

# Sacred Heart Catholic School

## Ulverstone



## Attendance Guidelines



## RATIONALE

The Education Act (2016) requires children of school age (5 - 18) to attend full-time at a government or registered non-government school.

Consistent school attendance is critical to achieving educational outcomes and keeping students engaged in learning. Every day that a student does not attend school can have a negative impact on their learning. The *Education Act 2016* mandates that a student attend school every school day and for the whole school day unless there is a genuine and authorised exemption.

## AIMS

- Ensure students and parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance
- To maximise the learning and future opportunities of all students enrolled at Sacred Heart Catholic School, regular and ongoing attendance at school will be ensured
- Ensure lateness is minimised, as the cumulative effect can impact their and other students' learning
- Ensure all students attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent
- To document obligations and procedures that must be adhered to

## AUTHORISED ABSENCES

Under the Education Act, reasons your child can be authorised to be absent include sickness/incapacity.

- In the case of frequent absences, the Principal may request a medical certificate for any illness lasting more than two days
- Natural disasters or extreme weather preventing your child from safely attending their enrolled school
- Terminal illness of an immediate family member
- Bereavement of a person your 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, with notification in advance to the principal
- Participation in a recognised learning experience
- An application for home education being received by the Education Registrar and provisional registration is being granted



### **Examples of unauthorised reasons for absence include:**

- Truancy
- Shopping expeditions
- Helping at home or parent/caregiver's workplace
- Appointments that could be made outside school hours (e.g. Haircuts)
- Family Holidays without prior consultation with the principal
- Birthdays
- Sporting, arts, and musical events/concerts that the child is not directly involved in.

### **ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES**

Each day, the class teacher will mark attendance and absences via Compass. The register should be completed by 9:15 a.m.; any unexplained absences will generate an automatic text message to parents/guardians at 9:15 a.m. Follow-up phone calls will be made to parents at 9:15 a.m.

### **NOTIFICATION OF STUDENT ABSENCES**

#### **Short-Term Absences**

- If a student is absent, the parent/carers must contact the school via Compass between 8:15 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. on the day of the absence and subsequent days.
- The school will SMS parents/carers if their son/daughter is absent and seek explanation and clarification for documentation.
- The administration, principal, and/or deputy principal will follow up on unexplained, unauthorised, or concerning patterns of absence.

#### **Extraordinary and Long-Term Absences**

#### **Representative and Cultural Activities**

The school recognises that students participate in non-school activities and events of educational and personal value, such as playing representative sports or participating in cultural experiences. Where a student is required to be absent from school for these events for three days or more, parents/carers must seek permission from the principal by email or in writing. The principal will consider the request at their discretion and notify the parent/carer. The principal will not formally approve any *unauthorised absences*.



## Family holidays

Please note that under the *Education Act 2016*, family holidays constitute an *unauthorised absence*. Parents are expected to plan family holidays during school holiday periods where possible. When a family must take a holiday during school time of longer than three days, prior consultation with the principal and the child's teacher/s is requested to determine the possibility for continuity of learning. All absences must be recorded in the Compass App.

## IMPLICATIONS OF NOT MEETING ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

- Schools will work closely with parents/carers to support a child's attendance to maximise their learning. They can provide options for continued learning where certified illness results in absences.
- In the first instance, the parents/carers of students who have absences for any unauthorised reason will be notified via email, phone call, or in writing, requesting the reasons for absences and a reminder of the process should absence continue.
- A letter will further remind the parents/carers of the obligation to have their child attend school.
- If the attendance concerns continue, parents/carers and the student will be required to meet with the principal (or Principal's delegate) and other relevant staff (including the Chaplain and/or Counsellor, if required) to discuss their ongoing absences.

In the case where absences continue, and the parents/carers know their obligations under the Education Act. In that case, parents will be informed that further actions will be taken should obligations be ignored. Procedures in this case will follow the agreed protocols issued by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office. The principal will inform the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and follow legal instructions from the Office. This may include the commencement of the process of Compulsory Conciliation (See Appendix A).

**Mrs Charlene Best**

*Charlene Best*

**Principal**

**SHU Advisory Board Approved: 27/03/24**

**Review Date: March 2027**



## APPENDIX A

### **COMPULSORY CONCILIATION**

The Education Registrar's Office manages the compulsory conciliation process for non-attendance at school.

The conferences will involve everyone necessary to support a resolution to non-attendance, including parents/guardians, the child (if the child wants to), and school staff.

