



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE NSW

RESPONSIBILITY

Principal, School Executive, Teaching Staff

Purpose

- To clarify the responsibilities of NSW Catholic System schools in encouraging attendance and reporting and dealing with absenteeism as determined in the 1990 *Education Act* (the Act).
- To clarify the statutory obligations of parents under the Act.
- To provide consistency in school attendance record keeping procedures throughout the NSW Catholic School System.

To ensure that attendance data is credible and accurate. Attendance records may be required as proof of a student's enrolment and attendance for a variety of purposes, such as eligibility for Youth Allowance or matters being dealt with by the Family Law Court.

Definitions

Attendance records:

Any and all hard copy documents or electronic records, which in some way record both the attendance and non-attendance of a child at school, scheduled sessions at the school and / or an approved educational course.

Authorised person:

A person authorised by the Minister of the NSW Department of Education and Community (NSW DEC) under section 119 of the Act.

Compulsory school age:

A child is of compulsory school age if the child is at least 6 years old and under the age that the first of the following happens: the child completes Year 12; or, the child is 17 years old.

Exemption Certificate

Is a certificate issued by the School Principal or the NSW Minister for Education exempting a child from the requirement to be enrolled with an education provider or registered for home education; or the full-time participation requirement.

The System's record keeping system:

The computer application and database used in the System to record details of student enrolments and related matters. This is currently known as MAZE.

Parent:

A person having parental responsibility for a child under the *Children and Young People Act 1999*, including a person who is a carer under the *Children and Young People Act 1999*, section 5, i.e. a person who provides regular and substantial care for the child or young person.

Registration Manual:

In NSW the Registration Systems and Member Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual sets out the guidelines for the registration of NSW Catholic System Schools. In this policy it will be referred to as the Registration Manual.

Student:

A person who is enrolled as a student in a NSW school in accordance with the 1990 Education Act.

Policy

This policy outlines the responsibilities of the NSW Catholic School System (the System) schools regarding student enrolment and attendance.

Procedures

1. Enrolment Procedures and Register of Enrolment

1.1. The School must maintain an enrolment register in a form approved by the Minister for Education, and be regularly updated and retained permanently (See Enrolment Policy)

1.2. At the time of enrolment of the child, proof of residency, in the form of an electricity account, tenancy agreement, current driver's licence or similar, must be shown to the Principal of the school, or the Principal's delegate. Proof of age and identity (e.g. a birth certificate or passport and immunisation records) must also be shown to the Principal, or the Principal's delegate, at the time of enrolment.

1.3. The following information must be recorded for each student in the Enrolment Register:

(a) name, age and address

(b) the name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)

(c) date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination

(d) for students older than six years, previous school or pre-school situation

(e) where the destination of a student above 6 and below 17 years of age is unknown, evidence that the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Officer with home school liaison responsibilities has been notified of the student's full name, date of birth, last known address, last date of attendance, parent's names and contact details, an indication of possible destination, other information that may assist Officers to locate the student, and any known occupational health and safety risks associated with contacting the parents or student.

1.4. Parents/carers will be asked to update student residential data at the beginning of each year.

2. Unique Identification Numbers 2.1. All NSW schools are allocated a block of unique identification numbers (ID numbers). These ID numbers must be used by the school when enrolling a child.

2.2. This identifying number will remain the same throughout the child's education in that school.

3. Keeping of registers and records of attendance

3.1. As a requirement of registration the school must keep a register of attendance at school of all children. This must be in a form approved by the Minister for Education, using the common code for the attendance registers of all NSW schools. The Act requires that a record of the attendance of a student must be kept for every day when the school is open for attendance and this information may be maintained in print or electronic form.

3.2. Attendance records must clearly show whether the child was present and if not, the reason for the absence in all cases.

3.3. Each school must have in place as a minimum, policies and procedures to:

(a) monitor the daily attendance/absence of students

(b) identify absences from school and/or classes

(c) follow-up unexplained absences

(d) notify parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding poor school attendance and/or class attendance

(e) transfer unsatisfactory attendance information to student files.

3.4. The register of attendance must include the following information for each student:

• daily attendance, which is recorded by noting daily absence

• absences

• reason for absence

• documentation to substantiate reason for absence.

4. Entering of data in registers of enrolment and records of attendance

4.1. Enrolment information must be entered directly onto the System's record keeping system (MAZE) by the school. The Catholic Education Office has access to each school's MAZE data.

4.2. This database is backed up and stored on a regular basis.

5. Name under which a child is enrolled

5.1. The entry of enrolment on the System's record keeping system must indicate the birth certificate name of the student. This is the name under which the student is officially enrolled.

