Procedure for

School Attendance

St Francis Xavier College procedures are designed to enable the College to enact the policies of the Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL).

All College Procedures intentionally promote a child safe culture which prioritises the safety and wellbeing for all students.

Contents

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:
- monitor the daily attendance of each student enrolled at the College
- identify any absences of a student from college, including absences from classes
- record reasons for absence
- follow up any unexplained absences of a student
- notify any parent or carer regarding a student's low attendance
- provide learning continuity support during absence
- outline notifications regarding attendance
- report significant attendance concerns to the relevant bodies (including the Whereabouts Unknown procedure)

Context

In accordance with the Education Training and Reform Act 2006 (Vic.) (the Act) and the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.) (Regulations) (Schedule 4), school attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from six to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted.

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially, academically, and developmentally. Young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives. It is important that Young people develop habits of regular attendance.

School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Conversely, limited school participation is associated with a greater chance of dropping out of school and antisocial behaviour. These outcomes have later implications for employment, a range of health risk behaviours.

Scope

This procedure applies to all students enrolled at the College and their families, as well as staff.

Definitions

Attendance	A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example, remote learning, an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part-time to make up full-time attendance, and the schools or education settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student.
School approved absences	At times, it may be necessary for a student to be absent and the school can approve such absences. Eg: illness, accident, medical appointment, religious or cultural obligation.
Parent, Guardian and/or Carer (*Parents* within this document)	Includes "a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides".
Student Attendance Officers	Are employed by the college to support attendance procedures.
School Attendance Officers	In the context of attendance, School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices and Infringement Notices.
Whereabouts Unknown	A student is considered whereabouts unknown if: they have been absent for 5 school days multiple attempts to contact their parent/guardian/family have failed no alternative education destination can be identified for them.
Exemption from Schooling	Schooling is compulsory for all student aged 6 – 17. Exemption from School can only be made in certain circumstances and through application. Students must continue to attend school through this process.
DOSCEL	Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited
SIMON	The Learning Management System use by the college for record keeping including attendance
PAM	The Parent Access Module of SIMON

Procedure

1. Prevention (and early intervention) of Absences

1.1 Creation of safe and supportive learning environments

The college communicates college wide expectations through Positive Learning Partnerships. These expectations are centred on:
- Unconditional respect
- Calm and just manner
- Facing challenges together with optimism

1.2 Data informed responses relating to early intervention and support planning

The college undertakes regular data reporting to identify and response to student attendance. This includes identifying students who require support for school attendance.

1.3 A tiered approach to promoting attendance and responding to absences

The tiered approach is based on the whole school approach to positive behaviour support (WSAPBS).

Tier 1 – all students
- Promotion of the Everyday Counts message via parent emails
- Awareness of attendance requirements and benefits via parent emails and student communication channels (eg: diary, SIMON)
- Regular check-in during or after absence

Tier 2 – some students who require targeted support
- Communication with families
- Support for learning program
- Referrals to support services as needed

Tier 3 – few students who require intensive support
- Communication with families
- Support for learning program
- Referrals to support services as needed

2. Recognising and monitoring absences

2.1 Parent notification of an absence (expressed permission)

If a student is absent:
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that they notify the college of the absence of their child/ren on any particular school day, and provide an explanation for the absence.
- This needs to occur as soon as possible, prior to the start of the school day.
- The notification may be provided via:
  - Parent Access Module (PAM) using the parent notified absence function (PNA)
  - Phone: 9707 3111

If a student arrives late (eg: due to a medical appointment or running late):

- Parents must notify the College in writing (eg: email), PAM, or via phone

If a student needs to leave early (eg: due to a medical appointment):
- Parents must notify the College in writing (eg: email), via PAM or in person (by collecting your child from a campus reception)
- The email/letter should include:
  - The reason for the early dismissal
  - The time that the student is to be dismissed
  - The manner of transport used / the person collecting the student

If it is known a student will be absent (eg: due to a family holiday), parents must request approval from the Deputy Principal Head of Campus for the absence. This request should be made via the form: Applications For Holiday During The School Term (accessible via PAM or college reception).

If an email is provided, the College may phone the parent in order to verify the information provided.

The College must be confident that the person collecting a student early is the parent or a person who has been authorised (expressed permission) by the parent to collect the child.

If needed the College may seek identification by:
- Phoning the parent in order to verify the information provided
- Asking a person for identification

2.2 College Monitoring of Daily Attendance

Attendance is recorded by class teachers each scheduled lesson of the day.

For excursions and other events which are a variation of the school day, attendance is recorded at least twice a day (morning and afternoon) by the teacher in charge of the group.

