Student Non-Attendance

The Hazard – Student Non-Attendance

Student non-attendance is the absence from school of a school aged student, without the consent of parents/guardians, during school hours.

Common reasons for student non-attendance include boredom at school, embarrassment and frustration at poor performance, fear of bullying or harassment, drug dependency, family stress or conflict, homelessness and defiance of authority.

Student non-attendance can compound the problems of students who are already behind in class as a result of behavioural, emotional or learning difficulties. They gradually fall further behind in their studies and jeopardise their chances of completing their education.

This increases the risk of students dropping out of school, becoming involved in delinquency and criminal activity and ultimately, reducing their adult employment prospects.

Enrolment and Attendance Policies

In line with our legal obligations, Holy Rosary has developed detailed policies and procedures to manage our obligations relating to Enrolment and Attendance of Students. Refer to our Student Enrolment Policy and Student Attendance Policy.

This policy has been developed specifically to manage issues relating to student non-attendance.

Holy Rosary's Policy

Holy Rosary is committed to the management of regular school attendance and providing a safe and positive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation.

It is our policy that:

- All unauthorised absences from school are unacceptable;
- High expectations of attendance will be made known to all students;
- Processes for unexplained student absences are implemented to reduce absenteeism and ensure the safety of students;
- Student- Non-Attendance prevention strategies are developed and implemented with the school community considering the needs of students; and
- Early intervention strategies and family support programs will be provided.

Management of Non-Attendance Immediate

School absenteeism is monitored closely to identify students who are failing to attend school as required.
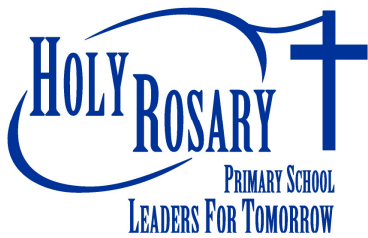
To avoid suspicion, parents/guardians are required to contact the school prior to school commencement time to explain their child's absence, late arrival or request for early leave.

All teachers are required to take a roll call in every class. Any student absences are recorded by the class teacher.

Where a student is absent the school administration office reviews absentee notifications to identify any students that are absent where no notification of absence has been received from a parent/guardian.

Where a student is absent without explanation and does not arrive at school within 2 hours, parents/guardians are forwarded a text message to their mobile phones in the following terms:

[Student Name] in [Student Class] is absent from school today [date]. Please call the Office on (03) 54484280 asap.

If the student's parents/guardians do not contact the school within one hour of sending the text message, attempts will be made to call the parents/guardians and confirm the location of the student.

Management of Non-Attendance – Parental Notifications

Where parents repeatedly fail to notify the school of legitimate absences, the school will write a letter to parents requesting that they comply with the school's notification procedures.

In cases of serious non-compliance, the school may request that the parents/guardians attend a meeting with the Principal to discuss the importance of parental notifications in ensuring the safety of all students.

Persistent Non-Attendance

All students found to be consistently failing to attend school as required, will be subject to the consequences as outlined in the Discipline – Student Policy.

Where absences are recurrent the school 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 student's non-attendance. Where appropriate, the school will work with the parents/guardians and the student to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

Whole School Approach – Strategies to Reduce Student Absence and Lateness

Holy Rosary adopts a number of prevention strategies that are in line with the Victorian Government's Every Day Counts Program. The following table provides strategies proven by schools to reduce student absence and lateness. Holy Rosary adopts the strategies that are appropriate for the school's environment.

Every Day Counts - Strategies proven by schools to reduce student absence and lateness

Culture	Information	Monitoring	Rewards / Incentives	Other Targeted Activities
Creating an environment where children want to be at school and demand to be on time.	Informing parents about current research that links attendance with student achievement levels and reporting absence rates through the school newsletter and comparing them with state norms.	Ensuring parents are called on the day by the principal, business manager, Koorie Educator or classroom teacher to check on the wellbeing of absent students.	Providing a term award, for example a sausage sizzle or extra sports activity, for all students who have attended every day.	Introducing a walking school bus.
Showing concern for students who are absent – ask them where they were and supply work missed.	Providing information to parents on the sequential nature of lessons and learning and how their child's learning can be severely disrupted if they miss crucial learning points.	Insisting on explanatory notes to explain all absences.	Presenting weekly 'class on-time' awards at assembly.	Offering a breakfast program, which provides an organised start to the day for many students and also engages parents who stay on for a tea/coffee.
Creating a school culture that views being punctual to school as important.	Providing regular flyers with current research on the importance of being at school and on time every day.	Using late and absence data to identify and target students.	Providing a special excursion once a year for the top 20 per cent of attendees for the year.	Arranging special interest lunchtime activities each day to target students with high absence rates.
Linking student attendance to individual teachers for appraisal and review.	Making presentations at information evenings for prospective Prep parents to ensure they clearly understand the importance of being at school and on time every day.	Acting in response to observed trends, for example if it has been identified that absences are high on Fridays, scheduling special events for this day of the week.	Introducing attendance prizes each term, for example basketballs, footballs and tennis racquets, for 100 per cent attendance for the term and a smaller prize (cinema ticket) for 90 per cent or greater attendance.	Implementing an Early Morning Fitness Club for targeted students from 8:40 am –8:55 am. Maintaining records of student attendance at the fitness club and hosting a pancake breakfast reward for high EMFC attendance.

