



## Purpose

Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) schools are committed to educating students in a community of faith. The educational endeavour is to foster children's development as an expression of God's grace. Every child is held in God's infinite tenderness, and He is present in each of their lives.

The Bishops' Mandate states: *The Catholic schools' concept of education should be the development of (students) from within, freeing them from that conditioning which would prevent them from becoming fully integrated human beings. The school must begin from the principle that its educational program is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.* Attendance is conceptualised within the context of CECWA's *Strategic Directions 2019 – 2023* and, specifically, the Guiding Principles which provide a framework for attendance policy and interventions.

Central to our identity as a Christ-centred community are our partnerships with families, parishes and schools. Attendance is supported through strong relationships and effective communication with these partners.

Most importantly, in terms of attendance, the most important factor is that schools should be places where young people want to be.

Sources of Authority	
CECWA Policy	CECWA's Strategic Directions 2019 – 2023 CEWA Student Attendance Resources (June 2021) Student Attendance Directives
Executive Directive	

## 1. Scope

### Students, Teachers, Parents and Caregivers, External Agencies

Absence can be reduced when schools work with families and communities to build a culture of going to school and addressing barriers to prevent absenteeism. Parents and families are essential partners in promoting good attendance because they have the bottom-line responsibility to make sure their children get to school every day. They have a responsibility to set expectations for good attendance and to monitor absences.



**Parents can:**

- ✓ Make sure their child gets to school every day
- ✓ Alert schools to barriers that keep their children from attending
- ✓ Work with school to monitor absence

To do this, parents need to be well informed about the importance of attendance. Epstein and Sheldon from John Hopkins University found that certain parent engagement practices contribute to improving daily attendance. These include:

- ✓ Orienting parents on school policies and expectation on attendance
- ✓ Provide parents with a school contact person
- ✓ Communicate often to provide all families with information on the importance of attendance
- ✓ Reward students for excellent and/or improved attendance
- ✓ Work closely with family and outside agencies (if appropriate) to reduce chronic absence

There are some key principles to engaging parents on attendance:

- ✓ Engage families early – starting early sets good habits for attendance
- ✓ Establish a positive relationship
- ✓ Communicate clear expectations and support
- ✓ Check for understanding e.g. different cultural groups or ESL
- ✓ Work from strengths
- ✓ Offer support when needed

Parent/carers own attitudes and experiences in school can influence their attitudes and actions with their own children. Inviting parents/carers to school social events, non-threatening parent evenings and so on can help to build a parent's confidence in their child's school.

## 2. Guidelines

St Joseph's Primary School is required to keep accurate attendance records for all its students. This includes taking attendance. Attendance must be recorded by teaching staff at least:

- *twice per day for primary and specialist schools*

The roll will need to be marked in SEQTA by 9:00am each morning. This will then allow office staff to complete the morning attendance process and send SMS messages out to parents by 9:15am.

- *If you have been advised verbally by a caregiver that their child/children are going to be absent, please ask them to complete the yellow absence note and record on SEQTA. If they have/or have not completed this, please advise the office of the absence details so that the SMS message is not sent out to parents who have previously advised the school of the child's absence.*



## *Attendance and Reengagement Guidelines*

- *If the office is advised of an absence in person by a parent/caregiver, they will ask the parents to complete a yellow slip. This will be placed in your pigeonhole for entry by the classroom teacher onto SEQTA and filed in your attendance folder.*
- *If the school receives a phone call to advise of an absence, depending on the time of day, office staff will either post on teams or advise teachers verbally.*
- *If parents advise the school of an absence via email or a return SMS, this will be printed off and place in your pigeonhole for entry onto SEQTA and filing in your attendance folder.*
- *If a child arrives late to school (and was signed in at the office) office staff will amend the absence status for you.*
- *Any Absence Notes received from parents will be handed onto the classroom teacher for teacher entry into SEQTA and filing in your attendance folder.*
- *If a child is collected during school hours all parents will be asked to complete the blue 'Free to Go' Form. Office staff will come to the classroom and collect the child. This form can then be used to record the absence and be filed in the attendance folder.*

### **Attendance Folder**

- Each Classroom has an attendance Folder. All attendance and corresponding notes are to be recorded in this folder at the end of each week. This file needs to be accessible to be viewed at any times and forms part of the physical school record of attendance.

Although all school staff are vital in supporting regular student attendance, the principal is responsible for:

- *Keeping accurate attendance records for every child enrolled in the school; these can be stored electronically but must be able to be reproduced in written form.*
- *Maintaining records for the appropriate period of time under the School Education Regulations 2000.*
- *Managing alternate attendance arrangements.*
- *Implementing plans and strategies to encourage regular attendance.*



## *Attendance and Reengagement Guidelines*

Records must include:

- *If the student was physically present or not.*
- *If the student was attending a different approved activity (the teacher running that activity must also record attendance).*
- *Any reasons given for an absence.*
- *If the reason for the absence is reasonable (see examples).*
- *A flag for unexplained absences (removed if a reason is given later).*
- *Information about any unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes.*
- *A mark for half-day attendance if the student is present for at least two hours of instruction.*

**Authorised absence (EXPLAINED)** – A principal can record an absence as 'Authorised' if there has been a reasonable explanation for a student's absence.

