Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

St Bernard's Parish Primary School Recording and Monitoring School Attendance Procedure

1. Introduction

St Bernard's Parish Primary School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS).

2. Purpose

This procedure sets out the operational requirements for recording and monitoring school attendance, as outlined in the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools. It supports MACS schools in meeting legislative and regulatory obligations and reinforces the school's duty of care in relation to student attendance. The procedure is designed to promote student safety, wellbeing, and engagement in learning by outlining whole-school approaches to building staff capacity, delivering targeted interventions, and engaging families to support regular attendance. All processes are aligned with the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools, relevant legislation, and, where applicable, reflect Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements.

3. Scope

3.1 This procedure applies at all MACS schools including specialist schools operated from MACS Subsidiary, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd (MACSS) and school boarding premises operated by MACS schools.

4. Recording attendance

4.1. The Principal will clearly document and administer structured whole-school procedures for recording student attendance in accordance with the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. This includes:

- ensuring attendance is recorded as follows:
  - twice daily in primary settings
  - in accordance with requirements for registered school boarding premises, where applicable
  - where students are attending off-site premises to participate in approved school learning activities that form part of their education program, the procedures for reporting and monitoring attendance must be clearly documented. This includes, but is not limited to, activities such as Vocational Education and Training (VET), camps and excursions and other school-approved learning experiences.
- ensuring attendance is recorded using: **Compass**
- assigning responsibility for recording attendance data to the classroom teachers and overseen by the Administration Staff.

4.2. Attendance data is monitored not only for compliance but also to identify early signs of disengagement, including school refusal, enabling timely and compassionate intervention.

4.3. For assistance with attendance categories, refer to *Student Absence Guidelines for MACS Schools.*

5. Managing Absences

5.1. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that well-documented and structured procedures are in place for receiving, recording and responding to student absences in accordance with the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and the MACS *Responding to Absence Process*.

Parents and Carers notification

5.2. Parents and Carers are required to notify the school of a student's absence and provide a reason either in advance – where the absence is known (e.g. medical appointments, participating in external sports events) – or on the day the absence occurs.

5.3. Notification methods available for Parents and Carers to advise include:

- Compass, phone call and email to relevant staff.

5.4. Notifications must be received by **8.50am.**

Attendance recording

5.5. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that attendance recording processes are accurate, timely, and sensitive to student circumstances. This includes:

- recording reasons for student absences promptly and accurately in the school's designated attendance system.
- notifying teachers of student absences and reasons via **Compass.**
- assigning responsibility for recording absence reasons to the classroom teachers and the Administration staff.
- responding to absences related to mental health, neurodivergence or trauma with understanding and sensitivity, ensuring they are acknowledged without judgement and recorded in a way that protects student dignity and avoids stigma.
- handling sensitive information confidentially and respectfully.

Categorisation and follow-up

5.6. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that absences are categorised and responded to in a timely, supportive and consistent manner. This includes:

- categorising absences according to the *Student Absence Guidelines for MACS Schools*.
- following up on absence reasons that relate to medical, health, wellbeing, behaviour or other factors by implementing appropriate support measures. This may include: wellbeing check-ins, adjustments to learning plans, or referrals to internal or external support services, as needed.
- implementing the MACS *Responding to Absence Process* to ensure timely and appropriate follow-up for unexplained absences.

6. Following up unexplained absences

6.1. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that structured procedures are in place to promptly follow up unexplained absences on the day they occur, in order to uphold the school's duty of care and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the student. This includes:

- assigning responsibility for following up unexplained absences to Administration Staff.
- contacting Parents and Carers by phone call.
- ensuring that follow-up communication is relational and respectful with a focus on understanding the reasons behind a student's absence and identifying any barriers to attendance.
- ensuring the following steps are carried out when a student is absent and no explanation has been provided:
  - attempting to contact Parents and Carers **on the same day** to request an explanation for the absence.
  - if Parents and Carers cannot be reached, contacting the student's listed emergency contact.
  - if neither Parents and Carers nor the emergency contact can be reached and concerns for the student's safety persist, initiating a welfare check by contacting local police, in accordance with duty of care obligations and relevant protocols.
- following the MACS *Responding to Student Absences Process* to ensure consistent and timely follow-up.
- documenting all follow-up actions in the school's attendance system.

