Related Merici Policies

Attendance - Senior Classes
Teacher Role Description and Responsibilities

Rationale/Purpose

Merici College encourages all students to attend all school days and events when they are able, but recognises that attendance is a parental responsibility. As such, it works with parents to support regular attendance.

It is required that Junior students attend from 8.45am - 3.25pm. Students are required to attend all scheduled lessons during the school day.

The College has a responsibility to assist parents with the regular attendance of their daughters and to assist parents with their compliance to the national legislation regarding students attending school until age 17.

Definitions

Acceptable evidence of absence
Hand-written or word processed note with original signature from the student’s legal guardian returned within 5 days of return from the absence.

Reasonable Excuse
Examples of a ‘reasonable excuse’ for a child’s absence might include:
• illness, including recovery from major illness, injury or medical condition
• medical or dental treatment
• bereavement
• religious or cultural observation
• family holidays or extended visits overseas
• attendance at a wedding
• attendance at court or other legal hearings or meetings associated with hearings
• participation in sanctioned debates, eisteddfods, sports, musical or theatrical productions not directly arranged by the school
• participation in territory, interstate, national, or international sporting event or equivalent
• sanctioned extended absence in relation to children of travelling families

Policy

Any absence during the day must be explained by a hand-written note from the student’s legal guardian or parent and must be presented either in Pastoral Care that day for a short absence or the first day the student returns to school following the absence. All full day absences must also be notified to the Attendance Office by phone before 9.30am. The Attendance Office notifies any parents who have elected to use an SMS service if their daughter is marked absent from Pastoral Care.
The following is adapted from the Catholic Education Office’s Attendance Policy:

Under Section 11 of the Education Act, it is the parents’ responsibility to ensure that a child who lives in the ACT, is of compulsory school age and is enrolled at a school attends:

- the school on every day, and during the times on every day, when school is open for attendance, and
- every activity of the school (including attendances at an approved educational course) that the school requires the child to attend.

Parents must have a reasonable excuse for not complying with the compulsory attendance requirement in the Act. If parents do not have a reasonable excuse, they are liable under the Act and may be fined.

Extended Absence from school

Information regarding student attendance requirements and Exemption Certificates are available from the ACT Directorate for Education and Training website: http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z

Please note:
for periods of less than 5 school weeks, approval for absences from school is made by the Principal, and students who live in NSW and attend a Catholic School in the ACT are required to send an application for leave greater than 5 school weeks to the Catholic Education Office to:

Dominic Braybon
Catholic Education Office
PO Box 3317
MANUKA ACT 2603

Procedures

The attendance roll is a legal document and is completed by the Pastoral Care Teacher, never by a student. As the roll is a legal document which may be subpoenaed and used in evidence in court teachers recognize the importance of accuracy in its completion.

The following guidelines are issued to staff:

1. The roll is marked electronically by the Pastoral Care Teacher
2. A late slip will be presented by a student who arrives late.
3. Phoned excuses will be inserted by Attendance Office after a call to school explaining absence.
4. When a student brings an absence note, the Pastoral Care Teachers place it in the Pastoral Care folder and it will be entered by the attendance office. The Pastoral Care Teacher should make a note that they have sighted the explanation next to the students name in the electronic roll.
5. It is the responsibility of Pastoral Care Teachers to actively follow up absence notes and make follow up calls to parents when students have been away if notes are not produced within 5 days of the student returning to school.

To support students in meeting attendance requirements, the College reports senior attendance to parents on a fortnightly basis. Senior Attendance reports detailing the total number of explained and unexplained absences for each subject on a cumulative basis for that semester are sent home. The dates for posting of
these reports are made clear to students and parents at the start of the year. If unexplained absences exceed six in a semester unit then the student will be deemed to have voided the unit. To avoid cumulating unexplained absences students must return a parental note explaining the absences within 5 school days of the return to school.

In relation to senior students, family holidays are not considered approved leave. Under extenuating circumstances, leave may be considered if the request for approval by the College Principal is made prior to the absence being recorded.

Non-Attendance

Students are legally obliged to attend school until the age of 17. The Education Act mandates that Principals must refer parents and children to support services when school procedures encouraging attendance are not successful.

Where a student is not regularly attending, every effort is made by the Pastoral Support Team to identify the reasons for this and re-establish a pattern of regular attendance. This will happen in the first instance through the Pastoral Care Teacher and the House Coordinator. The College Counsellors, the Assistant Principal Student Welfare and the Principal may become involved as appropriate. Under the ACT Education Act, the Principal may require a student and her parents to meet with the Non-Government Schools Section, ACT DET authorised person if a student is not regularly attending without a valid reason.

The Pastoral Care teacher will contact parents of students who fail to attend school for three subsequent school days. If the Pastoral Care Teacher is concerned or the absence is a repeating pattern, the Pastoral Care Teacher should inform the House Coordinator.

The House Coordinator will meet with the student and support the student in normalizing her attendance. This may include involving the CatholicCare staff, the Defence Mentor or Indigenous Home School Liaison Officer to work with the student to support them in attending school. The Coordinator will also make contact with the parents and explain to them the parents’ responsibility for student attendance. If this intervention shows a continuation of the unsatisfactory attendance pattern, the Coordinator will inform the Assistant Principal.

The Assistant Principal (curriculum/ students) will write to the parent of the student whose attendance is of concern and request a meeting to outline the seriousness of the circumstances and explain possible subsequent actions. The AP will write to the parent/s formalizing the position of the College following this meeting and notify the Non-Government Schools Office. If this intervention fails to normalize the student’s attendance, the AP will inform the Principal.

The Principal will contact the Catholic Education Office to discuss the individual needs of a student whose attendance is of concern and has shown no improvement despite intervention, and negotiate the involvement of an appropriate authorised person through the Non-Government Schools Section, ACT DET. Should there be no further compliance, ACT DET may commence legal proceedings to attempt to gain compliance.

The School is able to withdraw a student enrolment if they miss 20 consecutive days in a school term and all reasonable attempts have been made by the College to effect change on the part of the student.

Pre-Arranged Absences

In the event of a pre-arranged absence, students are required to meet with the Junior or Senior Coordinator to negotiate work arrangements for their absence. Students should make every effort to complete and submit assessment prior to their departure. If this is not practicable, students can negotiate
later submission dates prior to departure. If all assessment can’t be completed due to absence, estimates for tasks can be made, in keeping with the College Assessment Policy.

**Communication of Policy**

The Attendance Policy (without the staff procedures) will be communicated to students, parents and staff each semester in keeping with CEO requirements. Attendance procedures will be conveyed to new staff and to relief teachers at the commencement of employment.

**References**

BSSS – Policy and Procedures Manual (see ‘Attendance for Senior Classes’),


**Forms**

Student absence form: Absentee Note.pdf

Approved by: Merici Executive
Implementation Date: September 2007
Policy last Updated: 20 August 2012
Merici Contact Officer: Assistant Principal - Students