St Mary's College Guidelines and Procedures – Attendance

1 September 2025

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

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1 Authority and implementation

Date of approval	1 September 2025
Source of approval	Damian Messer Principal
Review	This policy will be reviewed one year from date of approval or upon request of College Leadership Team.

Damian Messer
Principal

1 September 2025

2 Purpose

St Mary's College and its teachers are mandated by law to monitor and document the attendance of students under their supervision every day, whether they are present or absent from class, participating in an excursion, or engaged in a school-related activity. Whether in electronic or paper form, class attendance records can serve as legal evidence and help demonstrate the school's adherence to its duty of care to students under common law. These attendance records are essential for complying with Workplace Health and Safety regulations and are crucial for identifying potential student protection issues. Furthermore, student attendance data is utilised for various purposes including student reporting, fee allocation, and government reporting.

Definitions

Under the Education Act 2016, the parent/carers of a school-aged child must ensure the child attends each school day. They are also required to provide formal notification of any student absence and the reason for this absence.

Authorised absences are those absences that meet the set of circumstances deemed for a student to be excused from daily attendance at school under the *Education Act 2016*.

Unauthorised absences are those absences that do not meet the set of circumstances deemed for a student to be excused from daily attendance at school under the Education Act 2016. The College, under the authority of the Education Act 2016, may investigate any unauthorised absences.

Information on the set of circumstances under which students may be excused from daily attendance can be found in the following documents:

- *Education Act 2016* (Sections 19 & 36)
- Ministerial Instruction No. 4 - Students Excused from Daily Attendance at School
- Education Regulations 2017 (Section 4)

Additionally, under the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*, a child* is considered at risk if they are not attending school. This requires a report to Child Protection by the College. The Federal Government requires schools to report on the attendance of students receiving Centrelink allowances (Austudy, ABSTUDY, AIC and PES etc). This involves reporting students with five or more unexplained absences for a term. Ongoing payment is dependent on satisfactory attendance.

3 Rationale

Commitment to Academic Excellence: At St Mary's College Hobart, we believe that regular attendance is fundamental to academic success. Our attendance procedures are rooted in the principle that consistent engagement in learning activities is essential for students to achieve their full potential and excel academically.

Student Wellbeing and Safety: The wellbeing and safety of our students are paramount. Our attendance procedures prioritise the monitoring of student attendance to identify and address any potential issues or concerns promptly. By promoting regular attendance, we aim to create a secure and supportive environment where students feel valued and cared for.

Partnership with parents/carers: We recognise the important role that parents and carers play in supporting their child's education. Our attendance procedures emphasise open communication and collaboration between the school and parents/carers to ensure that any absences are promptly reported and addressed. We value the partnership with parents/carers in fostering a culture of attendance excellence.

Individualised Support: Every student is unique, and our attendance procedures are designed to provide individualised support to meet the diverse needs of our student body. We offer additional assistance and resources to students who may be experiencing challenges with attendance, such as counselling services, and personalised intervention plans.

Early Intervention and Prevention: Proactive measures are key to preventing attendance-related issues from escalating. Our attendance procedures include early intervention strategies to identify students who may be at risk of chronic absenteeism and provide them with the necessary support and resources to address underlying issues effectively.

Transparency and Accountability: Transparency and accountability are core principles of our attendance procedures. We maintain accurate attendance records and ensure that students and parents/carers are aware of the expectations regarding attendance. Clear communication and consistent enforcement of attendance guidelines foster a culture of accountability among all members of the school community.

Continuous Improvement: We are committed to continuously reviewing and refining our attendance procedures to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with best practices in attendance management. Feedback from students, parents/carers, and staff is actively sought and considered in the ongoing improvement process.

4 Scope

This guideline/procedure applies to all members of the St Mary's College community, including staff, students, and parents/carers. It is intended to support a consistent and collaborative approach across the College, ensuring that everyone understands and upholds the expectations outlined within.

5 Procedures/Guidelines

Notification of Student Absence

In every lesson, attendance must be taken for every student.

Short Term Absences

If a student is absent, a parent/carer is required to contact the College by phone (6108 2560), email (absentee@smc.tas.edu.au) or via the School Website by 9:00am on or before the day of absence. The College will

SMS parents/carers after 10:30am if no notification has been received. If there has been an unexplained absence, a reply is expected as soon as possible thereafter, not exceeding two days, as it will then be considered an unauthorised absence. If a student is absent for medical reasons for a period of two days or longer, parents/carers will be required to provide a medical certificate. Unexplained, unauthorised, or concerning patterns of absence will be followed up by the Pastoral Care team.

Extraordinary & Long-term Absences

The College recognises that students may take part in non-College activities and events that hold significant educational and personal value for them, such as representing the College in national or international sports competitions or participating in cultural experiences. These will be considered authorised absences with written confirmation. Where a student is required to be absent from the College for such events for a period of five days or more, a parent/carer must request permission from the principal by sending an email to stmarys@smc.tas.edu.au. The principal will review the request at their discretion and inform the parent/carers. The principal will not grant formal approval for any unauthorised absences. It is important to note that, according to the *Education Act 2016*, family holidays are considered unauthorised absences.

