

STUDENT ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL Prep – Year 10

Student attendance at school is important and it is a legal requirement that schools must maintain an accurate record of all student attendance. Principals and staff have a duty of care towards students attending the school. This entails a responsibility to know which students are at school at a given time. Principals, as part of their day-to-day management, have responsibility to follow up unexplained absences for students enrolled at their school. Our Lady of Lourdes School has established a procedure for addressing student absence, with the following sequence of steps being the minimum requirement expected of schools in managing student absence. Relevant details of any contact or attempt to contact parents/carers in relation to a child's absence is to be documented.

Step 1	DAY ONE of absence	The single most effective strategy to improve student attendance is to follow up an unexplained student absence at the first opportunity. This may involve a phone call, note or email to the parent/carer on the first day of absence, where parents have not already contacted the school. (<i>Appendix 1</i>)
Step 2	Up to FIVE DAYS 'yet to be explained' or 'unauthorised' absence	<p>If a student is absent for three (3) consecutive days and there has been no notification from the parent/carer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School must attempt to contact the parent/carer to establish the reason from the child's absence. <p>If a student is absent for five (5) consecutive days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal may send proforma <i>letter</i> (<i>Appendix 2</i>) to the parent/carer asking them to make contact with the school to discuss the absence (if other attempts to contact the parent/carer have failed). • Principal may, under the <i>Education Act 1994</i>, request a parent/carer to provide a certificate from a registered medical practitioner (this may occur later than five days at the discretion of the principal).
Step 3	TEN DAYS 'yet to be explained' or 'unauthorised' absence in one school term	<p>If a student is absent for ten (10) days in any one school term or there is a pattern of absence which is of significant concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school should consider requesting a meeting with the parent/carer to ensure that there is no underlying problem behind the absence. • Principal may send proforma letter (<i>Appendix 3</i>) to the parent/carer outlining attendance concerns. • Principal should consider involving CEO and/or the school social worker. • Continued difficulty in contacting the family may necessitate sending a registered letter to the parent/carer.
Step 4	TWENTY DAYS of absence in one school term, irrespective of reasons provided	<p>If a student is absent for twenty (20) days in any one school term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School must initiate a 'case management' approach, involving face-to-face contact with the parent/carer, with the emphasis on a plan to support the student's return to regular attendance. • Principal may send proforma letter (<i>Appendix 4</i>) to initiate the above meeting. • Principal must involve the CEO to develop a strategy to restore attendance. The strategy may involve a flexible arrangement - for example provision of alternative placement, part-time schooling or open learning. <p>A principal should inform the CEO when a student has been absent (unauthorised) for school for 40 days. The CEO will ensure that an investigation is made and appropriate measures taken, including prosecution where appropriate.</p>