

PROCEDURES FOR
**student
attendance**

NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE SYDNEY



3. Procedures for Student Attendance in NSW Catholic Systemic Schools

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1. Context:

- 1.1 Regular attendance at school for every student is essential if students are to achieve their potential, and increase their career and life options. Schools in partnerships with parents are responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff, as part of their duty of care, record and monitor part and whole day absences. Schools, in providing a caring teaching and learning environment, which addresses the learning and support needs of students, including those with additional learning and support needs or complex health conditions, foster students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community.
- 1.2 This document applies to all NSW Catholic systemic schools, excluding preschools.
- 1.3 The school attendance register (roll) should reflect the highest professional standards.

2. Responsibilities of Parents:

Parents are responsible for:

- 2.1 enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) for home schooling;
- 2.2 ensuring that their children attend school every day the school is open for their instruction;
- 2.3 explaining the absences of their children from school promptly by means such as a telephone call, written note, text message or email to the school within 7 days from the first day of any period of absence;
- 2.4 working in partnership with the school to plan and implement strategies to support regular attendance at school, including communicating with the school if they are aware of issues impacting on their child's attendance or engagement with school

3. Responsibilities of school staff:

School Staff support the regular attendance of students by:

- 3.1 providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the school community;
- 3.2 promoting regular attendance at school through teaching and learning activities that acknowledge the learning and support needs of students.
- 3.3 recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance

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- 3.4 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;
- 3.5 maintaining accurate records of student attendance;
- 3.6 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;
- 3.7 implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise;
- 3.8 providing clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance;
- 3.9 retain records of written, electronic and verbal explanations from parents. If teachers receive verbal explanations from parents, they should record, sign and date the explanation;
- 3.10 alerting 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 within required timeframes (see section 5);
- 3.11 when nominated by the principal, liaise with external agencies, arrange referrals and coordinate involvement of the school with other services and agencies working with students. Nominated staff provide feedback about outcomes to the principal;

4 Principal Responsibilities:

The principal is responsible for ensuring that:

- 4.1 Students are enrolled consistent with the Catholic Education Office Sydney [Enrolment Policy](#).
- 4.2 Attendance records are maintained in a Catholic Education Office -approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of students.
- 4.3 All attendance records including details of transfers and exemptions are accessible to the Executive Director of Catholic Schools, Regional Consultant, or designated CEO officer and to the BOSTES Inspector.
- 4.4 The school regularly evaluates and addresses school attendance through the school plan.

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- 4.5 Principals must develop appropriate procedures to maintain accurate official records of attendance for each student. A Principal or delegated school executive must endorse this official record at regular intervals throughout the year. A suggested method is that a hard copy OR pdf of the electronic record is to be generated fortnightly. The principal or delegated school executive must endorse this copy, certifying its accuracy. (Certifying accuracy in a PDF can be shown in the file name or including a comment in the PDF using the 'comment' function.). Once signed, this copy becomes the official record of attendance and must not be amended. A school must be able to access archived records for individual students at any time.
- 4.6 Open communication on issues affecting student attendance is promoted with parents.
- 4.7 Effective strategies are in place to contact parents where there is a pattern of attendance causing concern or the parent has failed to provide a satisfactory explanation for an absence.
- 4.8 Interpreters and translated materials, including letters are available when communicating with parents from language backgrounds other than English in matters relating to school attendance.
- 4.9 School staff are trained to implement school attendance policies and procedures and that personnel with delegated responsibility for maintaining attendance records are supervised.
- 4.10 Staff record accurately the attendance of each student in each lesson when lessons are conducted in a number of locations.
- 4.11 A system is established for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours.
- 4.12 All cases of unsatisfactory attendance, including part day absences are investigated promptly and school based factors impacting on attendance are addressed.
- 4.13 Early identification of students at risk of developing poor school attendance patterns through strategies such as regular roll checks.
- 4.14 Attendance reports from roll checks are generated at least fortnightly and tabled at Learning Support / Well-being Team or attendance meetings for follow up by appropriate staff members.
- 4.15 Effective referral and support networks are established so that students whose attendance is identified as being of concern and their families can be connected to relevant services within the department and with local external agencies in discussion with parents. Appropriate staff members may be nominated to meet with parents, arrange referrals and to be the contact points for consultation and coordination of school involvement.
- 4.16 Communication, collaboration and information sharing occurs with other

services and agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions with students and families.

- 4.17 Any other child protection concerns underlying school attendance issues (including educational neglect) are managed consistent with the [CEO Sydney Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)

5 The responsibilities of Catholic Education Office Sydney.

The Executive Director of Catholic Schools is responsible for ensuring that

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Processes are in place to support principals prior to approval being given by the Regional Consultant and Education Officer: Compliance of compulsory school age participating in alternative education programs involving full or part day exemption from attendance at school.
- 5.3 Recommendations are made about the prosecution of cases of non-attendance or failure to enrol a child at school, in the first instance to the CEO Sydney through the Regional Consultant and Regional well-being Officer, Central Office personnel in Child protection and then the Catholic Education Commission, NSW.
- 5.4 Plans are implemented for the improvement of the attendance of students who are identified by schools as chronic non-attenders.

