
- Notify the parent/guardian if the absence has not been approved.
- Keep records of all attempts to contact parents/guardians in relation to attendance.
- Record attendance of any student who only attends half a day (two hours or more).
- Monitor attendance and work with the family to develop improvement strategies for attendance where necessary.
- Take further action, if necessary, if a student reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absences within a school year.
- Report the annual rates of school attendance to relevant authorities.

Unexplained Absences:

Parents are responsible for contacting the school when their child/children is/are unable to attend school on any given day. In the event that contact is not made with the School Office or via PAM, on the morning of the

absence and the absence is reflected in the daily attendance records, St Mary's office staff will make immediate contact with the parents/guardians to inform them of this occurrence. Contact will be made with parents through a personal phone call, from 9:30am. The school will make all reasonable attempts to determine the location and wellbeing of the student. When an explanation is received, the accurate cause of the absence must be recorded on the Student Attendance module through SIMON. If, following contact, the student's safety has been established, but no explanation has been provided within ten school days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and will also be noted in the student's file.

Following Up Absences:

Most absences will be excused and require no further follow up. The parents will be notified if their child reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absence in the preceding 12 months. The principal will then work with the parents/guardians to implement the appropriate support or intervention to assist the child to attend school every day and remain at school during school hours. Where this support and intervention does not improve a child's attendance, the Principal may decide to refer the matter to Catholic Education Melbourne.

No Reasonable Excuse:

In the event that St Mary's has determined that a parent has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school will notify the parent in writing to inform them that the absences have been recorded as such. The school will take care to ensure that this letter is addressed to the parent/guardian who has been deemed responsible for the child's absence on the relevant day(s). This correspondence will inform them that:

- They may not have met their obligations under the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006.
- An accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from The Education Department.
- Failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice.

Attendance Improvement Strategies:

St Mary's regularly monitors attendance and absence patterns, and reviews the explanations to determine students at risk of poor attendance or who may become disengaged. Where attendance concerns are identified, the school will meet with the parents/guardians to formulate improvement strategies.

Improvement strategies will be considered where:

- There has been a significant number of parent approved, health-related issues
- The absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational attainment, achievement and development
- A student has been truanting (absent without parental consent)
- A parent reports that a student refuses to attend school
- There has been no explanation for the student's absence
- A parent repeatedly fails to provide a reasonable excuse for their child's absence.

Improvement strategies will be implemented as an early intervention approach to identify any underlying issue affecting attendance and support the school can offer to assist the student's ability to attend school.

To ensure the appropriate improvement strategies are identified, St Mary's will:

- Further investigate the reasons for the student's absence (the actual reason may differ to the explanation initially provided)
- Organise a meeting with the parent/guardian and relevant teachers and/or staff members at the earliest opportunity to identify the issues related to the non-attendance and to plan for improvement
- Ensure they notify a parent/guardian in writing each time the school considers they have not provided a reasonable excuse for the absence.

The impact of absences on a student's educational attainment, achievement and development will depend on a number of factors. The following factors will be considered when identifying appropriate improvement strategies for individual students:

- Number of days of absence
- Number of consecutive days of absence
- Reason for the absence
- Time of year
- Age of the student
- Type of learning that will occur outside school.

Parents/Guardians Responsibilities:

- Enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends school at all times when the school is open for instruction. Please see our Enrolment Policy and Pre Enrolment Policy for more information about enrolling at St Mary's.
- Ensure that their child/children attend school regularly, and punctually and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- Inform the School Office of any absences, along with an explanation for their absence. This can be completed by email (office@smmalverneast.catholic.edu.au), phone (9571 1358) or logged directly through our online Parent Access Module (PAM- <https://pam.smmalverneast.catholic.edu.au>).
- Inform the School Office in advance, where the absence is anticipated for a period greater than two weeks. Please note: long periods of absence are strongly discouraged. Teaching staff will not provide work for families when they choose to withdraw their child/ren for extended periods of time.
- Ensure they contact the school if they anticipate their child/children attending school after commencement. A call to the office may be made from 8:30am on 9571 1358 or a message left on the school answering machine.
- Assist their child/children to sign in via the iPad (Student Kiosk) located in the School Office, when arriving at school after 8:45am.

Accepted Absences:

The following are generally acceptable explanations for student absence:

- Sickness or accident, where the child is not well enough to attend school
- Medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not appropriate
- Bereavement or attendance at a funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business (indigenous bereavement)
- School refusal (by the child), if a plan is in place with the parent to address cause/s
- Cultural observance, where the parent notifies the school in advance
- Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school (Principal or delegate) in advance
- When the child is suspended from school
- When the child is employed in the entertainment industry and has an approved exemption.

Unaccepted Absences:

The following are generally unacceptable explanations for student absence:

- Participating in leisure or social activities without approval
- Absence where the parent/ guardian did not provide an explanation.

Truancy:

Truancy is when a child chooses to miss school without a parent's permission. Such absences are due to the child's disobedience and not due to any fault of the parent. Therefore they may be considered a reasonable excuse for a parent. In deciding to accept this explanation, the principal will consider:

- The age of the student
- Previous attendance records for the student

- The parent's capacity to influence and control the student's behaviour. In the case of truancy or school refusal, the parents and the school will work together on a plan to address the cause/s

Distance Education:

Students in distance education must attend scheduled online sessions, respond to tasks online and engage with teachers as required. If this does not happen when expected, the leading teacher for engagement will contact the parent or carer.

Related Policies and References

[St Mary's Enrolment Policy](#)

[St Mary's Early Enrolment Policy](#)

[Victorian Education Reform Act, 2006](#)

[Victorian Department of Education & Training – School Attendance Guidelines](#)

Victorian Attendance Legislation 2017

Review

Every policy will have an approved review date nominated. Policies may be reviewed before the review date in response to relevant changes, or as requested by the Principal or School Board.

Approved by the Parish Education Advisory Board: Wednesday 12 August, 2020

Review Date: As per the Review Policy