7. Late arrivals, early departures and partial attendance

7.1. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that structured procedures are clearly documented and effectively administered to manage student arrivals and departures that occur outside scheduled school hours. These procedures must align with the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and the school's duty of care obligations, and be implemented with consideration for individual circumstances and a strong focus on student wellbeing.

7.2. The Principal has responsibility for ensuring that late arrivals, early departures and partial attendances are recorded in the school's attendance system and included in the student's attendance record.

Late arrivals

7.3. To manage late arrivals, the Principal is responsible for ensuring that students who arrive after the scheduled start time follow a consistent late arrival procedure. This includes:

- student signing in at the front office.
- recording the time and reasons of late arrival using Compass.
- Parents and Cares providing a reason for late arrival via Compass.
- assigning responsibility for managing late arrivals to Administration Staff.

Early departure

7.4. To manage early departures, the Principal is responsible for ensuring that students who leave school prior to the scheduled finishing time follow a consistent early departure procedure. This includes:

- student signing out at the front office.
- recording the time of departure using Compass.
- Parents and Carers providing reason for early departure via Compass.
- assigning responsibility for managing early departures to the Administration Staff.

Partial attendance during scheduled school hours

7.5. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that part-day attendance is managed in a way that supports student wellbeing and meets attendance recording requirements. This includes:

- supporting students to attend part of the school day where appropriate, such as returning after medical or allied health appointments that could not be scheduled outside school hours.
- where students are regularly absent during school hours to attend ongoing appointments (e.g. weekly NDIS-funded supports), the arrangement should be discussed with the Principal and formally approved to ensure it supports the student's wellbeing, complies with attendance recording requirements, and does not impact on the school's ability to meet VRQA minimum standards (e.g. deliver curriculum, assessment and reporting).
- accepting absences as reasonable where an explanation has been provided by Parents and Carers, either verbally or in writing.
- recording part-day attendance using Compass.
- encouraging staff to support flexible attendance arrangements that promote student wellbeing and engagement, particularly for students with chronic health conditions. See MACS Modified Timetable Procedure for more information.

8. Maintaining attendance records

8.1. The Principal will ensure that accurate attendance records are maintained using approved systems and protocols. This includes:

- recording all student absences in:
  - individual student files, which may be maintained within the school's approved attendance system or platform
  - student reports.
- including the following details in attendance records:

- dates and times of absence
- reasons for absence (where known)
- follow-up actions.

- assigning responsibility for maintaining attendance records to the Administration Staff.
- using Compass to maintain attendance records.
- keeping attendance records up to date and storing them securely in accordance with school data management protocols.

8.2. Attendance records may inform personalised support plans (e.g. attendance support plan, student safety plan, individual education plan, behaviour support plan, cultural plan) and guide referrals to wellbeing or allied health services.

9. Whole-school approach to attendance support

9.1. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that structured, whole-school approaches to promote regular attendance and engagement are clearly documented and effectively implemented. These approaches should operate within a tiered system of support and be tailored to meet the individual needs of students.

Building whole-school capacity

9.2. To embed a whole-school approach to attendance, the Principal will:

- implement a structured, whole-school approach to attendance by embedding a tiered system of supports (MTSS or equivalent), grounded in early intervention, student voice and family partnerships. This system ensures consistent, inclusive, and evidence-informed practices across three tiers of support based on individual student need:
  - tier 1: Universal support for all students
  - tier 2: Targeted supports for all students showing early signs of disengagement
  - tier 3: Intensive supports for students experiencing chronic absenteeism or school refusal
- ensure all staff participate in evidence-informed, culturally responsive professional learning related to attendance support, as determined by the Principal.
- provide clear induction processes to all staff that include explicit instruction on:
  - whole-school attendance expectations
  - attendance monitoring procedures and escalation pathways
  - early intervention strategies and family partnership approaches.
- build and maintain staff capacity and confidence in responding to attendance concerns through structured professional learning models – such as instructional coaching, mentoring, or peer-support.
- inform staff of relevant contacts in MACS responsible for attendance support and escalation, and ensuring staff understand how and when to access this support.

