

SMC ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE:

In the State of Victoria, the law requires that all children between the ages of six and seventeen years attend school unless an exemption from attendance has been granted (The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 & School Attendance Guidelines 2014). Daily school attendance is vital for young people to succeed in education and to ensure that they don't fall behind both socially and developmentally. Parents or guardians are legally responsible for ensuring that their children attend school punctually every day and communicate all student absences with the school.

Policy Guidelines

To ensure diligence to student safety, attendance is recorded throughout the day by both St Mary's and each partner school (each period for secondary students and twice daily for primary). The Campus Organiser of St Mary's is responsible for ensuring any unexplained absences are reported to parents/guardians as soon as possible following the first roll mark. The Deputy Principal at each campus makes contact with parents/guardians of any students that are absent for two consecutive days. This may be to enquire about the wellbeing of the student, rather than to discuss attendance concerns, as absence may be known. For students who continue to have non-medical related absences, a PSG meeting is called to ascertain causes and develop strategies to help improve the student's attendance. For more significant difficulties with attendance, a school engagement plan is developed with the student and PSG members.

Implementation

1. Students are expected to arrive to school on time and attend all classes, every day, in order to receive the maximum benefit from their educational endeavour. However, it is recognised that some absences are inevitable. Personal illness is a valid absence. Wherever possible parents/guardians are advised to make appointments (medical, dental or other) after school.
2. When an absence is known in advance, parents/guardians should contact the Deputy Principal of their child's campus. This ensures staff can put strategies in place to reduce lost learning during the absence. St Mary's will then notify the partner school of the planned absence. Parents are asked to apply, in writing, to the Principal for approval of extended absences due to family holidays. Extended holidays during the school term are not recommended, particularly for students studying a VCE subject.
3. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to communicate all absences. The procedure is as follows:
 - On or before the day of the absence, the parent/guardian should send a message to the Deputy Principal/Head of Campus mobile phone to verify and explain the absence.
 - Parents/guardians may also choose to notify the partner school by contacting the absence phone number as listed in the student diary although St Mary's staff will also do this on behalf of the parent/guardian.
 - If no phone call has been received by 9.00am the partner school will SMS the parent/guardian advising of student absence (secondary) on behalf of St Mary's. The St Mary's administration office will phone parents/guardians of Wantirna South primary students if no phone call has been received.
 - An unexplained absence must be followed up with a written note on the student's return to school. This is a legal requirement.

- It is the responsibility of the Deputy Principal of each campus, to follow up on students' unexplained absences.

Truancy

If a student is late to school or absent from school without parental permission the following process will occur:

- Parents will be informed of the student's unauthorised absence from the College by SMS or phone call by 10.00am.

The College may decide to take additional actions as outlined in the Student Behaviour Policy, as noted below:

- the Deputy Principal will make parental contact, time will be made up at lunchtime or afterschool and the incident will be noted on SIMON.
- After repeated instances of truancy, the student will be asked to attend a PSG meeting where a Behaviour Management Plan or contract may be put in place to support the student.
- Students who have repeated instances of truancy and/or extensive absences from school will be placed on a Return to School plan for attendance. This will be developed in consultation with the partner school and parents/guardian.

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