Attendance is recorded electronically in SIMON.

Students attending the college late or leaving early are to report to Student Services so that it is recorded in SIMON and teachers receive notification electronically through their class rolls of the absence.

3. Responding to unexplained absences

3.1. Initial response to unexplained absences

Where a student is absent from school without explanation from parents a SMS text message is sent to the student's parents (the parent/s who are listed as being a residential or primary contacts) notifying them of the absence and requesting that they immediately contact the college.

Parents can reply via PAM, phone or reply SMS.

- If parents have not responded with a reason for their child's absence, they may be phoned by the Student Attendance Officer to ascertain the reason for the child's absence.
- If they do not answer / reply, a registered emergency contact may be contacted.

- If the numbers on the school system are no longer contactable (eg: out of service), other registered contacts, including the emergency contacts, may be contacted.
- If upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day (but was in the care of another contact registered with the college), the Student Attendance Officer will notify the parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s).

3.2 Where there is no response from a parent

- Where the absence remains unexplained the matter will be reported to the Director of Student Wellbeing by the Student Attendance Officer. Continued contact with parents will be planned on a case by case basis based on the individual needs and context for the student.
- If all attempts to contact parents/carers and emergency contacts have failed and there is concern for immediate safety of the student, the following authorities may be consulted and called for support to locate the student (in consultation with a member of the College Executive Team):
  - Victoria Police
  - Department of Families, Fairness and House Child Protection, and/or
  - DOSCEL
  - Department of Education

3.3 Responding to repeated unexplained absences

3.1 multiple unexplained absences
- Where parents repeatedly fail to notify the college of ~~legitimate~~ absences, the college will write a letter/email to parents requesting that they comply with the college's notification procedures.
- In cases of serious non-compliance, the college may request that the parents/guardians attend a meeting to discuss the importance of parental notifications in ensuring the safety of all students.
- If repeated absence is significantly hindering learning, teachers and/or Heads of House will make contact to discuss support plans with parents/carers.

3.2 Whereabouts Unknown

If a student has repeated absences without a reasonable explanation, the school is required to report to the relevant authorities.

Where there is believed to be no immediate harm, this report is to:
- Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited
- Department of Education

In this case, the parent may be issued with a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer (from the Department of Education).

4. Responding to irregular absence (on a given day)

4.1 Irregular attendance in the course of a given day

In the event that a student is absent for a lesson, the teacher, when marking the roll, will check that the student has a reason for their absence. If no reason is provided and the student had previously been marked present, teachers will follow the process for engaging support in ascertaining the whereabouts of the student (eg: Absconding / Truancy process or Safety Alert Process).

5. Responding to repeated absences

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, the school will involve the parents and the student (as appropriate) in developing strategies to improve attendance.

5.1 Check-ins

Multiple days of absence may be followed up by the class teacher who may check on the student and offer support to engaged with the learning program.

5.2 Parent communications

Where there is ongoing concern for absence, the college will communicate with parent via phone and/or email in order to:
- Promote awareness about the student's attendance record
- Promote awareness about the impact of low attendance on educational and life outcomes
- Promote engagement with strategies that can assist school engagement
- Record a support plan for the student

5.3 Parent meetings and support plans

Where absences are recurrent the college will investigate the student's absences having regard to factors such as the day of the week, the class, subject or year level and particular social group that may affect their attendance.

Parents/guardians will be contacted to discuss issues which may be related to explained absences which are significantly impacting learning.

Where appropriate, the college will work with the parents/guardians and the student to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

6. Responding to requests for an *Exemption from Schooling*

Schooling is compulsory for all student aged 6 – 17.

Exemption from School can only be made in certain circumstances and through application. Students must continue to attend school through this process.

Exemption from School must be made to the Principal via the Director of Community Engagement and with the approval of the Deputy Principal Head of Campus.

To consider approving a request for an exemption from schooling, the College must have records of the following:

- The parent supports the request for an exemption form school
- A Careers Action Plan has been developed (in consultation with the school Careers team)
- Any offers of a future pathway (eg: letter from an employer)
- Support Plans and adjustments to enable to the student to stay in school and engaged with a learning program have been implemented – strategies may have included
  - Educational Needs assessment, engagement with support services in and our of school, Student Support Group meetings, Care Team meetings, work experience, etc

7. Reporting and notifications

7.1 Notification of Parents and Carers of Unsatisfactory Attendance

St Francis Xavier College has implemented the following systems and procedures in order to notify parents and guardians of unsatisfactory attendance:
- On a regular basis (eg: fortnightly), the Student Attendance Officer monitors the current semester attendance percentage for all students at the Campus.
- Attendance data and patterns are shared with Campus Wellbeing Leaders who determine Tier 1 (all), 2 (targeted), and 3 (intensive) responses in line with the College's Pastoral Care and Positive Behaviours Support Procedure and this procedure.
- Communication with parents is initiated to support school attendance

7.2 Notification of *Whereabouts Unknown*

When students meet the criteria of a Whereabouts Unknown notification the principal will:
- Consult with relevant DOSCEL staff prior to making a referral to the Department of Education
- Notify the Department of Education and Training School Attendance Officer as per the DET process/form of a referral for support for student attendance
  - Fill out the Whereabouts Unknown Referral Form and send this to the relevant School Attendance Officer.