Targeted attendance improvement strategies

9.3. To deliver targeted attendance improvement strategies, the Principal will:

- implement attendance improvement strategies in alignment with the MACS *Responding to Student Absences Process*, which may include:
  - development of student plans (e.g. attendance support plan, modified timetable arrangement, student safety plan, personalised learning plan, behaviour support plan, cultural plan)
  - scheduled Program Support Group (PSG) meetings regarding attendance
  - individualised support through wellbeing or learning teams, which may include submitting a consultation request through the Record of Student Adjustment and Evaluation (ROSAE)
  - Referrals to external agencies or support services.

- responding to school refusal with empathy, flexibility and collaboration, recognising that it is often a symptom of deeper distress.
- collaborating with relevant staff from the MACS Student Engagement Unit and external agencies to support complex cases of student absence, where necessary.

Monitoring and accountability

9.4. To ensure effective monitoring and accountability, the Principal will:

- establish a staged response to absences, aligned with the *MACS Responding to Student Absences Process,* and ensuring all interventions and follow-up actions are documented in student attendance records and reviewed regularly.
- monitor and review attendance data using Compass, with regular analysis by staff and/or school leadership once per term.
- assign clear responsibilities for leading attendance support strategies to the Wellbeing and Learning Diversity Team.
- assign responsibility for reviewing attendance support strategies to the Wellbeing and Learning Diversity Team.
- monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and interventions through wellbeing reviews.

10. Family communication and contact information

10.1. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that structured, whole-school approaches to communication are clearly documented and effectively implemented. These approaches must support accurate, inclusive, and responsive engagement with Parents and Carers, and designated emergency contacts.

10.2. Parents and Carers must provide up-to-date contact details including phone numbers, email addresses, residential addresses, and emergency contact information and notify the school of any changes.

10.3. The Principal will ensure that the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and associated Attendance Procedures are readily accessible, and clearly communicate these documents, along with attendance expectations, to Parents and Carers.

Maintaining contact details

10.4. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that accurate and current contact information is maintained for all families. This includes:

- assigning responsibility for updating contact records to the Administration Staff.
- maintaining contact details using Compass.
- recording preferred contact methods for Parents and Carers, particularly in cases involving:
  - separated families, ensuring communication reflects equal parental responsibility and complies with legal arrangements
  - shared custody arrangements
  - court orders or specific communication protocols.
- Documenting specific contact arrangements, where applicable, included:
  - who the primary contact is on specific days
  - any restrictions or conditions related to communication with Parents and Carers.

Communicating attendance expectations

10.5. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that attendance expectations are clearly communicated to all Parents and Carers in ways that are accessible, inclusive, and culturally responsive. This includes:

- ensuring the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and associated procedures are readily accessible and clearly communicated to Parents and Carers, along with the school's expectations for regular attendance.

- promoting the importance of regular attendance through newsletters and at parent sessions.
- reinforcing attendance expectations during key events and meetings such as orientation, parent-teacher interviews, and student transitions.
- assigning responsibility for communicating attendance expectations to the Wellbeing Leader.
- ensuring all communication with Parents and Carers must reflect the school's commitment to inclusion, wellbeing and belonging, and is delivered in ways that are clear, accessible, culturally responsive and tailored to meet the diverse needs of families – including those for whom English is an additional language.
- ensuring Parents and Carers understand:
  - their responsibility to notify absences
  - the impact of absenteeism on student learning and wellbeing
  - the school's support processes
  - how and where to access support services – both within the school and through external providers.