5.2. If, however, one of the following conditions apply, a Principal can enrol students under an alternative name or change existing records to indicate the new name:

• a signed consent from both parents indicating approval to use the new name is provided

• a court order is provided authorising the use of the new name

- a statutory declaration is provided by the enrolling parent indicating that the child has had no contact with the other parent for a period of five years and his or her whereabouts is unknown
- a signed consent from one parent and proof that the other parent is deceased. (This can take the form of a statutory declaration by the enrolling parent or a death certificate)
- a birth certificate issued in the new name
- proof of adoption.

5.3. Where none of the above conditions can be met, no change of name can be made and the parent requesting the name change is informed that no change will be made until one of the conditions can be met.

5.4. If a parent raises a concern about their child being known under another name with a Principal, the parent is advised that a further change would only be made if there is a court order or written agreement of both parents.

6. Keeping of attendance records 6.1 To ensure consistency in the keeping of attendance records, all schools must employ the codes outlined by the NSW Minister for Education when recording absences and the reason for absences.

6.2 Attendance records provided to a class teacher must be marked for each scheduled session as per below:

- preschools, each preschool session, regardless of the length of time of the session
- primary schools, the morning session and the afternoon session
- secondary colleges, each timetabled class or activity.

6.3 When a child is on a graduated return to school (after an absence due to illness or for other reasons), s/he is marked present for the time spent at school and absent with parental approval for the time not at school.

6.4 The status of the child as a child on graduated return is recorded on the child's file held by the school.

7 Management of records 7.1 Principals have a responsibility to ensure that records of all enrolments and attendance are made in accordance with the *Act and the guidelines set out in the Registration Manual, which outlines school responsibilities* in relation to record management by making and keeping records and ensuring accessibility of information.

7.2 All or part of the records pertaining to enrolment and attendance must be available for inspection by an authorised person or Board Inspector on request. This is a legal requirement under Section 24 of the 1990 *Education Act*.

The Principal must comply with such a request, as failure to do so is an offence.

7.3 Section 24 of the Act also states that the Board Inspector or authorised person may request access to stated information about enrolments or attendances of children at the school or course during a stated period of time. Principals must comply with such a request, as failure to do so is an offence.

7.4 Section 24 of the Act states that an authorised person or Board Inspector may make copies of the register of enrolments and attendances or any part of that register.

8. Compulsory attendance of school age children

8.1 Under Section 22 of the Act, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure that a child who is of compulsory schooling age is enrolled at a school and attends:

- the school on every day, and during the times on every day, when school is open for attendance, and
- every activity of the school (including attendances at an approved educational course) that the school requires the child to attend.

8.2 Parents must have a reasonable excuse for not complying with the compulsory attendance requirement in the Act.

8.3 If parents do not have a reasonable excuse, they are liable under the Act and guilty of an offence.

8.4 Examples of a 'reasonable excuse' for a child's absence might include:

- illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
- medical or dental treatment
- bereavement
- religious or cultural observation
- family holidays or extended visits overseas
- attendance at a wedding
- attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings

- participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school
- participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event or equivalent
- sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families.

8.5 Section 21B of the Act defines the compulsory schooling requirements of participation for students of the compulsory school age. Students of compulsory school age must be participating in full-time schooling, or its equivalent, unless they have applied and been accepted for an exemption (See Section 9 of this policy). Full-time schooling or its equivalent includes:

(a) a child above 6 years of age and below the minimum school leaving age of 17, participating in full-time study.

(b) a child who has completed Year 9 of study and leaves to engage in an apprenticeship or traineeship as defined by the Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001, with consent of their parents, School Principal and the Apprenticeship/Traineeship provider.

(c) a child who is over the age of 15 and is undertaking an equivalent course to Year 10 at a NSW TAFE, with signed approval of their parents, School Principal and the TAFE Director

(d) a child who has completed Year 10 and is undertaking an approved education or training course, or is participating in paid work, to an average of 25 hours per week.

8.6 In the event that a CEO System School becomes aware of a student or parent wilfully not undertaking the compulsory schooling requirements, the school must inform the Catholic Education Office, prepare relevant documentation and make a notification to the DEC Regional Office Manager Home School Liaison about the attendance issue.

9. Exemption from Compulsory School Attendance

9.1 Parents are required to seek exemption for their child if they wish for them to not participate in compulsory schooling for a period of time. The reason for exemption may vary as may the length of the exemption required. Both of these circumstances impact on the procedures for exemption and the type of exemption to be requested.

9.2 Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory education requirements may be granted by the Principal (and cannot be delegated), CEO Director or the Minister of Education. It is expected that any application for exemption will indicate that the exemption is in the best interests of the student in the short and long term, and that alternatives have been considered.

9.3 The Principal is allowed to approve up to 100 days in a 12 month period. Exemption applications may be for periods of 1 day and longer.

