ST. JOSEPHS PRIMARY SCHOOL
PORT MACQUARIE

Name of Policy: STUDENT ATTENDANCE
Date: March 2014
Review Date: March 2017

OUR VISION

“ONE IN CHRIST”

OUR MISSION

At St. Joseph’s Primary we will

• give witness to Christian values
• respect the dignity and sacredness of each student
• work with the parents to build up within the child an awareness of the presence of God
• endeavour to discern and fully develop the potential of each student
• foster a love for learning
• create a happy, accepting and enriching environment
St Joseph’s Primary School
Port Macquarie

Monitoring Student Attendance Policy

March 2014

Rationale:
The Education Act 1990 requires that children of primary school age, who are residents in Australia are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Education Department. Students must commence school by six years of age.

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. Schools, in partnership with parents, are responsible for promoting regular attendance of their children. School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

Compulsory School Age
- Between Age of 6 & 17
- Student who turns 6 late in year (After Oct 1st) can be granted an Exemption from Enrolment to start school the following year. But, they must be enrolled in full-time Preschool.

Implementation:
Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Lismore will be familiar to staff and adhered to. This document is located on the CSO intranet.

Responsibilities:
Parents are responsible for:
- enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered nongovernment school or registering them with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling;
- ensuring that their children attend school regularly;
- explaining the absences of their children from school promptly and within seven days to the school;
- applying for leave, in advance, if a known period of leave greater than two weeks is required. (Parents to complete Form B1. Principal to approve leave using Form B6.)
- taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children.

The responsibilities of school staff
The Principal is responsible for ensuring that:
- students are enrolled consistent with the Diocesan enrolment policy
- staff provide a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students’ sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community;
- programs and practices are implemented to address attendance issues when they arise;
- clear information is provided to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.
- excellent and improved student attendance are recognised and rewarded;
- attendance records are maintained in a Diocesan-approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.
- All official hard/PDF copies of student attendance are accurate and endorsed as accurate by the principal or other nominated member of the school executive;
- a system is established for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours;
- all attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Director of Schools or designated CSO officer and to the Board of Studies Inspector;
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern;
- the Director of Schools or designated CSO officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom school strategies have failed to restore regular attendance;
- relevant school policies and procedures are developed and implemented to address attendance issues including truancy. They should provide strategies for encouraging good attendance and establish structures and procedures that support teachers in addressing issues of student non-attendance;
- school staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised;
- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements;
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented.
- sick leave to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness (See Appendix A:10.2 Attendance Register Code ‘S’)
- an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student (See Appendix A:10.2 Attendance Register Code ‘M’)
- part-day exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 full days in a 12 month period for any one student (See Appendix A:10.2 Attendance Register Codes ‘M’ and ‘Pa’) (See Section ‘B’ Exemptions from Attendance and Exemptions from Enrolment

**Principal may record up to 15 days in a school year for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the principal** (See Appendix A:10.2 Attendance Register Code ‘L’).
This may be due to:
- misadventure or unforeseen event
- participation in special events not related to the school
- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- attendance at funerals
- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
Principals may decline to accept as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent should be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided.
Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged.
-Where principals have ongoing concerns, they can request the parents’ consent to contact the doctor. If the request is denied, or if the principal is still not satisfied with the reason for absence, they can record the absence as ‘unjustified’. (See Appendix A:10.2: Attendance Register Code ‘A’)

**Principals may nominate staff to maintain attendance registers (rolls).** In such cases, the principal must ensure that these staff:
- know the procedures in this document before marking the attendance register
and following up absences. Staff must understand how an absence should be noted on an attendance register using the approved codes;

- seek verbal or written advice promptly from parents regarding unexplained full or part day absences. Parents may not be aware that their child has been absent from school and will expect to be informed promptly if unexplained absences occur. Schools may wish to request this information by telephone;
- retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. If school staff receive verbal explanations from parents, they should record, sign and date the explanation;
- are aware of their responsibility to alert the principal or staff member responsible for monitoring attendance when a student’s pattern of attendance is of concern, or if no explanation is received from the parent or carer;
- report habitual unexplained, full or part day absences, fractional truancy and persistent lateness promptly to the principal or nominee.