6 School Attendance Records Requirements

School attendance records must include:

- 6.1 A Register of Enrolments to be retained permanently.
- 6.2 Notes and records of verbal explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for **seven years** from the date of receipt; an Attendance Register (roll) to be retained for seven years.
- 6.3 In a case where a student has an accident necessitating an accident report, all attendance records should be retained until the year the student reaches the age of 25 years.
- 6.4 The student's attendance record detailing the number of absences each year must be retained on the student's file for seven years after the student has left. In the case of a student who has had an accident

necessitating an accident report, the record card should be retained until the student reaches the age of 25 years.

- 6.5 Records for Certificates of Exemption from attendance and enrolment must comply with requirements at Statement 1.4 of *Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*.

7. Attendance Registers (rolls)

7.1 Registering the attendance of students

- 7.1.1 Manual and electronic rolls must reflect the highest professional standards.
- 7.1.2 The Education Act (1990) (Section 24) requires that attendance registers (rolls) be maintained in a form approved by the Minister. Codes to be used on attendance registers are found at Appendix A. Additional codes must not be used. Supplementary comments regarding absences may be made in the 'notes' column, if required.
- 7.1.3 Attendance registers (rolls) must be maintained on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.
- 7.1.4 The exception method (marking absences only) is to be followed by all schools. Only the codes listed in the NSW Attendance Register Codes are to be used. School attendance must be recorded on the attendance register (roll) early in the school day.
- 7.1.5 Students involved in off-site activities endorsed by the school must not be marked as absent. Whenever a class is conducted at a site other than the school site, attendance must be recorded. In addition, schools are required to develop their own procedures to monitor attendance during the day. There may also be situations due to the nature of the school location or the attendance record of particular students where further attendance monitoring may need to be implemented.
- 7.1.6 Attendance information must be recorded on an electronic attendance register on a **daily basis**. Staff responsible for maintaining attendance registers must be acquainted with requirements of this document and correct procedures. The principal or delegate should countersign the register each fortnight. This becomes the formal record of attendance. (see 7.2.2)

7.2 Electronic attendance registers (rolls)

- 7.2.1 Codes to be used on attendance registers are found at Appendix A. Additional codes must not be used. Supplementary comments regarding absences may be made in the 'notes' column, if required.

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- 7.2.2 Schools must develop appropriate procedures to maintain accurate official records of attendance for each student. A Principal or delegated school executive must endorse this official record at regular intervals throughout the year. A suggested method is that a hard copy OR pdf of the electronic record is to be generated fortnightly. The principal or delegated school executive must endorse this copy, certifying its accuracy. (Certifying accuracy in a PDF can be shown in the file name or including a comment in the PDF using the 'comment' function.). Once signed, this copy becomes the official record of attendance and must not be amended. **A school must be able to access archived records for individual students at any time.**
- 7.2.3 In the case of late arrival or early departure, the precise times of arrival or departure must be recorded with the relevant attendance code.
- 7.2.4 Where an alteration is necessary on an electronic attendance register, a line is to be ruled through the existing hard copy entry and the correct entry made above. The electronic record must then also be amended. The principal should initial any changes. Note: Alterations only apply to errors in roll marking. (Alterations in a PDF can be shown by using the 'comment' function.).
- 7.2.5 The Attendance Register Code 'B' is to be used where a student is absent from the school site on official school business. This may include work experience, school sport (regional and state carnivals), and school excursions. 'B' is not an absence code and is not included as an absence for statistical purposes. (See Appendix A)

7.3 Special circumstance registers (rolls)

- 7.3.1 Attendance registers must be maintained each day the school is open with the exception of:
- a) days on which there is part or full day industrial action involving teachers
 - b) approved staff development days
 - c) other days in which all students are not expected to attend.
 - d) on days which the IT network is unavailable.
 - e) days on which the school is inaccessible due to natural occurrences such as fire or flood. Principals should consult with Catholic Education Office personnel prior to deciding that a school is inaccessible.
- 7.3.2 Special circumstance registers are to be maintained on days as outlined in 7.3.1. They should:
- specify the dates and times of the variation
 - indicate the reason for the variation
 - list students attending on that day
 - be signed by the teacher maintaining the register
 - be permanently attached to the main attendance registers (rolls).

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- 7.3.3. Electronic attendance registers (rolls) should have the facility to display a 'staff development day' (or similar) message on staff development days. A similar notation must be made on hard copies/PDF of electronic attendance registers regarding other reasons for maintaining a special circumstance register (e.g. industrial action or school closure due to fire or flood).
- 7.3.4 Absences on these days are not to be recorded or counted as absences for statistical purposes.
- 7.3.5 Students can attend a specialist education setting separate to a mainstream school on a sessional or full-time basis:
- Such settings include **CEO approved** tutorial centres and programs, behaviour schools, juvenile justice and hospital schools. Where the mainstream school principal verifies that a student is attending a specialist education setting, the mainstream school can mark the attendance register with the Attendance Register Code '**H**' to denote student attending a specialist education setting on a sessional or full-time basis.
 - This does not refer to private coaching or tutoring even when it is delivered at a 'centre'.
 - Where the duration of attendance at a specialist education setting is more than four days in duration, the specialist education setting should use the special circumstance register to record student attendance (as per Statement 7.3.2). The special circumstance register should be returned to the student's mainstream school, preferably weekly.