A reasonable excuse for the purposes of explaining a school absence can include:

- *medical or dental appointments*
- *bereavement or attendance at a funeral, including Sorry Business*
- *illnesses and accidents*
- *unforeseen and unexplained circumstances*
- *compliance with another law that results in the child's absence*
- *The child is receiving distance education through a registered school*
- *The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment*
- *The child has been suspended*
- *The child is attending or observing a religious event, culture observance or obligation.*

**Unauthorised absence (UNEXPLAINED)** – A principal can record an absence as 'Unauthorised' when there has been no reasonable explanation provided for the absence. If a reason is given to the principal and it is not approved, then the school will notify the parent/carer in writing. In general, it is expected that these absences would not be excused:

- *The parent did not seek approval beforehand, or in accordance with school procedure.*
- *The student was absent due to leisure or social activities without approval.*
- *The conditions of an authorised absence were not met (for example, a student absence learning plan during a family holiday was not completed).*
- *The parent has provided no explanation for the absences.*

The Principal will ensure that attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to look for attendance patterns. Patterns of absences can be across the school, a class or at the individual student level. Having accurate data, including the reasons for absences, is important for:

- *Developing improvement strategies for students*
- *Reporting for funding requirements*
- *Using as evidence when there are attendance concerns*





## **When Attendance falls below 90%**

Catholic Education WA recommends the rate of 90% - 100% as 'Regular Attendance'. When attendance falls below this level it indicates a student may be at risk of not reaching their full potential.

Attendance is measured as the number of actual full time equivalent student days attended by full-time students in Pre-Primary to Year Six as a percentage of the total number of possible student days.

Educational Risk is defined as falling below 90%.

Attendance below 90% can be further divided into the categories of:

- Indicated (80 – 89%)
- Moderate (60 – 79%)
- Severe (< 60%)

Staff at St Josephs are constantly monitoring student attendance and if a child's attendance falls below 90%, the student will receive a letter home advising of their attendance status.

A student who has emerging issues with attendance, intervention through monitoring and following up can assist the student to improve attendance for the rest of their schooling. The aim of this phase is to reengage students back in school before the non-attendance patterns become engrained and a reengagement plan is required.

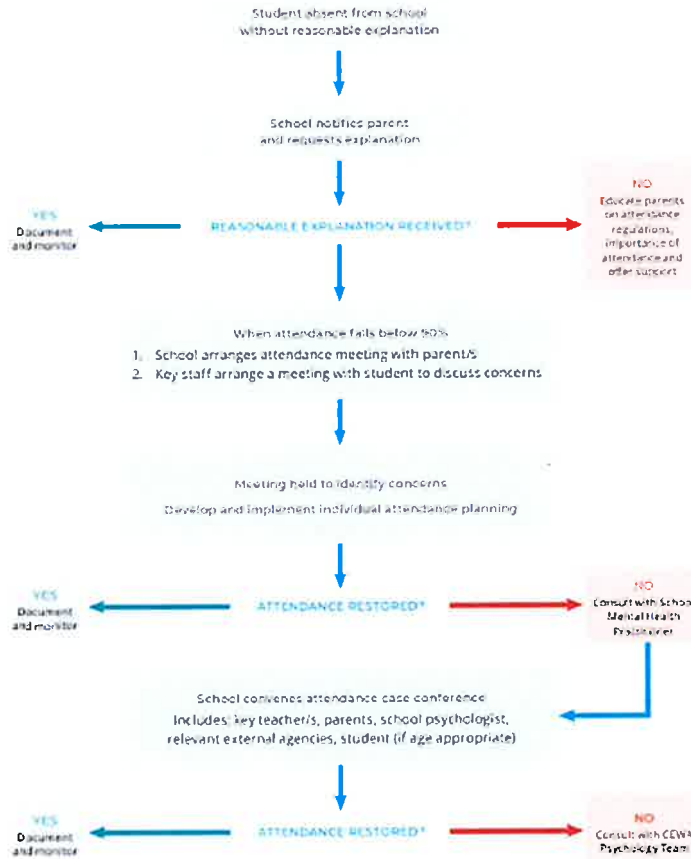
## **Reengagement of a Student at Education Risk due to non-attendance**

The Principal along with the classroom teacher and external providers will devise a plan which aligns with CEWA's Student Attendance Directives to follow up on students who have long-term absence. This may include:

- *Principal contacting parents for further discussion on their child's absence history.*
- *Provide a formalised record and reminder of attendance issues.*
- *Implementing an individual attendance improvement plan for the students at attendance risk.*
- *Implement an attendance reward system and ensure it is consistently applied from all stakeholders.*
- *Provide Motivational outcomes.*
- *Adjustments to curriculum e.g., concentrating on core or favourite subjects for a period of time, modifying conditions of tests,*
- *providing additional scaffolds, a temporary reduction in homework.*
- *A staged return or temporary part time attendance.*
- *A letter sent home at the end of the three weeks with attendance summary/congratulatory letter when attendance goals are achieved.*
- *Engage the CEWA psychologist to assist in plans for meeting with parents and to support parents to work at improving student attendance.*



## Student Non-Attendance Flow Chart



Authorised by	David Hamersley - Principal	Signature:	
		Date:	31.03.2023
Effective Date:	31.03.2023	Next Review:	31.03.2026