9.4 Principals may grant exemptions due to:

Exceptional domestic circumstances, including but not limited to participation in family holidays during school term

- Other exceptional circumstances such as health reasons where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not possible or appropriate
- Employment in the entertainment industry or participation in elite sporting events for short periods of time.

9.5 The parent applies to the Principal for exemption using the Application for Exemption from Attendance at School (NSW) form. If the Exemption is granted the school issues a Certificate of Exemption to the parents. A copy of the Certificate of Exemption from School (NSW) form can be found on the CEO Intranet, and a copy must be attached to the student's records.

9.6 Principals must not approve an exemption for any student who has an outstanding child protection issue, without first consulting the CEO Child Protection Officer, Human Resource Services. A risk assessment of the leave must be discussed before a decision on exemption can be given.

9.7 Applications for exemption for longer than 100 days must be forwarded to the Catholic Education Office, to be sent for NSW DEC for Ministerial approval.

9.8 Exemptions from school attendance cannot be granted retrospectively.

10. Compulsory School Attendance: Complete Year 10

10.1 Effective from the 1 January 2010, all students are required to complete Year 10 and remain in education and training, full-time employment or a combination of these, until the age of 17. Under rare circumstances a student of compulsory school age can be excluded from attending school, be deemed to have completed Year 10 or be permitted to participate in alternative education.

10.2 A student who has completed Year 9 may be eligible to complete Year 10 under special circumstances in that the student may apply to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship if the school

Principal and the Employer agree to the requirements in the Act. The parents, Principal and Employer must meet and complete the Application for Exemption from Enrolment at School (NSW). In these circumstances, the employer undertakes to inform the school if the apprenticeship or traineeship is discontinued. At this time the student may return to the school or another school to complete formal studies.

10.3 If approval is given for a student to complete Year 10 under special circumstances, the school will issue a Certificate of Exemption from Enrolment at School under Section 25 of the Education Act 1990. A copy of this form can be found on the CEO Intranet, and must be issued to the student with a copy attached to the student's records.

10.4 Principals must complete Checklist 1 which is attached to the Application for Exemption from Enrolment at School (NSW), and file the completed checklist with the student's records.

10.5 Similarly a student who has completed Year 9 and is over 15 years of age, may apply to complete Year 10 through an equivalent NSW TAFE course ie, AQF II Vocational Certificates. The student may apply to undertake Year 10 in a NSW TAFE if the school Principal and NSW TAFE Institute Director agree to the requirements in the Act. The parents, Principal and TAFE Liaison Officer must meet and complete the application for Approval to Undertake the Equivalent of Year 10 Secondary Education at TAFE NSW.

10.6 If approval is given for a student to complete Year 10 through NSW TAFE, the school will issue a Certificate of Approval to Complete Education under Special Circumstances under Section 21B of the Education Act 1990. A copy of this form can be found on the CEO Intranet, and must be issued to the student with a copy attached to the student's records.

10.7 Principals must complete Checklist 2 which is attached to the Certificate of Approval to Complete Education under Special Circumstances under Section 21B of the Education Act 1990, and file the completed checklist with the student's records.

11. Compulsory School Attendance: After Year 10

11.1 In the event that a student has completed Year 10 and would like to start an apprenticeship or traineeship, or fulltime employment, the student and parents must complete a Notice of Intention to Undertake Full-time Employment and/or Training (NSW). This formally informs the school of the student's intention to discontinue study and the parents of their responsibility to ensure the child continues study, training or work until 17 years of age.

12. Encouraging school attendance

12.1 Based upon the provisions of the Act, schools should develop their own attendance procedures, which, where possible, should be negotiated with the school community.

12.2 The school-based procedures should clearly state the school's policy on attendance recording, monitoring and follow up processes, including the ways in which the school will work together with the students, parents, teachers and the wider community to encourage regular attendance.

12.3 The Principal will assess regular school attendance on a case by case basis having due regard for the individual circumstances of each child.

12.4 The school attendance policy should be communicated to students, parents and staff at least each semester.

12.5 Schools need to provide the information on attendance procedures to new staff and to relief teachers at the commencement of employment.

12.6 Individual school policies should clearly outline the procedures for Principals in notifying parents of non-attendance of a child.

12.7 Principals should be aware that the responsibility for attendance of a child lies with the parents under the Act.

12.8 A school's policy should include provision of support and strategies to work closely with appropriate individuals, parents and community organisations, having regard for social, cultural and religious factors associated with indigenous children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and socially disadvantaged children.

Related Policies

- Enrolment

REFERENCES

<http://cg.catholic.edu.au/> or www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Policy Dates		
Formulated	2014	
Implemented	2014	
Review Date	2016	
Policy Authorisation: Principal or Executive Representative		