When a student experiences ill health, injury or a family emergency, College staff will work with the family to provide appropriate ongoing education and support.

Unexplained & Unauthorised Absences

If a student fails to attend classes or scheduled College activities without a valid reason, there are expectations of restitution, consequences, and access to support to help them catch up and fully participate in their education and College life.

Persistent unexplained and unauthorised absences will be referred to the relevant Director of School, who, in consultation with the Pastoral Care team, will initiate further formal contact with parents/carers as determined in the *Education Act 2016*.

Under the *Education Act 2016*, once all school-based intervention strategies regarding the student's truancy have been exhausted, the College will appoint an authorised person to investigate absences and proceed to conference with the family as mediated by government representation.

Known Absence

If staff become aware of a student's absence (at any time), for example, if they are contacted directly by the student's parent/carers, they must immediately email this information to absentee@smc.tas.edu.au

If a student has been delayed or required to meet a staff member and will be late or unaccounted for in their scheduled class, the staff member should immediately email the Student Services Office to studentservices@smc.tas.edu.au. They should notify them of their meeting and an expected return to class time.

Attendance Marking

Teachers must record student attendance in CONNECT for every Class/Pastoral Care period. If Class/Pastoral Care attendance is being recorded on a hard copy attendance sheet, teachers should mark an absent student with an '✓'.
Regardless of the method used (electronic or hard copy), morning attendance must be submitted by 9:00am each day.

Timetabled Classes

Teachers must record student attendance in CONNECT for every lesson. If a student who was initially marked as present in an earlier lesson is later identified as absent, the teacher must send an immediate email to the Student Services Office. The relevant pastoral care team can also be contacted in cases of concern.

If a student attends class but leaves with permission and does not return within 10 minutes an email should be sent to the relevant school Pastoral Care teams. This will initiate a search if they are still not accounted for. The responsibility belongs to the Wellbeing team of the relevant school.

If a student is unaccounted for and is not located after 30 minutes, with efforts to communicate with the staff member who last marked them present, the Director of Junior / Senior School or their delegate will attempt to call their parents/carers.

If, after 60 minutes, parents/carers are unable to contact/locate the student, the principal must be informed to determine whether police notification should occur.

Excursions

When staff take students off-campus on excursions, camps, reflection days, retreats, etc., they must provide the Student Services Office with a student attendance list with absences marked before departure.

If a student goes missing on an excursion or actively runs away

Students should only be physically restrained if their safety or the safety of others is in immediate danger. Staff should follow the student from a safe distance and attempt to de-escalate the situation. The College will be contacted, and a member of leadership will be notified, leading to additional resources being sent to the venue. The parents/carers will be notified immediately. If the parent/carers cannot contact/locate the student, the College will maintain communication with the parents/carers to determine whether police notification should occur.

Sick Bay Procedure

If a student is feeling ill or unwell during class time or sustains a minor injury, they should adhere to the following procedure:

- Approach the teacher and explain the symptoms to them.
- Obtain permission in the form of a note from the teacher allowing them to go to Sick Bay.
- Students are not to contact parents/carers themselves.
- Students must first report to Sick Bay and allow staff to treat the illness or injury.
- Once staff have completed their evaluation, the staff member monitoring the Sick Bay will contact parent/carers if the student needs to be collected, or once treated, students are to return to class.

- If it is recess or lunchtime and the student feels ill or unwell or sustains an injury, they must report to Sick Bay in the first instance. Students are not to contact their parents.

When a student is feeling unwell during class time or sustains a minor injury, staff should follow this procedure:

- Student approaches staff member and explains their symptoms.
- Provide permission for the student to go to Sick Bay by issuing a note.
- Emphasise that students should not independently contact their parents or guardians.
- Instruct the student to promptly report to Sick Bay, where Student Services staff will attend to their illness or injury.
- Once evaluation and necessary treatment are completed, the Student Services staff member will communicate with the student's parents/carers if student collection is required. Alternatively, if the student is fit to return to class after treatment, they should do so.
- During recess or lunchtime, if a student does not feel well or sustains an injury, they should initially report to Student Services. Students are not to contact their parents.

Group Activities

If a grouping of students prevents the use of digital attendance, the organiser will provide hard copy attendance for that activity to the Student Services Office.

Student Services Office Attendance Process

Attendance Marking	Rolls must be marked by 9:00 am and at the start of every scheduled lesson. Teachers will be contacted if their attendance is not completed. If rolls are frequently incomplete or inaccurate, this information will be passed to the College Leadership Team. Incorrectly marked rolls will be corrected by the teacher responsible for the class.
Present Categories	Students who are: • In class - marked 'Present'. • In the Lantern Space – marked as 'School Business' (with Lantern Workspace in the comments). • With Student Wellbeing - marked as 'School Business' (with Wellbeing Space in the comments). • Participating in activities (excursions, camps etc.) - marked accordingly by the class teacher or Student Services Office Staff.