8. Absconding, Truancy and Out of Class

If a student is missing from class and has attended other classes, or if the student leave the class without permission, the College will:

If a school staff member reasonably suspects that a student has left the school grounds or a school-approved activity, or has otherwise gone missing, the College will:
- take immediate steps to establish whether the student has left the school grounds or the school approved activity
- take all reasonable steps (which will vary depending on the circumstances of the case and the individual student) to discharge the duty of care that is owed to the student
- take reasonable steps to locate the student (which will vary depending on the individual student and context and the assessed risk to that student)
- notify Victoria Police if there is a reasonable concern for the safety of the student or others
- notify the parent or carer of the student as soon as reasonably possible if there is concern for the safety of the student or others
- notify the parent if the student is known to be on site but not in class, and seek parent support to collect the student

9. Record Keeping

9.1 Records of the Register of Daily Attendance

The college's attendance register is recorded on SIMON.

The register is retained indefinitely, stored electronically and backed up externally. The register is kept for each semester, and shows the attendance checks and any reasons for absence.

9.2 Records of attendance monitoring (over the semester)

The Student Attendance Officer provides regular reporting on student attendance to the College Leadership Team and the Campus Leadership and Wellbeing Teams.

9.3 Access to attendance records

For parents and students:
- Attendance is reported to parents twice yearly in the Student Semester Report
- Attendance can be viewed at any time in SIMON or PAM

For staff:
- Attendance can be recorded and viewed on SIMON (Attendance module)
- All notes and communications relating to attendance can be recorded on SIMON (Student Notes)

Compliance

Responsibilities

Parents	To notify the school of absences and promote attendance as outlined in this procedure
Students	To attend school during normal school hours every day of each term (unless an approved absence is recorded)
Teachers	To mark class rolls and raise absentee alerts/notifications as outlined in this procedure To follow-up on non-attendance for classes
Student Attendance Officers	To follow attendance and absence procedures as outlined in this procedure
Deputy Principal Head of Campus	To promote attendance and response as outlined in this procedure To follow the Whereabouts Unknown process
College and Campus Leadership Teams	To monitor school attendance data and respond to promote school attendance To provide support to students with low attendance as outlined in this procedure

Implementation

This procedure is implemented by:
- communicating these guidelines to the College community
- effective maintenance of student records

- effective incident notification procedures
- monitoring the effectiveness of the procedure
- reviewing and evaluating the procedure

Discipline for Breach of Procedures

Where a staff member breaches these procedures St Francis Xavier College may take disciplinary action.

Related legislation

- Privacy and Data Protection Act Vic 2014
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act, 2005 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)
- Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (Cth)
- Disability Standards for Education, 2005 (Cth)
- Education and Training Reform Act, 2006 (Vic)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2004 (Vic)
- School Attendance Guidelines 2018

Related DOSCEL Policy

- Student Attendance Policy
- Student Duty of Care Policy
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Student Pastoral Care Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion Policy and Procedure
- Critical Incident Management Policy

Related College Procedures

- Child Safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- Student Duty of Care Procedure
- Privacy Procedure
- Suspension, Negotiated Transfer and Expulsion Procedure

Related
- Student Support Plan Templates
- VCE attendance requirements

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from: Deputy Principal Wellbeing

Status of Procedure	
College Leader Responsible	Deputy Principal Wellbeing
Implementation Date	August 2019
Last Reviewed	Jan 2024
Review Date [Commonly 1 – 2 Years]	2 years (Jan 2026)
Local Governing Authority Approval	*College Executive Team*

Record of Review

Details of Amendments	By Whom	Date
Significant changes to include further details to promote and respond to school attendance Addition or significant addition to the following sections: - Context - Definitions - Prevention and early interventions - Compliance - Responding to requests for an *Exemption from Schooling* - Reporting - Absconding, truancy and out of class - Record keeping Removal of the Whereabouts Unknown Procedure so that it is included within this procedure	Deputy Principal Wellbeing	Jan 2024