Notes –

- the code, 'H,' would be used rarely and applicable only for students attending a CEO Sydney approved behaviour school, juvenile justice centre, and/or hospital school
- use 'F' for external tutorial centres and programs that are school authorised. The principal may also use the codes, 'L', 'A' according to the particular circumstances of the absence
- neither code, 'H' or 'F', is applicable with regard to distance education; students who are enrolled in distance education cannot also be enrolled in a non-government school; students who access distance education must be removed from the roll.

7.4 Security of attendance registers (rolls)

- 7.4.1 Registers (rolls) must be stored in a secure location within the school.
- 7.4.2 Copies only of the register of daily attendance should be stored offsite at regular intervals.
- 7.4.3 Registers (rolls) must not be removed from the school premises unless removal is warranted by exceptional circumstances such as fire or flood. Teachers must not take attendance registers home.
- 7.4.4 The loss of an attendance register (roll) is a serious occurrence and must be reported immediately to relevant Catholic Education Office personnel.

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A new register (roll) should be commenced immediately. Attendance information referring to absences on occasions prior to the commencement of the new register must not be included.

- 7.4.5 A notice signed by the principal must be attached to the new register (roll). The notice must state the period for which the original register was a record of student attendance (e.g. 1 February - 30 March, 2015) and the date from which the replacement register (roll) commences.
- 7.4.6 At the end of each school year the principal must ensure that the attendance register (roll) and attached special circumstance registers are preserved as a complete record of students' absences for that year.**
- 7.4.7 The attendance register (Roll) must be stored and archived in either paper or PDF format, independent of electronic software for legacy purposes. A school must be able to produce past records of attendance no-matter what software is being used.**

7.5 School sport rolls

- 7.5.1 School sport is an integral part of the curriculum. Principals must ensure adequate attendance monitoring practices at school sport to ensure the safety of students.
- 7.5.2 Specific sports rolls must be marked at the beginning and conclusion of each sports session. Attendance information contained on sports rolls must be transferred to the attendance register (roll). Absentees must be followed up promptly to ensure that the school's procedures for managing non-attendance are implemented.

7.6 Students participating in flexible timetables

- 7.6.1 The attendance of students participating in flexible timetables must be recorded in the same manner as other students. However, scheduled days or periods of non-attendance must not be marked as absences. The symbol noted in the Attendance Register Codes, 'F', regarding timetabled days or periods of non-attendance should be used.
- 7.6.2 The scheduled non-attendance of students participating in flexible timetables is not recorded as an absence for statistical purposes.
- 7.6.3 In the case of students participating in course work or school activities away from the school site (such as work placements), the principal or an authorised person should obtain an accurate record of student attendance at other sites at the conclusion of each school week.

7.7 Overseas exchange students

- 7.7.1 Students participating in accredited overseas student exchange programs for periods of up to 12 months are to remain on the school attendance register (roll). They are not to be marked absent for the duration of their exchange. In general, students on overseas exchanges are to be considered present. Schools should use the attendance code 'B' – 'The student is absent from the school on official school business'.
- 7.7.2 Please note that **an Application for Exemption is NOT required**.
- 7.7.3 A note is to be attached to the attendance register (roll) regarding the place and duration of the exchange. For statistical purposes, students on overseas exchange are to be considered present.

7.8 Kindergarten Staggered Date start

- 7.8.1. **Where Kindergarten students have a 'staggered start' to the school year**, the following advice is provided regarding marking the Attendance Roll. This advice does not apply when all Kindergarten students commence school on the one date.

The Roll Code 'F' would be used for days where the Principal has informed parents that the Kindergarten children are not required to attend school.

An example of the practical application of this is:

Kinder students	<u>Wednesday</u> Roll Marked as	<u>Thursday</u> Roll Marked as	<u>Friday</u> Roll Marked as
Group A (Expected to attend Wed only.)	X	a-F	a-F
Group B (Expected to attend Thurs only.)	XaF	Usual Roll marking	a-F
Group C (Expected to attend Fri only.)	XaF	a-F	Usual Roll marking

- 7.8.2. **Where there is an initial period at the beginning of the year where Kindergarten students are not grouped in their final Roll Class**, the following advice is provided:
- Students will need to be placed in a Roll Class Group from Day 1
 - A teacher needs to be assigned to this Roll Group for Roll marking
 - At the time that the students are placed in their final Roll Class, individual students can be moved as required to the appropriate Class group.
 - When you change the students to their "new classes" please ensure that this occurs after the Roll has been marked for one full week and before a Roll has been generated for the following week.

7.9 Students who are suspended from school in accordance with Catholic Education Office Sydney [Student Management: Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Policy and Procedures](#).

- 7.9.1 The appropriate Attendance Register Code symbol for out-of-school suspension ('E') is to be used to denote the absences of students whilst on suspension. This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the suspension and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the suspension period. In such cases, the student's absence would be unjustified and recorded accordingly. (See Attendance Register Code 'A'). Students who are on in-school suspension are counted as present.
- 7.9.2 The absence of students who are suspended are counted as absences for statistical purposes.
- 7.9.3 **E Code** (Suspended) to be used until further investigation is complete and a behaviour improvement plan has been discussed with parents. If part of the plan includes partial absence the [Application for Part Day Exemption short term alternative Educational program form](#) should be completed. Regional Consultant and Student Wellbeing Coordinator must be informed.