	These attendance categories must not be changed unless the student is present in class, and then the category should be changed.
Absent Categories	Students who are: Not in class, and notification has not been received from a parent/carer - marked 'Unexplained - Not an excusable circumstance'. Not in class, and notification has been received from a parent/carer advising the student is unwell - marked 'Explained - Sickness / Incapacity'. Other absence reasons will be marked accordingly. When marking the roll, if teachers have received written information from a parent/carer regarding a student's absence, they should forward the details to the Student Services Office to be recorded by emailing studentservices@smc.tas.edu.au. If parents/carers inform the Student Services Office of the student's absence, including any future planned absences, the office staff will enter the absence with the relevant code to reflect the reason for the absence. Students serving an Internal suspension will be marked as 'School Business' and External suspension will be marked as 'Suspension' upon College Leadership instruction. When teachers receive a written explanation of the student's absence from their parent/carers, they must forward this information to absentee@smc.tas.edu.au for updating absence data.

Unexplained Absence	An unexplained absence occurs when a student is not present, and their parent/carers do not contact the College. An SMS message is sent to the primary contact by approximately 9:30am in the Junior School and approximately 10:30am in the Senior School each day.
Late Arrivals	A student is considered to have arrived late after the 8:40am bell. Class and Pastoral Care teachers must mark the student's attendance as 'late arrival'. After the Period 1/Pastoral Care period, students arriving late must be signed in at Student Services Office. If it is observed a student has made a habit of arriving late or is late for three consecutive days, the students' class teacher or pastoral care teacher will contact the student's parent/carers.

Student Non-Attendance

Reasons for a student to be marked with an Authorised absence include:

- Sickness/incapacity.
- Medical, legal, or related appointments.
- Natural disasters or extreme weather preventing a child from safely attending their enrolled school.
- Terminal illness of an immediate family member.
- Bereavement of a person the child had a close, significant, or family relationship with.
- Having witnessed or been subjected to family violence.
- Being a participant or official at a recognised state, national or international event.
- Participation in a recognised learning experience.
- An application for home education being received by the Education Registrar and provisional registration being granted.

What If a child is absent for a reason that is not listed?

The absence will be recorded as an Unauthorised Absence.

The Pastoral Care team will receive reports on the number of unauthorised and total absences.
Letters notifying parents/carers of the number of absences are sent at 15, 20, 30, and 40+ days.

What happens if the family goes on holiday during the school term?

If families take a holiday during the school term, permission needs to be sought from the principal and will be recorded as an 'Explained - Not an authorised absence'.

What information may be requested?

After five consecutive days of illness-related absence, the Principal, Deputy Principal - Wellbeing & Leadership, or a Head of School may request a medical certificate or statutory declaration.

The Principal, Deputy Principal or the Director of School may also request evidence for other authorised absences, such as evidence of participation in an event or recognised learning experience, or a statutory declaration from a parent.

The following total absence thresholds will be used to manage student absences.

- A medical certificate or statutory declaration to explain absences for illness after a child has been absent for more than five days.
- Evidence for other authorised absences, such as evidence of participation in an event or recognised learning experience, or a statutory declaration from a parent/carer.
- The College Pastoral Care team will be consulted prior to any correspondence being distributed.
- Action Plans will be emailed to families and added to the student's Pastoral Care record in the learning management system.

Attendance Procedures	
5 days absence in a term	The College will work with families to provide appropriate ongoing education and support. In this instance, (a) Principals may require evidence to be provided which can include: a. Medical Certificate/s b. Statutory Declaration from parents/guardians c. Documentation confirming participation in student's sporting, cultural or academic event.
5 consecutive days, or an unexplained pattern of absences, or 10 days of absence in a school year	The College will: (a) Send parents/carers/independent students a letter notifying them of the number of days absent and providing information on the impact on the student's learning. (b) Work with parents/carers/independent students to increase the student's attendance to maximise the student's opportunity to catch up with the schoolwork missed. The Principal may use their discretion in relation to sending this letter.
20 days absence in a year	The College will:

	(a) Send parents/guardians/independent student a letter notifying them of the number of days absent and providing them information on the impact on the students learning. (b) Request for a formal meeting with the principal to discuss the impact on the students learning and may include discussion on whether part time attendance may support the student to participate in school and in an approved learning program.
Continued Absence	The Principal or Authorised Delegate will refer the matter to the Education Registrar in accordance with the Catholic Education Tasmania Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference (Guidelines for Document: Date of commencement: Page Reference: Attendance Policy 12 March 2025 Page 5 of 8 Catholic Schools) and Ministerial Instructions No 6 Relating to School Student Absences

6 Related Documents

Policies and Procedures	CET Attendance Policy Referral for a Compulsory Conciliation Conference TCEC Engagement and Transition Guidelines
Applicable Laws	Education Act 2016 Ministerial Instruction No 4 Students Excused from Daily Attendance at School Education Regulations 2017