**The responsibilities of CSO officers**

**The Director of Schools** is responsible for ensuring that:

- schools are supported to maintain accurate records of student attendance in a form approved by the Minister. The Diocesan system should conduct regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to principals in maintaining these documents;
- plans are implemented for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders.

**Attendance Records**

- Register of Enrolments – To be retained **permanently**
- When a student of Compulsory School Age leaves the school, a record of communication with Parents/Carers re Destination School must be retained. If no communication, a record of report to DEC must be retained
- Rolls – To be retained for **21 Years**
- Absence Notes/Emails & Written Records of Verbal Explanations – To be retained for **21 Years** *(filed by the end of each term in Individual Student Record Files)*
- Individual Student Record File* – To be retained for **21 Years after student leaves school**
  - If student has an accident requiring an Accident Report – All attendance records pertaining to that student to be kept until the end of the year in which that student turns 25.
  - Must be marked using the Exception Method (marking absences only)
  - Must be marked at the start of the school day & on all days that the school is open for instruction, including sports carnivals, excursions etc.
  - Precise times of Late Arrival or Early Departure must be recorded with relevant code *(record in Notes section of roll)*

To monitor student attendance at St Joseph’s Primary School, Port Macquarie the following actions will be undertaken:
• Teachers will mark the roll at the beginning of the school day electronically. The default position for students in ‘present’. Teachers will mark absences.
• Teachers are to read and then print their name on absent notes, and send them to the Office in the Note Bag.
• Office Staff will record partial student absences and record the relevant codes for both partial and full absences.
• Students who are absent for part of the day will be signed in and/or out by a parent or carer at the front office.
• Students will bring a laminated card to class to indicate they have arrived late and have been signed in through the Front Office.
• The Principal can grant exemptions from school for 15 days a year up to 100 days a year. The Application for Exemption from Attendance at School for parents/ carers is Form B1. The Certificate for Exemption from Attendance at School is Form B6. Exemptions from school attendance cannot be granted retrospectively under the Guidelines. Parents are to be informed in writing if the Principal denies the application using Form B11.
• Parents/carers will inform the school of the reason for student absence in writing, on the students return to school. Absences unexplained after 7 days or unjustified will be marked as an ‘A’.
• Teachers or their nominee will make a courtesy telephone call to the parent or carer of a child who has been absent from school for five days without explanation.
• In consultation with the classroom teacher, the Principal, Assistant Principal or teacher will contact parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
• Ongoing unexplained absences, or lack of co-operation regarding student attendance, will result in a formal attendance conference being organised which may include the relevant CSO officer.
• All student absences are recorded on Student Record Cards and communicated to relevant Authorities as required.
• The exit destination of children leaving the school will be recorded on SAS.

**School Action for the Management of Habitual Non Attendance**

**Students may be absent due to sickness.**

In addition to sick leave, the Principal may record up to 15 days in the school year for a student for the following reasons which have been explained by parent/carer note:
- Misadventure/ Unforeseen event
- Domestic necessity
- Participation in non-school special event
- Recognised religious Festival or Ceremonial Occasion

When absences are not explained within 7 days or are unjustified the following steps may be taken:

**Step 1 5-10 days unexplained/unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)**

(1) If at any time a teacher is concerned about a student’s pattern of attendance, they are to notify the Principal and contact the parent or carer by telephone. Teachers are to make a note of this action in the shared google doc ‘Student Attendance’.