7.10 Students who are exempted from school

- 7.10.1 The appropriate symbol for exemption is to be used when the absences are the result of students being exempted from attending school (see Attendance Register Code 'M'). This symbol is to be used only for the duration of the exemption and must not be applied to students who fail to return to school following the exemption period.
- 7.10.2 The absences of students who have been exempted from school are not counted as absences for statistical purposes.
- 7.10.3 The register code 'M' is **NOT** to be used for travel within Australia or overseas.

7.11 Yr 12 Student Attendance Roll Marking:

- 7.11.1 Year 12 students are considered to be enrolled as a student until they have completed their last HSC exam. (Therefore, the last exam date for **each** student is the last date of each student's enrolment.)
- 7.11.2 The Register of Attendance (Roll) must be kept for each student until the completion of each student's last HSC exam.
- 7.11.3 During the period when students are on approved study leave – and during the HSC exam period – the Roll would be marked with

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'Attendance Code F': 'Student participating in flexible timetable not present because they are not required to be at school'.

7.11.4 In the case of a student not attending school on the date when required to be present for a HSC exam, then the appropriate Roll Code would be marked to replace 'Code F' (e.g. Code S: Sickness/Medical Appointment).

7.12 A student's name must be removed from an attendance register (roll) if:

7.12.1 The student enrolls in another school.

7.12.2 Advice has been received from parents that the student is enrolled in another registered school, or is registered with the Board of Studies NSW for home schooling/ Distance Education. Principals who are concerned about information provided to them by parents should request the name of the other school or evidence of home schooling/ Distance Education so that a check can be made. The status of the student should not be changed (i.e. the student should not be marked as 'Left') until confirmation of enrolment is received from the enrolling school

7.12.2 The student has been expelled or excluded from the school in accordance with Catholic Education Office policy.

7.12.3 Students who are still of compulsory schooling age and have successfully completed Year 10, and there is documented evidence that they are engaged in full-time study, employment or a combination of both. 'Full-time' is defined as an average of 25 hours per week or more.

7.12.4 Students who have moved out of New South Wales and have not applied for a cross-border enrolment in New South Wales. Information should be requested from the parent regarding the interstate residential address, or name of school in which the parent intends to enrol the student so that confirmation of enrolment can be sought.

7.12.5 Students who have moved out of New South Wales and the school have received an Interstate Student Data Transfer Note from the student's new school.

7.12.6 If a student is of compulsory school age, and has been marked as 'absent' for a period exceeding 10 consecutive school days where the school is open for instruction, and there has been no communication with the school, the school should contact the Catholic Education Office (Regional Student Wellbeing Coordinator) for advice on further action. Prior to reporting the matter, all appropriate checks should be made (See Section 7)

- 7.12.7 If a student is no longer of compulsory school age and has not attended school for more than 15 consecutive school days where the school is open for instruction, for reasons not known to the school, their whereabouts are unknown and the family has not responded to attempts by the school to communicate with them, the school should remove the student from the attendance register and report the matter to the Catholic Education Office (Regional Student Wellbeing Coordinator) for advice on further action.
- 7.12.8 If a student's name has been removed from the roll because 'their whereabouts are unknown', absences from the last day of attendance at school are not included as absences for statistical purposes. The roll should be amended to reflect this.

8. Enrolment and Attendance

- 8.1 Students may attend a NSW Catholic systemic school if they are:
- enrolled at that school or
 - attending in the short-term.
- 8.2 Requirements and procedures for enrolling students in NSW Catholic systemic schools are located in the [CEO Sydney, Enrolment Policy](#).

8.3 Short-term attendance of students

- 8.3.1 Students may be enrolled in one school only at any given time. However, for a variety of reasons, a student enrolled at a NSW Catholic systemic school may need to attend another school for a short period of time.
- 8.3.2 Short-term attendance arrangements should not unduly disrupt programs in the host school. They should not result in any reorganisation of classes or timetables.
- 8.3.3 Prior to agreeing to the short-term attendance of a student, the principal of the host school should gather the necessary information to permit a risk assessment to be conducted. The objective of the assessment should be the maintenance of a safe learning environment for staff and students.

9. Absence guidelines.

- 9.1 The principal or an authorised person will undertake all reasonable measures to contact parents promptly concerning an unexplained absence. Contact with the parent may be made either by telephone, email or SMS text message, if a pre-arranged secure address has been provided.
- 9.2 The principal or an authorised person will ensure that where absences are

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recorded within seven days of the occurrence of the absence, the hard copy roll should not be amended. (See Statement 7.2.5)

10. Types of Absences

- 10.1 **sick leave** to students whose absences are satisfactorily explained as being due to illness (Attendance Register Code 'S')
- 10.2 an **exemption** from school attendance for periods totalling up to **100 days in a 12 month period** for any one student (Attendance Register Code 'M')
- 10.3 an exemption from school attendance for students wishing to participate in employment in the entertainment industry for periods totalling up to **100 days in a 12 month period** for any one student (See Appendix A: Attendance Register Code 'M')

***Note: For large scale and long running productions applications for exemptions for periods over 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student should be forwarded to the Executive Director of Catholic Schools.*

