



St Joseph's Primary Laurieton

School Attendance Policy and Procedures

Date Issued: May 2021

Evaluation and Review: May 2023

LEGAL CONTEXT

At St Joseph's Laurieton:

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

School staff, as part of their duty of care, are responsible for monitoring part or whole day absences and for ensuring that school attendance records are 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) which is 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 the 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 St Joseph's Laurieton:

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 St Joseph's Laurieton an immediate notification to the principal must occur if any school personnel 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 [delegated staff member's name here] when an absence is recorded over 5 days 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 following times in the school year end of term. 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 for example). Staff are to inform parents that any time away from school will require an application to the principal. The following procedures apply at St Joseph's Laurieton 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.
- .
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 of the decision why the explanation has not been accepted. 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 that the principal or a senior member of staff brief new and casual staff on school attendance procedures and approved roll marking.

Teachers at St Joseph's Laurieton must:

1. Ensure that the class roll is accurate at all times.
2. Follow-up on student absences and provide written explanations to the school secretary who will record all absences using the Schoolworx program.
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 [suggest 5] consecutive 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. Record student absences on student record cards (located in the Principal's office) 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 St Joseph's Laurieton

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 notes and send in the plastic envelope provided to the office daily. Ensure the family surname is clearly on the note along with a date.
3. At the end of the term the notes will be transferred to the student's file in the office.
4. Phone verification notes will be signed by the staff member who took the call and handed to the secretary (sample in appendix)
5. Parents are required to sign the register in the office for late arrivals or early departures. A child arriving late should present to the teacher a "Partial Absence" card to indicate they have been to the office to be signed in before coming to class. If leaving early the inter-school phone will be used to notify teachers that the child should come to the office. Precise times are recorded by the secretary in the notes column.
6. The school secretary will file all absence notes at the end of each term in the student file.

Marking the Roll Book (All schools)

The roll must reflect the highest professional standards. Teachers are to regard this as a professional responsibility and ensure that the roll is accurately and carefully recorded.

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 Assistant Principal before any entry is made in the schoolworx program

The roll is marked on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports events, excursions and similar events.

The roll is marked early in the school day, as soon as possible on entering the classroom. You are asked to establish a class routine to ensure the pattern is known to the students.

Electronic marking at St Joseph's Laurieton

A hard copy or PDF copy of the school roll is to be generated once a fortnight and at the end of the school term. The principal or Assistant Principal, will endorse by signature, name and date this hard or PDF copy, certifying its accuracy. The endorsed hard or PDF copy becomes the official record of attendance and will not be amended.

A hard or PDF copy of the electronic record of individual students will be generated at the end of each term and attached to the student record file. The school administration will determine when to generate the record.

In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance code.

Where an alteration is necessary a line is to be ruled through the existing hard or PDF copy entry and the correct entry made above. The electronic record must also be amended. The principal or endorsed delegate will initial any changes. *Note:* Alteration only applies to errors in roll marking.

Checking and security of attendance registers (rolls)

Class roll books prior to 2015 are stored in the Assistant Principal's office for security.

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.

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.

Managing applications for extended leave (travel or holiday)

From time to time parents/caregivers may approach the school to seek permission for their child to travel during school term for periods of time. From the beginning of 2015, family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the Exemption from School Procedures and therefore as a general rule principals should not approve leave for this purpose. Parents should be advised of this and if they choose to proceed, the absence should be recorded using the code 'A' (Unjustified Leave). Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.

In exceptional circumstances parents may complete a Certificate of Extended Leave – Travel for consideration explaining why an absence for extended leave is in the best educational interest of the student. The principal may decline or accept this application. If accepted a Certificate of Exemption is issued by the delegated officer and the code 'M' is used.

Travel is considered to be domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reasons.

A Certificate of Extended Leave -Travel should not be issued where the principal is aware that the student has been the subject of a child protection report made to Family and Community Services and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.

Principals should consult with parents about the intention of the travel and in the case of family holidays, encourage parents to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.

Principals should ensure that parents/caregivers understand any implications on student academic progress as a result of the extended leave.

Principals should also ensure that parents/caregivers understand any implications on their child's academic year/class placement on their return from the extended leave.

Part 2, 4(b) of the NSW Education Act (1990) states that the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents. Therefore, it should not be an expectation of parents/caregivers that the school provide work for the student during the time of the extended leave.

Where the permission sought is for less than 10 days, and the principal accepts

the reason provided for the absence, the principal can record the code 'L' in the attendance register/roll.

Where the permission sought is for 10 or more days, and the principal accepts the reason provided for the absence, the principal can also record the code 'L' in the attendance register/roll but must also ask parents to complete the Application for Extended Leave – Travel (Form A1). In completing the application, parents/caregivers must specify the reason for the application for extended leave. The principal informs the parent that if the application is accepted, the absences will be recorded as 'L' – leave. Special conditions may be associated with the certificate.

