

PROCEDURE: Student Attendance

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to describe Brisbane Catholic Education’s (BCE) approach to ensuring that every student attends school on every day, for the education program in which the student is enrolled.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with: Student Attendance policy; Student Wellbeing policy; Student Attendance procedure templates for P-12 and secondary and primary schools; and Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 General requirements

Student attendance is a shared responsibility of students, parents or guardians and the school. A positive school culture is developed by a welcoming, safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment that promotes student engagement with learning, student wellbeing and positive relationships. Positive attendance habits are set in the early years of schooling. Schools celebrate and acknowledge high attendance i.e., above 95% and support and reengage students with attendance below 90%.

Schools must develop a local student attendance procedure using the BCE-approved templates available on the Student Attendance policy page on Spire. The school’s local student attendance procedure and this procedure work in tandem to provide school employees with the mandatory rules and steps that must be followed. Schools must publish to the staff portal the school’s local student attendance procedure. The procedure template has been designed to align with BCE’s Student Attendance policy and this procedure. Schools must ensure attendance processes align to the policy, this procedure and the school’s local student attendance procedure.

Both procedures provide essential information to school employees on processes to manage student attendance, including data entry requirements for eMinerva. The focus of this procedure is on providing employees with information on the practical management of student absences.

2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Principal (or delegate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the BCE-approved template available on the Student Attendance policy page on Spire to develop the school’s own student attendance procedure • undertake a high-level review of the school’s procedure once a year and a more in-depth review once every two years. Make changes to the school procedure, if required • inform parents of their legal obligations about student attendance • ensure attendance-marking is completed in accordance with the school’s local student attendance procedure • monitor student absences and identify when absences are of concern

Role	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for students of concern, ensure records of unsuccessful attempts to contact the student's parent or guardian are kept in Personalised Support Area of the Engage Student Support System • for students in out of home care, see section 3.5 below • for students of concern, maintain documentation in the Engage Student Support System of attempted and implemented intervention strategies aimed at restoring a student's attendance • ensure attendance records and notes are managed in accordance with current BCE requirements • ensure the school has published and communicated on the staff portal the school's local student attendance procedure using the BCE approved procedure template • celebrate and acknowledge high attendance.
School employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage student attendance and absence in accordance with this procedure and the school's local student attendance procedure • ensure data is entered in eMinerva in an accurate and timely manner, at least twice per day • for students of concern, inform the Principal (or delegate) of an unexplained student absence on the same day the absence occurs • inform the Principal (or delegate) of three (3) or more days of absence • for students of concern, records any unexplained non-attendance and unsuccessful attempts to contact the parent or guardian in the personalised supports area of the Engage Student Support System.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Identify patterns of absence

The school must proactively manage student absences by identifying unexplained or unsatisfactory absences or patterns of absences, for example:

- when a student is absent without explanation for one (1) or more days
- when a student is absent for three (3) or more consecutive school days with an explanation
- where there is a persistent pattern of unexplained absences requiring follow up with guardians or absences without reasonable excuses
- where a student's attendance is reasonably considered unsatisfactory by the Principal e.g., 80-90% attendance (for pastoral intervention) and under 80% (for personalised supports) as shown in the BI Tool.

The Principal (or delegate) must confirm that the student is obliged to attend and that no circumstances exist where the parent or guardian's obligation does not apply.

Schools must monitor student academic progress and attendance to identify at-risk students and intervene early.

3.2 Contact, respond, report and record

The Principal (or delegate) must contact the parent or guardian regarding student absences described in s.3.1 above. For students of concern, the parent or guardian response and actions taken by the school, must be recorded in the personalised supports area of the Engage Student Support System.

Schools must follow up initial contact with the parent or guardian where there is a pattern on non-attendance and offer support and interventions to ensure a student's attendance improves. A return to school plan, or attendance improvement plan, can support a student's successful transition back to school and considers the needs of students, parents or guardians, and employees. See Spire for resources.

Student absences must be evaluated as part of an overall risk assessment for students. Schools must consider student protection risks when managing unexplained absences and when considering cancelling a student's enrolment. If the school believes there could be an issue, the school must contact the school's Student Protection Contact or BCE Student Protection.

