# Catholic Schools - Attendance Policy

# Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This policy is intended to:

a. set out the requirements for attendance of students at Catholic schools of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (the Diocese);
b. support an effective response to non-attendance;
c. define the responsibilities of workers and Catholic schools of the Diocese regarding attendance; and
d. comply with the requirements of the Education Act 1990 (NSW) (Act) and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

# Section 2 - Scope

(2) This policy and associated procedures, supporting documents, forms and guidelines apply to all Catholic schools of the Diocese.

(3) Workers carrying out related activities for schools of the Diocese are responsible for implementing school responsibilities under this policy.

# Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) School attendance plays a critical role in enhancing the lives of students in schools. Every day of attendance adds to a student's academic and social achievements at school, and conversely every absence, can impact their learning and progress.

(5) Schools, in partnership with parents/carers, are responsible for promoting and maintaining, the regular attendance of students.

(6) In NSW, all children between the ages of six years and below the minimum school leaving age as defined in the Education Act 1990 (NSW) (Compulsory school-age) are legally required to be enrolled at and attend school or be registered with NESA for home schooling.

(7) Parents/cares have a duty to ensure a compulsory school age child is enrolled at and attends school. This duty is imposed on parents/carers under the Education Act 1990 (NSW) and is not imposed on the School.

(8) The Principal of a school must keep a register of enrolment and daily attendances of all children at the school. The register must record all absences and notifications given about the absence of a child and be available for inspection by an authorised person of the Minister under the Act.

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# Section 4 - Policy Principles

(9) The following principles guide this policy:

a. all students enrolled in a schools of the Diocese are expected to attend school each day unless they are unwell or unable to attend for an approved reason or have been granted an exemption;
b. all Catholic Schools in the Diocese have a core responsibility in encouraging regular attendance;
c. the school attendance register of all schools in the Diocese must reflect the highest professional standards and compliance with the requirements outlined by NESA and attendance codes approved by the Minister of Education; and
d. all schools in the Diocese must implement appropriate actions and strategies to follow up and respond to absences and issues of non-attendance.

### Non-Attendance and Enrolment Continuity

(10) Regular attendance is a condition of enrolment. Where attendance concerns arise, the school will work with the student and parents/carers to identify and address barriers, communicate concerns, and implement appropriate supports and interventions aimed at improving attendance. The school will generally convene a number of meetings and develop and review a number of attendance improvement plans with relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, to support re-engagement. The nature, sequence and extent of any actions may vary according to individual circumstances, and steps may be repeated, combined or adapted as needed.

(11) If, after reasonable opportunities to engage with the school and implement support, attendance does not improve to a satisfactory level, the school may determine that the enrolment cannot continue. In such cases, the Principal (or delegate) may end the enrolment or recommend transition to an alternative educational setting, consistent with the enrolment agreement and applicable legal obligations. Nothing in this policy limits the school's ability to act urgently to address safety risks or to comply with legal reporting requirements.

# Section 5 - Responsibilities

| ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|---|
| Parents/Carers | • Enrolling their children of compulsory school age in a government or registered non-government school or registering them with NESA for home schooling.<br>• Ensuring that their children attend school regularly.<br>• Explaining to the school the absences of their children promptly and within seven days, otherwise this absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence. Parents/carers have the option to explain absences through the Compass platform.<br>• Working in partnership with the school in taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their children. |

| ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|---|---|
| Principals | • Ensuring students are enrolled consistent with the Catholic Schools Enrolment Policy and Guidelines for Enrolments and Transition of Students with a Disability.<br>• Providing information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance.<br>• Providing school staff with information on attendance requirements and their obligation to monitor and promote regular attendance at school.<br>• Ensuring daily attendance records and register (roll) are maintained by staff in accordance with approved codes and the Diocesan approved format, Compass.<br>• Ensuring effective school processes are in place for school staff to monitor and manage student attendance and absences, including reviewing explanations, requests and reasons, and contacting parents/carers promptly following an unexplained absence.<br>• Maintaining and managing all attendance records, applications and documentation, including details of transfers and exemptions consistent with the Diocesan's Student Attendance Procedures.<br>• Ensuring attendance records are available for inspection upon request.<br>• Establishing a system for signing out students who need to leave the school premises during school hours e.g. appointments.<br>• Investigating all cases of unsatisfactory attendance from school promptly and ensuring that appropriate identification and intervention strategies are implemented.<br>• Developing and documenting attendance improvement plans and sharing these with Catholic Schools Maitland-Newcastle to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern.<br>• Responding to requests from the Minister for information about a child relating to attendance, enrolment and other relevant factors in the form and timeframe requested. |
| Director of Schools | • Supporting schools to maintain accurate records of student attendance.<br>• Conducting regular audits of school attendance registers and provide support to Principals in following correct attendance procedures through the Continuum of School Improvement (COSI) process.<br>• Supporting schools in their implementation of attendance improvement plans and partial attendance plans to support students and their families with attendance concerns.<br>• Making decisions regarding the termination of enrolment due to habitual non-attendance.<br>• Granting specific exemptions that are delegated from the Minister for enrolment and attendance. |

# Section 6 - Notations

(12) If there is any inconsistency between a policy document in existence before the commencement of this policy, and a policy document developed after the commencement of this policy, the latter applies to the extent of the inconsistency.

# Section 7 - Further information

(13) If you would like further information about managing, recording, reporting and monitoring student attendance, please contact attendance@mn.catholic.edu.au

# Section 8 - Document Review

(14) This policy will be reviewed when there is a legislative change, organisational change, delegations change, technology change or at least every 3 years to ensure it continues to be current and effective.

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## Status and Details

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| **Status** | Current |
| **Effective Date** | 20th February 2024 |
| **Review Date** | 1st December 2026 |
| **Approval Authority** | Chief Executive Officer |
| **Approval Date** | 1st December 2023 |
| **Expiry Date** | To Be Advised |
| **Unit Head** | Jacqueline Wilkinson<br>Director Catholic Schools |
| **Enquiries Contact** | Transition and Projects |

## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Catholic school"** - Is one which operates with the consent of the Diocesan Bishop and is one where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine. It includes primary, secondary and K-12 schools.

**"Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (the Diocese)"** - The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle (the Diocese) is inclusive of all parishes and agencies, communities, ministries and works that are under the authority of the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle. The Bishop takes his authority from Canon Law (Canons 375-402). The geographical coverage of the Diocese includes all or part of the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Cessnock, Port Stephens, Singleton, Muswellbrook, Upper Hunter, Dungog and Mid-Coast local government areas, with almost 160,000 Catholics, 38 parishes and serviced by multiple diocesan ministries and agencies. The Diocese is not wholly geographic in nature. There are elements of the Catholic Church operating within the physical boundaries of the Diocese that do not fall under the authority of the Bishop and are not a part of the Diocese. Equally, particular diocesan ministries occur within external institutions (e.g. Prison Chaplaincy, Hospital Chaplaincy).

**"Policy Document"** - Codes of Conduct, Governance Policies, Operational Policies and documents such as procedures and guidelines which are subordinate to policy and support the implementation of policy.

**"Worker"** - A person who carries out work in any capacity for an employer or 'Person Conducting a Business Undertaking'. This includes: • employees; • teachers; • educators; • contractors; • apprentices; • clergy; • religious; • student placements; • trainees; and • volunteers/unpaid . In the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 'worker' includes those who carry out work in diocesan parishes, within diocesan agencies and as a part of the diocesan curia.