Examples of special conditions for lengthy leave may include (but not limited to): completion of set tasks, loss of marks due to missed assessments, alternative assessments, assessment of the student to ascertain which grade to return to etc. These should be discussed with the parent prior to issuing the certificate.

Principals should request copies of travel documentation, such as itinerary or e-ticket and ensure this is attached to the application.

Principals should ensure that parents are assisted with the completion of the application and provide a translation service if required.

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 will 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 will 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 by the school, the identity of the caller will be verified. Should the whereabouts of the family remain unknown after these inquiries then the DEC Home/School Liaison officer will be contacted. The CSO Education Consultant will advise.

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.

Sport Rolls (Secondary issue)

Specific sports rolls must be marked at the beginning and conclusion of each sports session. Attendance information contained on sports rolls must be transferred to the attendance register

(roll). Absentees must be followed up promptly to ensure that the school's procedures for managing non-attendance are implemented. Students found to be absent from sport and who have not been marked absent from school shall be notified to **the Assistant Principal** immediately.

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 are 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 will 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**.

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 will 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 will require a range of additional school based strategies including:

1. Student and parent interviews
2. A review of 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 will 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).

APPENDICES and RESOURCES

Appendix 1: Attendance Register Codes

Appendix D: Application for Extended Leave – Travel

Appendix 1

Attendance Register Codes

<i>Note</i> 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	
Symbo l	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. <i>Note following symbols should be recorded above the a or Pa symbol as appropriate.</i>	
Symbo l	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

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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	<p>The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical appointment. In these cases:</p> <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.

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	<i>Please tick</i>	Date	
	<i>Please tick</i>	Date	
	<i>Please tick</i>	Date	
Class teacher		Date	
Principal/Assistant Principal		Date	
Others (please specify)		Date	
<i>Please place this completed form in the child's Record Card in the office</i>			

Additional Inserts for Parent and Staff Handbooks

ST Joseph's Laurieton

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?

The school acknowledges that sometimes families will ask for student leave from school in term time for personal reasons and for travel. As from the beginning of 2015, family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the Exemption from School Procedures and therefore as a general rule, principals should not approve leave for this purpose. If after given this option considered, parents still wish their child to take unapproved leave a Notification of Extended Leave Form A4 should be completed. In exceptional circumstances parents may complete a Form A1 Application for Extended Leave – Travel for consideration by the principal of why this absence is in the best educational interests of the child. The principal may decline or accept this application. If accepted a Form A2 Application for Leave Approved is issued.

Form D1

Proposed School Action for the Management of Habitual Non Attendance

To be read in conjunction with the Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedures

Schools should have processes in place so that the principal or delegate is notified of student non-attendance concerns. Concern is defined as three consecutive days of unapproved leave or any five days of unapproved leave in 10 days or any other pattern observed (such as regular Friday's away).

Early intervention is the key to both preventative work and improving attendance therefore school processes should include immediate follow up of unexplained absences and the investigation of the possible reasons for non-attendance.

Prior to implementing the *Student Non-Attendance Standard Operating Procedures*, the following steps should be implemented.

1. Daily phone call/SMS text message to parents on each day of unexplained/unjustified non-attendance.
2. Discussions and monitoring with students in regards to attendance.
3. Referral to the school's learning and support team to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs for the student.
4. Engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality.
5. Letter/email to parents detailing concern.
6. Principal or assistant principal phone call to parents and notify school counsellor and other appropriate school staff.
7. Seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them. Requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies.
8. Use of interpreters and translated materials.
9. Follow-up with letter/email to parents requesting meeting with parents to discuss attendance.
10. Development of a school-based Attendance Improvement Plan with the student and parents.

Note: Refer to 4.13 in the Lismore Diocesan *Student Attendance Policy*.

Note: If at any time the child is considered at risk of serious harm a Family and Community Services Report must be lodged and child protection procedures enacted immediately.

Appendix D Application for Extended Leave – Travel

Application for Extended Leave - Travel
(Leave between 10 – 100 days)

Form A1

Information: From the beginning of 2015, Family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the *Exemption from School - Procedures*. Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.

Note: This form is to be completed by the student's parent/caregiver and returned to their child's school principal. Separate applications are to be completed for each school if siblings do not attend the same school.

STUDENT DETAILS

Please complete table below with details of all student(s) associated with the period of travel

FAMILY NAME	GIVEN NAME	DOB	AGE	GRADE

Student address		Postcode	
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School name	
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Details of extended leave

State date of leave		End date of leave	
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Number of school days absent	
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Reason for travel (including why this travel is occurring during school time)	
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Relevant travel documentation such as an e-ticket or itinerary (in the case of non-flight bound travel within Australia only) must be attached to this application.