11. Definitions

Definitions of standard terms used in this Policy can be found in the Glossary of Terms.

Attendance

A student is considered to be attending school when they are onsite at their enrolled school, engaged in MACS-approved remote learning, or participating in an offsite curriculum program or activity organised by the school – such as excursions or camps. A student is also considered to be in attendance when they are engaged in a re-engagement program or attending another school part-time to make up full-time attendance. In these cases, attendance is recognised when time fractions – each of which must not exceed a total of 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) – have been agreed between the schools or settings, allocation of funding (if appropriate) has been determined, and a Personalised Learning Plan is in place and endorsed by all relevant parties.

In the context of the senior secondary years of education attendance also includes:

- Vocational Education and Training (VET) delivered at a Technical and Further Education (TAFE), Registered Training Organisation (RTO) or another school or provider
- Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) or Work Experience undertaken in industry settings
- School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBATs) as part of approved student learning programs.

Dual enrolment

Dual enrolment refers to an arrangement where a student is enrolled in two educational settings (registered schools) simultaneously, with a combined enrolment equating to 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE).

Dual enrolment is a formal arrangement that supports students with disability or additional learning needs to attend both a mainstream school and a specialist school at the same time. This can also refer to other arrangements, such as attending mainstream school while also taking subjects through the Virtual Schools Victoria (VSV). This arrangement is designed to give students access to a broader range of educational experiences and support services.

Dual enrolment does not include a combination of home education/schooling and enrolment at a MACS school.

If a family determines that an enrolment below 1.0 FTE is more appropriate for their child, they must ensure the remaining FTE is fulfilled through enrolment at another registered school - such as a specialist or special assistance school.

When entering into a dual enrolment agreement, several considerations must be addressed. These include the enrolment processes at both schools, the provision of updated assessments and

documentation from relevant specialists, and the clear allocation of attendance days across each setting. The duration of the dual enrolment, transition and orientation arrangements, and the communication and reporting protocols between schools and families must also be established. Additionally, both schools must work collaboratively to identify the student's learning needs and ensure reasonable adjustments are in place to support their educational access and engagement.

Exemptions

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic) (the Act) allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in specific circumstances. An exemption from school attendance and enrolment may be granted under:

- *Ministerial Order 705: Exemption from school attendance and enrolment* to participate full-time in approved education, training and/or employment.
- *Ministerial Order 713:* where a child will turn six (compulsory school age) while attending kindergarten.
- *Ministerial Order 714: Exemption to allow for employment in the entertainment industry* if the student is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry.
- *Ministerial Order 715: Exemption from school attendance and enrolment* if leaving school is in the best interests of the student.

Refer to the Department of Education (DE) Exemption from school attendance and enrolment guidance for further information.

Modified timetable

A temporary, time-limited (maximum of 10 consecutive school weeks), flexible arrangement developed in partnerships between the student's Parents or Carers, with consultation from the student's Program Support Group members. It allows for adjustments to the student's daily schedule to support their learning, wellbeing, or transition needs.

Multi-tiered system of supports

A three-tier framework to support intervention at increasing levels of intensity (AERO 2024a).

Partial Enrolment

Partial enrolment is a combination of school and home education. It allows a child who is registered by the VRQA for home education to attend a registered school for specific subjects or activities. This arrangement enables families registered by the VRQA to combine home education with formal school-based learning.

Students cannot complete the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), the VCE Vocational Major (VCE VM) or the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) via a home education/schooling arrangement.

Students who are registered by the VRQA for home education **can** be partially enrolled in a MACS school, subject to determination by the Director, Education Excellence and the Chief of Regional Operations at MACS. Parents and the School Principal will work together to determine the nature of the partnership and whether partial enrolment in a MACS school is a suitable option for the student and the school.

Regular attendance

Regular attendance is defined as attendance for at least 80% of the time the student is enrolled at the school in the current year.