Promoting to parents that the school has the welfare capacity to care for students while at school.	Weekly profiling of attendance with a regular reminder in the school newsletter that attendance is not optional but compulsory.	Following up ongoing lateness.	Issuing raffle tickets to students with good attendance. At the end of each week, the raffle for a showbag is drawn.	Working closely with families and support agencies when families are suffering hardships or are in crisis to ensure that students are at school in an environment that has order and routine.
Ensuring that all classrooms are motivating and stimulating and (for Koorie students) have high interest areas that will appeal in particular to Koorie children.	Making announcements at weekly assemblies about the need to be on time at school every day.	Continuing to phone parents of high-absence students for each absence.	Organising a friendly competition between rooms or sections of the school based on attendance for the term, for example having a free BBQ sausage sizzle lunch for the 'winning' group.	
The Principal and assistant principal undertaking yard duty every day to provide a consistent approach to dealing with playground problems.	Emphasising compulsory school attendance requirements and that Monday-Friday during term are school days, not days that students may go to school.	Standing at the front gate and handing out late passes to parents.	Introducing attendance prizes each month (certificates and some fun stationery) that are awarded for full attendance.	
	Letting parents know that some school activities, such as working in groups, are rendered ineffective by the absence of one or more group members.	Writing to all parents at the end of each term informing them how many days their child has been away.	Sending reminders to students at the end of each school day about the exciting things they can expect to happen at school the following day.	
	Publishing attendance and 'late' figures as well as targets in the school newsletter.	Sending home 'pink slips' for unexplained absences.		
	Emphasising that teachers plan sequential lessons, which can be severely disrupted by regular non-attendance.			

Teaching Staff Responsibilities – Engagement Strategies for Teachers
Teaching Staff are expected to:
- Encourage all students in the class to take responsibility for each other's safety;
- Model and develop a culture of trust;
- Model effective timekeeping practices, for example returning work promptly, arriving and finishing classes on time;
- Communicate and promote the school's attendance expectations regarding the importance of attending school every day and arriving on time by:
  - Talking to students about why it is important to be at school and discuss the school's attendance policy.
  - Talking positively about regular attendance.

- Contact parents to follow up student absence to:
  - Ensure that all teachers are responsible for contact.
  - Use agreed timelines and protocols across the school and within teams for parent contact.
  - Provide for long-term absences through classroom teachers organising meaningful work as required.

Workers' Responsibility
All workers are responsible to ensure that:
- Students are made aware of the importance of regular attendance and notification of absences;
- Accurate records of student attendance are maintained; and
- Where they have suspicions relating to possible behaviour that is thought to be associated with non-attendance, they raise this with the student's classroom teacher or the Principal.

Signage
The following posters are displayed throughout the school:
- Every Day Counts Poster (Primary School)

Implementation
This policy is implemented through a combination of:
- Staff training;
- Development and implementation of a whole school strategy in line with the Victorian Governments 'Every Day Counts' Program to encourage regular attendance and to reduce non-attendance;
- Implement strategies to address specific needs of each individual student, according to their reasons for non-attendance;
- Development and promotion of positive relationships within the school by implementing programs that develop social and emotional skills, peer tutoring, mentoring and anti-bullying strategies;

- Establishing positive home-school relationships to assist parents/guardians to support their child's attendance at school;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Related Policies
Attendance Policy
Bullying Prevention & Intervention Policy
Code of Behaviour (Student) Policy
Counselling Services (Student) Policy
Discipline Policy
Enrolment Policy
Student Duty of Care (Summary) Policy

Evaluation & Review
This policy will be reviewed as part of Holy Rosary's overall cyclical review process and should be read in conjunction with the Holy Rosary Child Safe policies.

This policy was ratified by the Holy Rosary Governing Authority in 2020.