LEGAL CONTEXT

At St Gabriel’s:

Parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children at school (Section 22 Education Act 1990).

School staff, as part of their duty of care, are responsible to monitor part or whole day absences and ensure that school attendance records will be maintained according to the Diocesan Guidelines for the Management of Student Attendance in the Catholic Schools.

The school attendance register (roll) must reflect the highest professional standards.

Definitions

Parent
Includes a carer or other person having the care or custody of a child or young person

Explained absence
A student absence where a parent provides a reason for a student’s non-attendance

Truancy
The absence of a student from school without the knowledge or permission of their parent or carer

Unexplained absence
A parent has not provided an explanation of the student’s absence within seven days of the occurrence of the absence

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE RECORDS

School attendance records include:

1. The Register of Enrolments which is retained permanently in SAS.
2. Notes and records of explanations for absences from parents. This advice is to be retained for seven years from the date of receipt
3. The Attendance Register (roll) to be retained for seven years.

The student's record file detailing the number of absences each year must be retained 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 file should be retained until the end of the year in which the student reaches the age of 25 years.
RESPONSIBILITIES

At St Gabriel’s:

Parents and Carers are responsible for:

1. Ensuring their child is legally enrolled at the correct age
2. Ensuring that their child attends school regularly
3. Promptly explaining the absences of their child from school
4. Taking measures to resolve attendance issues involving their child

The Principal will:

1. Ensure this school policy provides clear information to students and parents regarding attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance through newsletter items and in official school publications including the parent information handbook and on the school website.
2. Implement procedures to address attendance issues in consultation with parents and teachers. Staff members at this school have a responsibility to notify the Principal when an absence is recorded over 3 consecutive days without prior notification from the parents and when contact has not been possible with the parent/carer.
3. Ensure attendance records are maintained in the Diocesan approved format and are an accurate record of the attendance of all students.
4. Inform the Director of Catholic Schools or the designated Consultant of any attendance problems and issues. This includes providing the appropriate people with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance or persistent truancy is an issue.
5. Allow an Exemption from School Attendance for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student or grant part-day exemptions from school for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student under certain conditions (family holiday for example). Staff are to inform parents that any time away from school will require a letter of request to the principal. The following procedures apply at St Gabriel’s when parents talk to a teacher and request absence from school for their child:

5.1 Inform the parent/carer that the request must be made in writing to the principal with all the relevant details
5.2 Inform the parent/carer that the granting of the request is not automatic
5.3 Advise the parent/carer to make arrangements to secure an interview with the principal.

6. Accept or decline as satisfactory an explanation for an absence. The parent will be advised in writing that the explanation has not been accepted and a reason for the decision provided. The Principal may also request a medical certificate when the absence is questionable, frequent or prolonged. Should teachers have information that relates to potentially declining a request for absence they must inform the principal as soon as possible.

7. Ensure new and casual staff receive a briefing on school attendance procedures and approved roll marking.
**Teachers** at St Gabriel’s must:

1. Ensure that the class roll is accurate at all times.
2. Accurately record absences for all students by **9.30am** and again immediately after lunch by **2.15pm**, using only the approved codes. Rolls are auto printed in the office area twice daily.
3. Ensure casual and relief teachers in their classes follow school procedures.
4. Contact parents via phone regarding unexplained non-attendance that has occurred **over a three day period**. If no contact is made, the Principal must be notified.
5. If a parent explanation is verbal (that is, the parent phones in the absence), teachers must note the reason, time the explanation was provided, sign the note and place with other absence notes as per the school policy.
6. Alert the Principal when a student’s pattern of attendance is of a concern (late to school, absent on regular days), or if no explanation is received from the parent/carer when the 3 day phone call has taken place.
7. Inform parents who raise the possibility of an extended absence from school (ie. holiday) that the matter should be discussed with the principal.
8. Maintain the absence notes as follows:

**Absence Notes/Records**

Absence notes must be collected and retained as part of the attendance record. Teachers are to follow the procedure below:

1. Insist on absence notes from each student when they are away. Persist with this request to develop a school wide culture. *(Please see information on phoned absences above)*
2. Collect and retain notes for the year in a plastic sleeve of the Student Attendance Display Folder which is issued annually.
3. At the end of the year, the notes will be collected and transferred to the Admin store area.
4. Parents are required to sign the register for late arrivals or early departures. Precise times are recorded by the parent, as well as the reason for their partial absence.
5. The school office staff will forward on any/all absence notes sent via Skoolbag or via phone message as soon as practicable daily.

**Marking the nForma Roll**

The roll must reflect the highest professional standards. Teachers are to regard this as a professional responsibility and take pride in the accuracy of the class roll.

The *Education Act (1990)* (Section 24) requires that attendance registers (rolls) be maintained with the utmost care.

The roll is marked on all days on which the school is open for instruction, including school sports days, swimming carnivals, excursions and similar events.

The roll is to be marked early in the school day prior to 9.30am and again immediately following the lunch break, prior to 2.15pm. You are asked to establish a class routine to ensure the pattern is known to the students.

Teachers should make themselves familiar with the codes in the Nforma package.
Procedures when attendance is an issue

The school takes its attendance responsibilities seriously and will support parents with their son or daughter’s attendance issues. While parents should be reminded of their legal obligations under the Education Act (1990) the welfare of the student must be the focus of this consultation.

We believe that 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.

Resolution of student attendance difficulties may require a range of additional school based strategies including:

1. Student and parent interviews
2. A review of the appropriateness of the student’s educational program
3. The development of a school-based attendance improvement plan
4. A referral to an outside agency
5. Further support from school based personnel

If a range of school based interventions has been unsuccessful, support may be requested by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Education Office in the first instance, which can then advise the school.

Appendices to support our Student Attendance Policy

Appendix 1

Letter requesting absence information

Date

Dear

Your child [name of child] in class [class name] was absent from school on [date]. We are obliged by law to request a reason for this absence so that our records can be kept in accordance with our legal requirements. Please send in a letter of explanation at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher
Appendix 2

Letter for repeated late arrival

Date

Dear

The number of days your child arrives late for school is presenting some concern. Our records show that [name of child] has been late on [number of days] days.

The morning session is an important part of the day as directions and routines for the day are set up.

When your child arrives late, it means they will miss out on important part of the day's learning. The bell for the start of the day rings at 9am. If being on time presents a problem to your family will you please make contact with the Principal.

Yours sincerely

Class Teacher

Appendix 3

Record of phone notified absence

Date: ___________________________

Student: _______________________________

Notification via: _________________________

Reason (circle one) : Sick Family Other

Signed by Class Teacher: ________________________________ Date: _____
ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/STAFF HANDBOOK

Additional information that can be used in newsletters or letters to parents

Family holidays and extended time away from school: What do we do when we know we’ll be away for consecutive days?

Shorter term
The school acknowledges that sometimes families will ask for student leave from school in term time for personal reasons. It is assumed families have given this option considered thought before applying for leave. Parents must be aware that the request is made in writing to the principal.

 Longer term
The school acknowledges that sometimes families will ask for extended student leave from school in term time for personal reasons. It is assumed families have given this option considered thought. Parents must be aware that the request must be made in writing. Mostly this will involve travel. When parents are aware that this will occur, appropriate advance notice is required (preferably a term’s notice).

In adopting these guidelines, we are following our registration obligations.