**Step 2 11-20 days unexplained/unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)**

(i) Second phone call to parents to discuss unexplained/unjustified absences. Action recorded by class teacher in shared google doc ‘Student Attendance’.
(ii) Registered letter and/or phone call to parents re attendance requesting meeting between school and parents to discuss at 15 days unexplained or unjustified absences. Teachers to make note of this action in the shared google doc ‘Student Attendance’. Copy of letter to be filed in Student Record Card.
(iii) Inform the CSO Consultant

**Note:** Refer to 4.13 in *Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Lismore Diocesan Schools System*
Step 3 21-30 days unexplained / unjustified absence (not necessarily consecutive)
(i) Phone call to parents at 20 days unexplained/unjustified non-attendance by Teacher, Principal or Assistant Principal. Second Attendance Meeting with parent, teacher and principal held. Action Plan for attendance developed and committed to by parent/carer. Inform the CSO Consultant. Teachers to make note of this action in the shared google doc ‘Student Attendance’. Copy of letter to be filed in Student Record Card.

(ii) Phone call/ Registered letter to parents regarding attendance requesting meeting with CSO Consultant, and Principal after 25 days unexplained or unjustified. Third Attendance Meeting with parent, teacher, Principal and CSO Consultant held.

Step 4 Above 30 days unexplained / unjustified absence within last 100 days
(i) Daily phone call to parents on each day unexplained/unjustified non attendance by Assistant Principal
(ii) Consult with CSO Child Protection Officer on whether it is appropriate to report to Community Services (C.S.) If so, Principal makes report to C.S. and informs Schools Consultant.
(iv) Referral by Schools Consultant to Risk Manager for possible further action

Step 5 Above 30 days unexplained / unjustified absence and no improvement from Step 4
(i) Risk Manager and Principal make schooling arrangements with parents/carers that include a written undertaking with respect to compulsory schooling.

Evaluation:
Ratified: March 2014
Next Review: March 2017
Summary for Teachers

Rolls
- Student Attendance is being monitored for Terms 1 & 2 (instead of only the month of May).
- Must be marked using the Exception Method (marking absences only)
- Marked early in the school day, a second time after lunch and on all days that the school is open for instruction, including sports carnivals and excursions.
- Precise times of Late Arrival or early Departure must be recorded with the relevant code and in the Notes section at the back of the roll.
- Marked in black pen with no liquid paper. Casual staff are encouraged to record in lead pencil.
- Signed by the teacher each day.
- To be sent to the Office after the second marking on a Friday afternoon. Rolls will be photocopied and returned to the class teacher’s pigeon hole.

Granting Leave
- Parents or carers must write a note to explain absences within seven days of the child returning to school.
- Absences unexplained after 7 days will be marked with code ‘A’
- Student absences that are explained by note or phone call as the result of sickness or medical appointment are to be recorded as ‘S’
- Students who know that they will be away for greater than 10 school days are requested to fill in Form B1 (available on the website) and lodge with the Principal.
- The Principal will notify the teacher that such leave has been approved and the absence recorded as ‘M’
- For students who are absent and the note or phone call indicates another pressing reason for being absent from school such as a funeral, unforeseen event/misadventure, participation in a non-school Special Event or domestic necessity, then the absence is recorded as ‘L’.
- Students who are absent from the school on official school business such as school excursions and sport are recorded as ‘B’

Attendance Records
- Rolls will be retained for 21 years.
- Individual Student Record Cards will be retained for 21 years.
- Absent Notes will be filed in Individual Student Record Cards by the end of every term and total absences recorded on the card.
- The precise times of Partial Absences are to be recorded in the Notes section of the class roll.
- Teacher action to ensure student attendance such as a phone call or meeting are to be recorded in the Notes section of the roll.
- Parents/carers will be provided with information educating them about their responsibilities in ensuring student attendance and justifying absences twice a year through the school Newsletter and on enrolment.
- A courtesy Explanation of Student Absence Form will be provided in hard copy and on the school website for parents/carers.

Concerns about Student Attendance
- If at any time a teacher is concerned about a student’s pattern of attendance they are to refer to the school action plan in the Attendance Policy and notify the Assistant Principal.
- A courtesy phone call is made to the parent or carer of any child who has been absent from school for five consecutive days without explanation to check on the child’s welfare. The Office staff may make this welfare check on the request of the teacher. Teachers will record this action in the Notes.
section of the roll. However, if there are concerns about a child’s ongoing pattern of attendance, the teacher is to refer to and follow the school action plan. All actions taken by the teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal will be recorded in the Notes section of the roll.