- 10.4 an exemption from school attendance for students participating in **elite Sports or elite Arts events** for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student. For students participating in elite arts or elite sporting programs who are required to attend regular activities/training during school time an *Application for Exemption from Attendance/Enrolment at School* must be completed and submitted to the principal for approval prior to commencing the program.
(See Appendix A: Attendance Register Code 'M')

Accredited **elite sports programs include **national and international sports organisations** which run camps for athletes and national sports squads in which students have been selected to participate. They also include talent identification programs run by the New South Wales Sport and Recreation.*

*** **Elite Arts** is defined as an opportunity for a student to participate in an event or program that is beyond the gifted and talented opportunities that CEO offers. Where a principal is unsure if a program meets the definition they should contact Education Officer: Compliance.*

- 10.5 **part-day exemption** from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student (Attendance Register Codes 'M' and 'Pa'). (See Section 2.2 of *Guidelines for Exemption from Attendance at NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*).
- 10.6 Principals may record absences using the '**L**' Code for students of compulsory school age who have provided an explanation of the absence which has been accepted by the principal. Additional days for students not of compulsory school age may be recorded at the principal's discretion. This may be due to:

- a) **Holidays/travel** during school time (**If exceeding 10 days requires a separate application for leave form (from 10 – 100 days) must be completed prior to the travel dates)** (Further information in section 11)
- b) misadventure or unforeseen event
- c) participation in special events not related to the school
- d) domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- e) Attendance at funerals
- f) Recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions

11. Managing applications for extended leave (Travel or holiday)

- 11.1 From the beginning of 2015, Family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the *Exemption from School-Procedures*. Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.
- 11.2 From time to time parents/caregivers may approach the school to seek permission for their child to travel during school term for periods of time.
- 11.3 Travel is considered to be domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reasons.
- 11.4 A Certificate of Extended Leave -Travel should not be issued where the principal is aware that the student has been the subject of contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit or a Community Services (Family and Community Services) report and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.
- 11.5 A principal should not accept a reason for travel during school term if it is not in the best interests of the students' educational, social and participation reasons, which should be specified on the application.
- 11.6 Principals should consult with parents about the intention of the travel and in the case of family holidays, encourage parents to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.
- 11.7 Principals should ensure that parents/caregivers understand any implications on student academic progress as a result of the extended leave.
- 11.8 Principals should also ensure that parents/caregivers understand any implications on their child's academic year/class placement on their return from the extended leave.

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- 11.9 Part 2, 4(b) of the NSW Education Act (1990) states that *the education of a child is primarily the responsibility of the child's parents*. It should not therefore be an expectation of parents/caregivers that the school provide work for the student during the time of the extended leave.
- 11.10 Where the permission sought is for **less than 10 days**, and the principal accepts the reason provided for the absence, the principal can record the code 'L' in the roll. An Absence note/email/phonecall is required.
- 11.11 Where the permission sought is for **10 or more days**, and the principal accepts the reason provided for the absence, the principal can also record the code 'L' in the roll but must ask also parents to complete the *Application for Extended Leave – Travel* (Form A1). In completing the application, parents/caregivers must specify the reason for the application for extended leave. The Principal informs the parent that if the Application is accepted, the absences will be recorded as "L" –Leave. Special conditions may be associated with the Certificate.
- 11.12 Examples of conditions for lengthy leave may include (but not limited to): completion of set tasks, loss of marks due to missed assessments, alternative assessments, assessment of the student to ascertain which grade to return to etc...These should be discussed with the parent prior to issuing the certificate.
- 11.13 Principals should request travel documentation, such as travel itinerary or e-ticket, and ensure this is attached to the Application.
- 11.14 Principals should ensure that parents are assisted with the completion of the Application and provide a translation service if required.
- 11.15 Where the travel period **exceeds one school term**, the principal should contact the Regional Consultant to discuss the particular circumstance and the resultant outcome.
- 11.16 When travels period **exceeds one school term** access to Distance Education or enrolment in another school **must** be considered. Refer to *Distance Education: Enrolment Procedures 2014* (Discuss with the CEO Sydney Education Officer: Compliance).
- 11.11 Principals may decline to accept a parent's Application for Extended Leave Travel. In this case the parent must be advised in writing. Refer to example letter *-Declining an Application for a Certificate of Extended Leave -Travel*.
- 11.12 If a student or students do not return on the date specified, the principal

must ensure the parents are contacted to establish the whereabouts of the student. If contact is not established then the principal should contact the Regional Consultant and Well-Being Officer and follow processes associated with an Application for Home School Liaison Program support. Record the absence as 'unjustified'. (Attendance Register Code 'A') from the due date of return.

- 11.13 On accepting a parent's Application, a Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel must be issued. The original certificate will be provided to the parent and a copy of the certificate placed in each student's record.
- 11.14 An Application for Extended Leave form, Certificate of Extended Leave and example letter for declining an application are available in the appendices of this document and on the CEO Sydney Intranet.
- Application for Extended Leave (Travel or Holiday)
 - Certificate of Extended Leave
 - Sample Letter

12 Non- Acceptance of explanation for an absence

- 12.1 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. A "A" Code is used for an unjustified absence
- 12.2 **Frequent absences due to illness**
- Where frequent absences are explained as being due to illness consultation with parents must occur regarding the health care needs of the child.
 - Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation when absences explained as being due to sickness are frequent or prolonged. Medical certificates are not sacrosanct documents. Where principals have concerns about medical certificates being produced for absences, they can ask the parent to request that the doctor write on the certificate the statement 'this child is unfit for school' with specified dates included.
 - 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'. (Attendance Register Code 'A')

13. Common Leave Pass

- 13.1 Catholic systemic schools must implement a leave pass system for students who wish to leave school premises during normal school hours.

