



## Attendance Policy

Policy Title	Attendance Policy
Document No.	1.13
Approved by Council	May 2019
Developed	August 2016 – May 2018
Next Review	2021
Responsible Officer	Principal Through the Deputy Principal
Standing Committee	Education

### Preamble

The South Australian Education Act, 1972 requires that children of compulsory school age (6 years up to the age of 16 years) living in South Australia, must be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless exempted by the Minister. Students of Compulsory Education age between 16 and 17 years are required to be in attendance at school participating in an approved learning programme, or a combination of school and other approved training or learning programme, unless exempted by the Minister.

An approved learning programme is:

- International Baccalaureate Programmes (IB) MYP; DP.
- South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE).
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses, or accredited courses offered by Registered Training Organisations (RTO).
- Apprenticeships or Traineeships.
- University Degrees, Diplomas or other University award courses.
- Other programmes authorised by the Minister for Education and Child Development.
- A combination of the above.

### Policy Statement

Mercedes College works with parents/caregivers to:

- Ensure student attendance and participation.
- Provide a safe, success orientated and caring environment.
- Provide relevant learning programmes for all students.
- Maintain accurate records of attendance.
- Ensure non-attendance is followed up through early intervention strategies.
- Develop strategies to resolve attendance difficulties.

## **Rationale**

Regular attendance at school is important for a child's and young person's learning, wellbeing and development. Patterns of attendance and absence that are set up in the early years, typically persist throughout education and life. Conversely, children and young people who are frequently absent are likely to miss opportunities to learn the skills needed for their future education which may lead to compromised wellbeing, learning and educational outcomes. Young people with interrupted educational programmes, who leave school before completing Year 12, have significantly diminished options for their post school pathways.

## **Principles**

### **Acceptable School Absence**

It is acceptable for a student to be absent from school when they are:

- Too sick to leave their home.
- Sick with an infectious illness such as gastroenteritis, chicken pox or measles (to reduce contagion).
- Required to attend medical, dental or specialist therapy appointments that cannot be made out of school hours.
- Engaged in elite sport training or competition with the approval of the relevant Head of School.
- Undertaking a family trip which has the prior approval of the relevant Head of School.
- Able to provide the Principal with a genuine reason that prevents them attending school.
- Suspended from school for disciplinary reasons.
- Granted an exemption from school.

### **Exemptions from school**

A parent or guardian must apply to the Principal in writing for an exemption from school attendance if they wish to take their child out of school temporarily or permanently. Students must attend school regularly until the Principal approves the exemption in writing. The Principal may approve conditional and part-time exemptions, or permanent exemptions.

Exemption from attendance at school can be sought for:

- Family travel or holidays during the school term.
- Student Exchange Programmes
- Medical or health reasons.
- Home education programmes (up to four weeks).
- Full-time employment.
- Disability or mental health challenges requiring part-time exemption from school.

Parents may apply in writing to the Principal to home educate their child and seek an exemption from attendance at school.

Permanent exemptions can be granted for students aged 15 and 16 years of age who are taking up full-time employment. To qualify students must be:

- Under 16 years of age and working more than 30 hours per week.
- 16 years of age and working more than 25 hours per week.
- Able to supply a letter of offer from the employing organisation, highlighting the position and the number of hours to be worked per week.

Students can be employed in more than one position to make up the minimum hours.

## **Unacceptable School Absences**

It is not acceptable for students to absent themselves from school due to:

- Truancy. This is a deliberate behaviour to avoid school and school organised events that form part of the academic and pastoral programmes.
- Selectively opting out of school organised activities and events e.g. Retreats, Camps, Athletics/Swimming Carnivals, even if this is parent sanctioned.
- Falling behind with work and taking time out of school to catch up.
- Avoiding assessment tasks, or assessment deadlines.
- School refusal.

## **School Refusal**

This is typically a spectrum disorder generally associated with a level of anxiety, which is amendable to early detection and intervention. Students experiencing anxiety will require professional assessment and intervention external to the College, and can access additional in-school support.

In all cases there may be underlying circumstances contributing to the student experiencing difficulty attending school, so it is important that parents and College staff communicate effectively to ensure that an individualised student support plan is in place to facilitate attendance.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Parents/Guardians**

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to:

- Make adequate provision for student transport to and from the College, and College organised events or activities, to ensure that the student arrives safely and on time.
- Notify the College as soon as possible of student absences and explain the reason for this absence.
- Provide a medical certificate for student absence due to reported illness of three or more consecutive days.
- Respond as soon as possible to College generated instant messages of unexplained student absences.
- Provide written advice to the relevant Head of School, in advance of an extended student absence, e.g. for family travel or sporting purposes.
- Apply in writing to the Principal to request a short-term or permanent exemption from school.

- Apply in writing to the Principal when seeking to Home School their child.
- Engage external service providers to support students experiencing school refusal associated with anxiety.
- Participate with the external service provider and College staff in the development of return to school plans and comply with the agreed strategies.

### **External Service Providers**

- It is the responsibility of external service providers engaged by parents/guardians to support students experiencing school refusal to act as an independent Case Manager and work with the student, parents and College staff to negotiate and monitor compliance with return to school plans.