All efforts to improve student attendance must be recorded in the Engage Student Support System. This includes, but is not limited to, records of meetings and conversations e.g., phone calls, letters, the return to school plan, contact with BCE Student Protection, referrals to the Guidance Counsellor or to an external agency.

3.3 Other circumstances

The Principal (or delegate) must consider whether an exemption from schooling, flexible arrangement, or alteration to a student's educational program is appropriate and required.

For approved exemptions or alterations to an educational program, parents or guardians must be involved in planning for the student's return to school. See Spire for resources.

Clarify and understand the multifaceted nature of school absences and differentiate the different motivators and behaviours using the following categories:

- absenteeism
- school refusal
- truancy
- school withdrawal.

3.4 Actions

Schools must monitor and track student absences. If an emerging pattern of absenteeism is noted, initial contact with parent or guardian must be made and individualised support offered.

Letter 1 - Failure to attend

If the student is still not attending regularly after two (2) weeks (10 school days) of the first attempt to contact the parent or guardian, the Principal (or delegate) must send Letter 1 – Failure to Attend by registered post to the parent or guardian.

The school must keep a signed copy of the letter, and record the date, time and who posted it in the Engage Student Support System.

Letter 2 - Warning notice

The Principal (or delegate) must send Letter 2: Warning Notice – Failure to Attend by registered post to the parent or guardian if, after sending Letter 1:

- a meeting occurred with the parent/legal guardian, but there is no change in circumstances within one (1) week (5 school days) of the support meeting or
- a meeting did not occur with the parent/legal guardian, and there is no change in circumstances within one (1) week (5 school days) of sending the letter.

The school must keep a signed copy of the letter, and record the date, time and who posted it in the Engage Student Support System.

Check enrolment status

If there is no change in attendance in one (1) week (5 school days) after Letter 2: Warning Notice was sent, the Principal (or delegate) must investigate if there has been a change in enrolment to another BCE school (by checking eMinerva) or to a registered training provider.

Cancelling an enrolment

Cancellation of enrolment must be considered only as a last resort. The school must demonstrate that it has made a reasonable effort to identify and address the causes of the non-attendance and has a documented a range of intervention strategies and contact attempts. The school must also take into account the student's history, disability, mental health and wellbeing, religious and cultural considerations, home environment and care arrangements.

Where no response is received, and the student has not attended school for a significant period, the Principal (or delegate) must undertake the following actions:

- consult with the Senior Leader – School Progress and Performance, to decide the course of action
- consult with a Student Protection Contact, where the attendance issues relate to student protection concerns relevant to parent or guardian action or inaction such as neglect or parental abuse or family violence, and student wellbeing and, if necessary, with BCE Legal Counsel.

Student protection risk and procedural fairness must be considered before cancelling enrolment. After cancellation if the destination of the student is known, then this should be documented.

3.5 Same day student absence

Schools must advise a parent or guardian when their child is absent from school without explanation as soon as possible on that day. Schools will subsequently need to follow-up with contacts listed in eMinerva if no response is received from the parent.

For students in out of home care, notification must be sent to the carer of the child and the relevant Child Safety Officer.

Notification

All BCE schools have been provided with the ParentSMS system.

Schools must update and verify parent or guardian contact information, and update eMinerva as necessary when a child transfers schools or when status changes based on signed Confirmation of Enrolment documentation.

Schools must record a Legal Welfare Alert in eMinerva to indicate that a relevant court order may be in place for a child. Documentation to the particulars of the order must be stored on site, and must be referred to for further detail.

Same day absence notification process

Schools must:

- run the BCE Daily Attendance Check Report, filtering on 'Unexplained' after all morning rolls have been marked to review the Unexplained Absences for the day
- cross-check with other sources of information regarding students who are 'Present - Off Site' participating in a school endorsed learning activity e.g., school-based apprenticeships, traineeships, representative sport/excursions or who are on site but not in their usual class e.g., Sick Bay/In School Appointment
- contact the appropriate parent or guardian by SMS, email or phone on the same day once an unexplained absence has been identified
- ensure that notifications have been successfully sent to parents
- record the response from the parent or guardian in eMinerva.

If no response from the parent or guardian is received by the end of the school day, further attempts must be made from the contacts listed in eMinerva and by using other methods such as phone calls or email. This may occur on the following day.