The procedures for granting a leave pass to students are to be managed by the school.

14. Students Attending Lessons/Training Outside School During School Hours

- 14.1 Involvement in private lessons, such as ballet and music classes, sports training (excepting Elite sports) conducted outside the school during school hours may not be conducive to the effective operation of the school or to the education of the student concerned. Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities will usually be limited to outside school hours.
- 14.2 Where attendance at a private lesson during school hours is of exceptional importance such as sitting examinations, principals may use their discretion in justifying the absence. This provision must not be used on a regular basis. The code to be used is "L".
- 14.3 If parents withdraw their children from school for private lessons or training, an unjustified absence should be recorded and dealt with in the usual manner.
- 14.4 This section of the document does not apply to School Certificate or Higher School Certificate courses conducted outside school or participation in work placement or TAFE based courses.

15. Student's whose whereabouts are unknown.

- 15.1 Some students may not be attending school because they may have moved or enrolled elsewhere, and their parents have not notified the school. In some cases the student may not have enrolled in another school.
- 15.2 Prior to the student's name being removed from the Attendance Register (roll) a number of actions need to be confirmed by the principal.
- 15.3 Where the family or student is missing (or their destination is unknown) and there are concerns for their safety, welfare or wellbeing, discuss with the Regional Consultant and Regional Student Wellbeing Coordinator and if need be report the matter to their Local Police.
- 15.4 The Regional Student Wellbeing Coordinator will assist you and if need be lodge a notification with the relevant DEC personnel.

16. Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School

- 16.1 Parents are responsible for the regular attendance of students at school. Principals and school staff, in consultation with students and their parents, will usually be able to resolve problems of non-attendance. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the Education Act (1990) the welfare of

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the student must be the focus of this consultation.

- 16.2 The most effective means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance includes sound attendance monitoring practices and regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents promptly. Early telephone contact with parents is one means of achieving this.
- 16.3 A child is considered to have an unsatisfactory school attendance when they have:
- regular absences without explanation (despite follow-up from the school)
 - regular absences and explanations provided by parents are not accepted by the principal, or
 - an extended period of absence without an explanation or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. An extended period of absence may be consecutive or irregular patterns of non-attendance.
- 16.4 Resolution of attendance difficulties may require more targeted school based strategies including:
- meeting with the student and parents
 - referral to the school's Learning and Support Team to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and support needs for the student
 - development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents
 - engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality
 - referral to the school counsellor
 - requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies
 - use of interpreters and translated materials
 - seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them.
- 16.5 The school should identify if other agencies are involved with the family and liaise with them when a student's attendance is of concern and where it is determined that the issues impacting on attendance are outside of the role of the school to address in isolation. The school may have a role in working collaboratively with the services to engage the family. Family case discussions should be attended by school representatives if the issues relate to students whose attendance is a concern. Meetings and interviews at the school may also involve representatives from support agencies. They may be initiated by school, other agency or departmental staff. Schools may also refer families to services, in discussion with families.
- 16.6 If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful in resolving attendance difficulties the principal can request support from the Regional Well-Being Officer. The Regional Student Wellbeing Coordinator will assist schools in making an application to the Home School Liaison Program and submitting the application to the local program manager for consideration. Parents should be

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advised by Letter 1: *Principal to parent advising of Attendance concerns*. Copies of communication with parents and documented strategies that the school has implemented to address student attendance issues are to documented..

- 16.7 In managing attendance concerns consideration should be given to whether the pattern of unsatisfactory attendance may on its own or with other risk factors impact on the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the student. Contact with the CWU should be made or a report to the Child Protection Helpline if they believe the student is at suspected risk of significant harm.
- 16.8 Legislative amendments effective in January 2010 increased the range of options available to deal with unsatisfactory attendance and non-enrolment at school.
- A. Compulsory Schooling Conferences are conferences directed by either the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities (or delegate) for the purpose of ensuring a student is provided with compulsory education. It aims to bring together the parents, student, a member of the school executive nominated by the principal, and where appropriate, relevant agencies to help parents to resolve the underlying issues that have led to the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Conferences are convened by an authorised person appointed by the Children's Court or the Secretary of the Department of Education and Communities. Students under the age of 12 are not required to attend compulsory schooling conferences
 - B. Undertakings are written agreed commitments regarding action that will be taken to resolve the student's unsatisfactory attendance. Undertakings can be obtained with parents at any time and independently of the conferencing process. Undertakings are also a key outcome of a compulsory schooling conference and are often given by conference participants in addition to parents. They can be entered into evidence in any future court action
 - C. Compulsory Schooling Orders. Application for a Compulsory Schooling Order to the Children's Court can be considered where previous measures have been unsuccessful in improving student attendance. It is an extension of efforts aimed at addressing any welfare issues deemed to be adversely affecting a child's attendance at school. The Application to the Children's Court can also include an application for a Court Ordered Attendance Conference
 - D. Prosecution in the Local Court is only undertaken when all other avenues have been exhausted, or where there is no likelihood of an Application to the Children's Court rectifying unsatisfactory attendance.