### **Students**

According to the student's age and developmental level, it is their responsibility to:

- Organise their daily routine to ensure on-time school arrival.
- Advise teachers of any school and work related concerns.
- Speak directly with Teachers to seek extensions to deadlines for work, in advance of the due date.

### **Class and Home / Tutor Group Teachers**

It is the responsibility of Class and Home / Tutor Group Teachers to:

- Record morning student absences on Synergetics.
- Approve daily student departures (e.g. for appointments) via the green slip system.
- Track student attendance via reports generated from Synergetics.
- Telephone parents/guardians when students are absent for periods of three consecutive school days, or they notice a pattern of absences occurring including late student arrivals or early departures, and full school day absences and notify the Year Level Coordinator and Head of School.
- Liaise with parents/caregivers to ensure that absent students maintain their connection with the learning programme via ManageBac and other on-line learning platforms.
- Pay particular attention to attendance records at the intake years.

### **Junior School Class and Specialist Teachers**

It is the particular responsibility of Junior School Class and Specialist Teachers to:

- Monitor Junior School students for signs of separation anxiety and liaise with parents/caregivers, the College Psychologist and Head of Junior School to develop strategies to address these early warning signs for school refusal.
- Specialist Teachers complete attendance rolls following recess and lunch and follow-up non-advised absences immediately.

### **Subject Teachers**

It is the responsibility of Subject Teachers to:

- Complete lesson attendance records for every lesson (Years 6-12) on Synweb/Synmobile and be vigilant of student absences, including patterns of absence from lessons.
- Liaise with the Home / Tutor Group Teachers (Years 6-12) in relation to student absence patterns of concern.

- Notify Junior School and McAuley Office ESO staff of unexplained student absences from lessons.
- Liaise with the relevant College Psychologist on individual student social emotional issues which may impact on attendance and develop appropriate curriculum and assessment adjustments.
- Participate with the College Psychologist and Health Administrator in return to school planning for students following their absence due to extended illness or medical treatment.
- Liaise with parents to ensure that absent students are connected with the learning programme via ManageBac.

### **International Students Programme, Coordinator of Student Welfare and Accommodation**

It is the responsibility of the International Students Programme, Coordinator of Student Welfare and Accommodation to:

- Assist students enrolled in the International Student Programme to understand VISA compliance regarding attendance required of a full time student.
- Monitor whole day absences for students enrolled in the International Students Programme and forward this information to the International Student Programme, Academic Advisor.
- Liaise with Homestay parents, Education Agents and parents/guardian to develop strategies to address emerging patterns of whole day absences.
- Inform the International Student Academic Advisor, Year Level Co-ordinators and Heads of School of students who are at risk of breaching their student visa attendance requirements, to develop appropriate action plans.

### **International Students Programme, Academic Advisor**

It is the responsibility of the International Students Programme, Academic Advisor to:

- Monitor the late arrival of students and those who take unexplained absences, enrolled in the International Students Programme and action through the Year Level Coordinator, the usual consequences (e.g. Personal Responsibility notifications) to ensure compliance with College and visa attendance requirements, and to minimise the impact on student learning.

### **Year Level Coordinators / Heads of School**

It is the responsibility of Year Level Coordinators / Heads of School to:

- Regularly monitor student attendance reports from Synergetics to identify students at risk for school refusal and liaise with Home / Tutor Group Teachers and College Psychologist to develop appropriate action plans.
- Work with staff to ensure Home / Tutor Group and class attendances are being correctly entered.
- Oversee extended absences (greater than 3 consecutive days) or patterns of absence.

### **Education Support Officers (Strathspey, Junior School and McAuley Offices)**

It is the responsibility of these Education Support Officers to:

- Receive parent advice about student absences and record the date and reason for the absence on Synergetics.

- Conduct the instant messaging system to notify parents of unexplained student absences.
- Alert Class and Home / Tutor Group Teachers of parent concerns in relation to student absences.

### **Health Administrator**

It is the responsibility of the Health Administrator to:

- Ensure that student health records are up to date and accurately reflect any requirements for absence from school due to medical illness or treatment.
- Participate with teachers and the College Psychologist in return to school planning for students following their absence due to extended illness or medical treatment.

### **College Psychologist**

The College Psychologist is responsible for:

- Ensuring that teachers are briefed on individual social emotional issues which may impact on student attendance and assist with developing appropriate curriculum and assessment adjustments.
- Participate with teachers and the Health Administrator in return to school planning for students following absence due to extended illness, or medical treatment, or school refusal.
- Assist parents and teachers in addressing student school refusal by conducting an assessment of the situation; recommending an intervention plan; monitoring compliance with the plan; and providing a prognosis based on progress with the plan.

### **Principal**

The Principal is responsible for:

- Receiving, assessing and responding in writing to parent requests to remove students during school time e.g. for the purposes of family holidays, Student Exchange Programmes or sporting commitments.
- Advising Heads of School of these approvals.
- Receiving, assessing and responding in writing to parent requests for school exemption, including the Department of Education application process to be followed.
- Advising the Registrar of student exemptions.
- Meeting with students and parents in relation to non-compliance with return to school plans.

**School Staff will not be responsible for visiting students at home for the purposes of transporting them to school.**

### **Review**

**Approved by Council:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Review date:** \_\_\_\_\_