If there is no response from the parent or guardian to the follow up, schools must decide when follow up is to cease and to leave the absence recorded as unexplained.

If a student of concern has a personalised support area in the Engage Student Support System, then all details and evidence of notifications on this process must be detailed within by the appropriate employee.

3.6 Notification process when court orders are in place

The parent or guardian who must be notified will depend on what is directed by the court order. For example:

- a court order may direct that one parent or guardian has sole responsibility for the child and the other parent or guardian must not have access to information about the child
- a domestic violence order may prohibit a parent or guardian from having contact with the school or receiving information about the child
- a child protection order may be in place, and in such cases the Child Safety Officer should be notified as well as the carer.

4. PERFORMANCE

Compliance management and monitoring responsibilities are as follows:

Role	Compliance responsibilities
Senior Manager – Inclusive Education and Student Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitors attendance reports in Power BI and escalates concerns to the relevant Senior Leader - Progress and Performance report non-compliance with this procedure to the Head of Education for consideration and remedial action.

5. REFERENCES AND DEFINITIONS

5.1. References

- Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) (ss.176 and 239)
- Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (Qld) Part 4
- eMinerva: Attendance – Description of Attendance Categories
- eMinerva: Attendance - How to Mark Attendance (Teaching and Administration Staff)
- Queensland Government Protocol for Joint Agency Response: When a Child in Care in Missing
- Student Attendance policy
- Student Attendance procedure template (primary) (on Spire)
- Student Attendance procedure template (P-12 and secondary) (on Spire).

5.2 Definitions

Absenteeism	Any form of absence from school or class.
Alternation to program	In some instances, such as for students experiencing long-term illness, elite sportspeople, young carers, pregnant and parenting students, and students employed in the entertainment industry, a student's educational program may be altered so that they can remain enrolled in the school but do not attend the same hours as their peers.
Parent or guardian obligation	In Queensland, the law requires parents to ensure their compulsory school aged student is enrolled at school and attends school for the educational program on every school day. Compulsory school age starts when a student is at least 6 years of age and finishes when the student turns 16 years of age or completes year 10 (whichever is sooner).
Exemption from schooling	An exemption from compulsory schooling or the compulsory participation phase is available when a student or a young person cannot attend, or it would be unreasonable in all the circumstances to require them to attend school or participate in an eligible option for a period of more than 10 consecutive school days.
Flexible arrangement	A flexible arrangement allows for all or part of a student's educational program to be delivered by an alternative education provider, where it is in the best educational interest of the student.

Reasonable excuse	<p>Parents or guardians have a reasonable excuse if, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the parents or guardians are not reasonably able to control the student's behaviour to the extent necessary to comply with their obligation to have their student enrolled, attending or participating • the parents or guardians are unable to comply with their obligation because of ill health or a disability • the student in question is considered to be independent, and is no longer practically subject to the parental authority of the parents or guardian • the student's non-attendance or non-participation was due to an accident or unforeseen event that the parents or guardians could not prevent. <p>Other reasonable excuses can include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the student is absent due to family circumstances beyond the influence of the student. The parent is aware that their child is absent, and an explanation has been provided to the school. • the parent has informed the school that the student is sick • sport representation • the student has been granted an exemption. <p>Evidence must be provided for e.g., certificate signed by medical/health professional in case of medical event, note provided by parent/guardian. For all roll marking attendance categories refer to Spire.</p>
School refusal	When a student refuses to attend school and/or has problems remaining in class for an entire day and is anxiety based e.g., separation, generalized or social anxiety.
School withdrawal	When a parent or guardian deliberately keeps a student away from school for various reasons including family illness, parental conflict or family holidays.
Truancy	Concealed absences by the student, without parent or guardian knowledge.
Unexplained absence	An unexplained absence occurs when the student is not present at school and parent, or guardian does not contact the school.
Same day student absence notification	Schools advise a parent or guardian when their child is absent without explanation as soon as practicable on that day, allowing time for the parent or guardian to respond before the end of the school day.
Students in Out of Home Care	Includes any child or young person we know to be living away from home and in the care of the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, or extended family or kin, or living independently whilst engaging in schooling at a BCE school.