* Further information and guidelines are available *in Section 6 Legal Action Guidelines* and *Section 7: Habitual Absence Guidelines* of the *Student Attendance folder*.

** *All serious cases of habitual absence should be reported to your Regional Consultant and Student Wellbeing Coordinator.*

17 Role of the Police

- 17.1 Police officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act (1990).
- 17.2 During school hours, an authorised person or police officer may approach a student who is apparently of compulsory school age, and who is apparently not in attendance at school. They may request the student's name and home address and the name and address of his/her school. They may approach a student who is accompanied by an adult.
- 17.3 A police officer or authorised person, in the company of a police officer may accompany the student to his or her home, or to the school, to verify the information provided.
- 17.4 Under this authorisation, police have no power of arrest, detention or physical restraint.
- 17.8 Police and Department of Education personnel conduct regular Joint Anti-Truancy initiatives (JATS) targeting truancy.

18 Definitions

Compulsory School Age	See Section 21B of the NSW Education Act (1990)
Explained/justified absence	A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has been accepted by the principal.
Explained/unjustified absence	A parent has provided an explanation of the student's absence which has not been accepted by the principal.
Parent	Includes a carer or other person having the care or custody of a child or young person.
Parent condoned absence	When a parent or carer causes a student to be absent from school without acceptable reason.
Truancy	The absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent or carer.
Unexplained absence	A student absence where a parent provides no reason for a student's non-attendance.
Unexplained/unjustified absence	A parent has not provided an explanation of the student's absence within seven days of the occurrence of the absence

Appendix A: 2015 Attendance Register Codes

Definitions

Only the following attendance register codes **must** be used to record the:

- explanation of student absence, and/or
- variation in student attendance.

Note: The symbol X is to be used for the first and last day that the student attended for each term.	
Symbols to be used where students are absent from school	
Symbol	Meaning
a	The student was absent on that day.
Pa	The Student was late or was absent for part of a day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded
Attendance Register Codes	
Symbols to be used for explanation of student absence	
Symbol	Meaning
A	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.
S	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a medical certificate is provided or - the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.
L	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 - travel in Australia and overseas - recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.
E	The student was suspended from school

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Attendance Register Codes Symbols to be used to record a variation in attendance (not counted as an absence for statistical purposes)	
Symbol	Meaning
M	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
F	The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required to be at school. This could include participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HSC Pathways Program - Best Start Assessments - Trial or HSC examinations - VET courses
B	I. The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work experience - school sport (regional and state carnivals) - school excursions - student exchange
H^{1, 2}	II. The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis. III. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tutorial centre and programs - behaviour schools (CEO Approved) - juvenile justice - hospital schools - distance education

1. Note: In most cases this code will only be used by Department of Education and Communities schools, with the exception of students from non-government schools attending hospital schools.
2. Note: **For Catholic Schools use “F” not “H” for students attending external tutorial centres and programs that are school authorised.**

Appendix B: Attendance Scenarios

Like any set of rules, there are some attendance situations that do not fit neatly into one box. Therefore, in an attempt to make it clearer the following scenarios may assist. If you have any questions please refer them to your Regional Consultant or Education Officer: Compliance. Some cases may need further review.

Scenario	CEO recommendation
Maximum length of leave (no longer prescribed)	Generally, When travel / leave period exceeds 10 weeks access to Distance Education or enrolment in another school must be considered. Therefore enrolment at the current school would cease
Student exposed to a communicable disease(e.g. German measles), but is either not vaccinated or not showing symptoms and/or Teacher is pregnant and/or unvaccinated students/teacher are in the class	<p>The parent is not required to apply for an exemption in cases of the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under section 42D of the Public Health Act 1991. The principal may grant a <i>Certificate of Exemption</i> for the period determined by the medical officer of health.</p> <p>Principal to inform the Regional Consultant.</p> <p>CODE M</p> <p>Notifiable Diseases</p>
Student requested to not attend school due to ongoing behavioural issues that need further investigation by health professionals.	<p>E Code (Suspended) to be used until further investigation is complete and a behaviour improvement plan has been discussed with parents. If part of the plan includes partial absence the Application for Part Day Exemption short term alternative Educational program form should be completed.</p> <p>Regional Consultant and Regional Student Well-Being Coordinator must be informed.</p> <p>Code Pa/M is to be used for the duration of the program on those days the student only attends part-day. Students may be granted part day exemptions for periods of time not exceeding the equivalent number of full school days</p> <p>Code Pa/M or H is used on the days when the student is attending a CEO, Sydney approved Centre: Rivendell, Arndell (Coral Tree) or Redbank. The centre should send the home school special circumstances register once a week.</p>
Student does not attend school due to ongoing health issues/treatment	<p>Pa/S or S Code used unless an Application <i>for Part Day Exemption short term alternative Educational program form</i> is completed.</p> <p>For part day exemption due to the requirements of a health care</p>