School attendance concerns

School attendance concerns refer to patterns of problematic absenteeism and can be reliably differentiated into three key types:

- **Truancy:** Truancy is said to occur when:

- (1) a student is absent from school for a whole day or part of the day, or they are at school but absent from the proper location (e.g., in the school-yard rather than in class); and
- (2) the absence occurs without the permission of school authorities; and
- (3) the student typically tries to conceal the absence from their Parents and Carers.

- **School refusal:** School refusal is said to occur when:
  - (1) a student is reluctant or refuses to attend school and shows signs of emotional distress. This distress may be short-term (e.g., fear, temper tantrums, unhappiness, unexplained physical symptoms) or chronic and ongoing (e.g., depressive affect; sleep problems). These feelings often lead to absences, which might include late arrivals, missing whole school days, missing consecutive weeks or longer; and
  - (2) the student isn't trying to hide their absence from their Parents and Carers (they are usually at home, and the Parents and Carers are aware of this). If they previously hid the absence in the past, they stopped doing so once the absence was discovered; and
  - (3) the student does not display severe antisocial behaviour, beyond resisting their Parents and Carers' attempts to get them to school; and
  - (4) the Parents and Carers have made reasonable attempts – now or in the past – to get the student to attend school, and/or they express their intention for the student to attend school full-time.
- **School withdrawal:** School withdrawal is said to occur when:
  - (1) a young person is absent from school (e.g., late arrivals; missing whole school days; missing consecutive weeks, months, or years); and
  - (2) their absence is known to their Parents and Carers and not hidden; and
  - (3) the absence is either due to the Parents and Carers actively keeping the student at home, or because the Parents and Carers have made little or no effort to support their return to school.

    (Hayne et al 2018).

Special provision for attendance (senior secondary years of education)

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) Special Provision policy ensures students whose learning and assessment are affected by disability, illness, impairment or other circumstances, are given the most appropriate, fair and reasonable options to demonstrate their capabilities.

Prolonged absence from school or study is not in itself grounds for Special Provision. However, provisions are available to students experiencing severe hardship that may result in prolonged absence. Upon application from the student, and with supporting evidence, the school may grant Special Provision for classroom learning and school-based assessment. In such cases, students must not be penalised for reduced physical attendance, provided the school has approved alternative arrangements.

Refer to the VCAA Special Provision page for more guidance.

Student engagement

Encompasses attendance, behaviour, belonging, learning, mental health and wellbeing, and motivation.

Engagement supports students to feel a sense of belonging and purpose as a learner. It encompasses students' behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement – essentially, how

students behave, feel and think as they undertake learning activities. The influence of teachers is pivotal to students' engagement (AERO 2023a).

Engagement is different for each student. It will not look the same for all students or be replicated in each classroom in the same way (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004).

Unexplained or unapproved absences

A Principal can approve or not approve any absence based on the requirements of the Act, an individual school policy or on a case-by-case basis.

The Act provides some examples of what a reasonable excuse is for the purposes of explaining a school absence and includes, amongst other considerations:

- illnesses and accidents
- unforeseen and unexplained circumstances
- if the absence was a result of complying with another law
- the child is receiving distance education through a registered school
- the child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment during school hours
- the child has been suspended or negotiated transfer/expelled
- the child is attending or observing a religious event or obligation.

A Principal will record an **absence as unexplained** if no explanation about the absence is given to the school by the Parents and Carers of the student.

12. Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Attendance Support Plan
Modified Timetable Arrangement Plan
Modified Timetable Procedure
Student Absence – Guidelines for MACS Schools
Responding to Student Absences – Template for MACS Schools

Related MACS policies and documents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Child Safety and Wellbeing Procedures
Behaviour Support Policy
Behaviour Support Procedure – Template for schools
Duty of Care Policy
Enrolment Policy
Enrolment Variation Procedure
Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

13. Legislation and standards

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
Ministerial Order 1359 – Implementing the Child Safe Standards – Managing the Risk of Child

14. Policy information table

Responsible executive	Director, Education Excellence
Document owner	Chief of Student Services

Approving authority	Director, Education Excellence
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