Independent conciliators will run individual conferences with a report prepared to provide recommendations to the Registrar.

This process intends to improve outcomes for Tasmanian students not currently attending school by providing those responsible for ensuring a child attends school with a way to participate in a process and voice their needs to enable and support them to ensure the student returns to school.

Information about attendance and non-attendance policies can be found on the Department of Education website for government schools. For independent non-government schools, you should check with each individual school and the Catholic Education Office for Catholic schools. Ministerial Instructions are for both government and non-government schools.

### **INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

#### **Why might I be asked to attend a conciliation conference?**

You may be asked to attend a conciliation conference because your child or a child you are responsible for has yet to attend school regularly.

#### **Who else will be at the conference?**

A representative or representatives from the child's school, such as the principal, a teacher, or a social worker. You and any other parent or guardian of the child. Possibly a doctor, psychologist, police officer, counsellor, support worker or other helpful specialist person.



## What happens at a conciliation conference?

An experienced and independent conciliator runs a conciliation conference. The conciliator will discuss the concerns about the child's non-attendance at school, and you will then be allowed to raise any issues you may have that might help explain the child's non-attendance. The school representatives will also be allowed to raise any issues or concerns.

The conciliator is required to report to the Registrar of Education on the outcome of the conciliation. If agreement is reached, the Registrar may make a formal Requirement that the parties do those things they agreed to do. If no agreement is reached, the Registrar will consider the conciliator's report and decide based on the report.





## Appendix B: Student Absence Chart

### STUDENT ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL Prep - Year 10

Student attendance at school is important and it is a legal requirement that schools must maintain an accurate record of all student attendance. Principals and staff have a duty of care towards students attending the school. This entails a responsibility to know which students are at school at a given time. Principals, as part of their day-to-day management, have a responsibility to follow up unexplained absences for students enrolled at their school. Whilst many schools already have an established procedure for addressing student absence, the following sequence of steps outlines the minimum requirement for schools in managing student absence. Relevant details of any contact or attempt to contact parents/carers in relation to a child's absence should be documented.

<b>STEP 1</b>	<b>DAY ONE</b> of absence	The single most effective strategy to improve student attendance is to follow up an unexplained student absence at the first opportunity. This may involve a phone call, note or email to the parent/carer on the first day of the absence, where parents have not already contacted the school.
<b>STEP 2</b>	<b>Up to FIVE DAYS</b> 'yet to be explained' or 'unauthorised' absence	<p>If a student is absent for three (3) consecutive days and there has been no notification from the parent/carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School must attempt to contact the parent/carer to establish the reason for the child's absence.</li> </ul> <p>If a student is absent for five (5) consecutive days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal may send <i>Proforma Letter One</i> to the parent/carer asking them to make contact with the school to discuss the absence (if other attempts to contact the parent/carer have failed).</li> <li>Principal may, under the <i>Education Act 1994</i>, request a parent/carer to provide a certificate from a registered medical practitioner (this may occur later than five days at the discretion of the principal).</li> </ul>
<b>STEP 3</b>	<b>TEN DAYS</b> 'yet to be explained' or 'unauthorised' absence in one school term	<p>If a student is absent for ten (10) days in any one school term or there is a pattern of absence which is of significant concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School should consider requesting a meeting with the parent/carer to ensure that there is no underlying problem behind the absence.</li> <li>Principal may send <i>Proforma Letter Two</i> to the parent/carer outlining attendance concerns.</li> <li>Principal should consider involving CEO and/or the school social worker.</li> <li>Continued difficulty in contacting the family may necessitate sending a registered letter to the parent/carer.</li> </ul>
<b>STEP 4</b>	<b>TWENTY DAYS</b> of absence in one school term, irrespective of reasons provided	<p>If a student is absent for twenty (20) days in any one school term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School must initiate a 'case management' approach, involving face-to-face contact with the parent/carer, with the emphasis on a plan to support the student's return to regular attendance.</li> <li>Principal may send <i>Proforma Letter Three</i> to initiate the above meeting.</li> <li>Principal must involve the CEO to develop a strategy to restore attendance. The strategy may involve a flexible arrangement – for example provision of alternative placement, part-time schooling or open learning.</li> </ul> <p>A principal should inform the CEO when a student has been absent (unauthorised) from school for 40 days. The CEO will ensure that an investigation is made and appropriate measures taken, including prosecution where appropriate.</p>