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	<p>plan', the principal should seek the parents' consent to obtain information from health professionals responsible for the health care of the child.</p> <p>Regional Consultant and Regional Student Well-Being Coordinator must be informed.</p>
Elite Sport	<p>Accredited elite sports programs include national and international sports organisations which run camps for athletes and national sports squads in which students have been selected to participate. They also include talent identification programs run by the New South Wales Sports and Recreation Includes competition Events.</p> <p>For students participating in elite arts or elite sporting programs who are required to attend regular activities/training during school time an <i>Application for Exemption from Attendance/Enrolment at School</i> must be completed and submitted to the principal for approval prior to commencing the program. It must meet the "Elite" Definition and be supported by the State or National Sporting body</p> <p>Exemption from school attendance for students participating in elite arts or elite sporting events up to 100 days in a twelve month period for anyone student.</p> <p>Where programs run for more than 5 school days, applicants should be provided with an educational program under this section</p> <p>Code M or Pa/M</p>
Elite Arts	<p>Elite Arts is defined as an opportunity for a student to participate in an event or program that is beyond the gifted and talented opportunities that CEO offers. Where a principal is unsure if a program meets the definition they should contact Education Officer: Compliance.</p> <p>Exemption from school attendance for students participating in elite arts or elite sporting events up to 100 days in a twelve month period for anyone student.</p> <p>For students participating in elite arts or elite sporting programs who are required to attend regular activities/training during school time an <i>Application for Exemption from Attendance/Enrolment at School</i> must be completed and submitted to the principal for approval prior to commencing the program. The Program must meet the Criteria of being "elite"</p> <p>Code M or Pa/M</p>

Appendix C:

Application for Extended Leave – (Including travel) (Leave over 10 days.)

**Form
A.1**

Information: From the beginning of 2015, Family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the *Exemption from School-Procedures*. Travel outside of vacation period is now counted as an absence for statistical purposes.

NOTE: Part A is to be completed by the Student's Parent/Caregiver and returned to their child's school principal. Separate applications are to be completed for each school if siblings do not attend the same school

PART A: STUDENT DETAILS

Please complete table below with details of all students associated with the period of travel:

FAMILY NAME	GIVEN NAME	DOB	AGE	GRADE	SRN
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			
		/ /			

Student Address		Postcode:	
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School Name:	
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Details of extended leave:

Start Date of leave		End date of leave	
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Number of School Days absent:	
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Reason for Travel (Including why this travel is occurring during school time)	
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Relevant travel documentation such as an e ticket or itinerary (in the case of non-flight bound travel within Australia only) must be attached to this application.

DETAILS OF PRIOR EXEMPTIONS/EXTENDED LEAVE

Start Date of leave		End date of leave	
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Number of School Days absent:	
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Certificate of previous Exemption/Extended Leave-Travel attached (Please tick): Yes No

PARENT DETAILS:

Family Name		Given Name	
Address:		Post code:	
Telephone Number		Relationship to Student	

As the parent and applicant, I hereby apply for a *Certificate of Extended Leave* and understand my child will be granted a period of extended leave upon acceptance by the principal of the reason provided.

I understand that if the application is accepted: I am responsible for his/her supervision during the period of extended leave. The provided period of extended leave is limited to the period indicated the provided period of extended leave is subject to the conditions listed on the *Certificate of Extended*.

For leave greater than 50 days (10 weeks of a school term): When travel / leave period exceeds 10 weeks access to Distance Education or enrolment in another school must be considered.

Leave-Travel

The period of extended leave will count towards my child's absences from school I declare the information provided in this application is to the best of my knowledge and belief; accurate and complete. I recognise that should statements in this application later prove to be false or misleading any decision made as a result of this application may be reversed. I further recognise that a failure to comply with any condition set out in the *Application for Extended Leave-Travel* may result in the provided period of extended leave being cancelled.

Signature of parent/caregiver:

Date: / /

Once you have completed and signed this application please return this form to the school Principal

Appendix D:

C.1 Certificate for Extended Leave (L) –APPLICATION FOR LEAVE ACCEPTED.

Please attach the Application to this Certificate. Parent receives the original and a copy is kept in the student's file.

I accept this Application for Extended leave

Reason for providing the period of extended leave:

Conditions applicable to providing the period of extended leave:

It has been explained to the parent of the above mentioned student/s that they are responsible for his/her supervision during the provided period of extended leave.

The parent understands that the period of extended leave is limited to the period indicated and acknowledges that the provided period of extended leave is subject to the conditions listed.

Principal name: _____ Principal signature: _____ Date: _/ _/ _

This certificate has been issued without alteration and must be produced when requested by police or other authorised attendance officers.

Appendix E:

D.1 Declining an Application for Extended Leave

Please attach the Application to this Certificate. Parent receives the original and a copy is kept in the student's file.

Dear _____,

You recently applied for a *Certificate of Extended Leave –Travel* for your child/children. *Certificates* are provided when it has been clearly demonstrated by the parent that the leave is necessary or desirable and that alternatives to providing leave have been considered. Further, the providing of leave must be in the student's best interests in the short and long term.

Your application has been considered. On closer examination I find there are insufficient reasons and I am not able to provide leave at this time. I am not satisfied that providing a period of extended leave is in _____ best interest.

Please be aware that any absences not accepted by a principal will be marked as A -Absent (unexplained/unjustified) on the school's attendance register.

I encourage you to contact the school on school's phone number to make an appointment with me if you wish to discuss this application further.

You have the right to appeal this decision if you consider that correct procedures have not been followed or that an unfair decision has been made.

Principal's Name

Principal

Insert date