

Rationale

‘The Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterized by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation.’ The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium’

Research indicates strongly that school attendance matters for achievement and everyday counts.

Background

Regular attendance for all school-aged children is important in their educational and social development. Students who attend school regularly have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher income levels across their lifespan. It is important that children develop habits of regular attendance at an early age to actively participate and engage in their learning and to maximise their life opportunities. The school will communicate these expectations to parents on enrolment and through regular updates such as the school newsletter. Students are expected to attend school during normal school hours every day of each school term unless:

- There is an approved exemption
- The student is registered for home schooling and has only partial enrolment

Students are considered to be in attendance at school if they are involved in an offsite curriculum program or activity organised by the school.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that it is the parents’ responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so is an offence punishable by law. It is the responsibility of the local authority to ensure that all parents fulfil this responsibility. The local authority has the authority to issue penalty notices and to seek prosecution through the Magistrates Court where parents fail to fulfil this obligation.

Loreto College Ballarat has both a legal right and a responsibility to ensure that students have excellent attendance, and that absence is only approved in exceptional and unavoidable cases, as set out in guidance provided by the government. For this reason, the College parental agreement, which parents sign when their child joins Loreto College Ballarat states:

Attendance is expected at every session of the College year except in the case of illness or when an absence has been authorised by the Principal. Our families must seek approval from the Principal should a student miss any days of school in order to take holidays. Our families therefore agree not to take holidays in term time in line with statutory guidance. College events such as the Swimming and Sports Carnivals, Walkathon, GB Day and Year Level events are part of the College year and attendance at these events is compulsory. Persistent absence (less than 90%) apart from medical grounds will result in intervention by the College and may lead to legal action.

Policy Statement

Loreto College Ballarat will maximise learning opportunities for students, by ensuring:

- Schools are open for approximately 40 weeks (up to 200 days) per year, as designated by the Victorian Minister of Education.
- Staff are allocated appropriate vacation time, in accordance with applicable industrial awards, including gazetted public holidays.
- Staff are engaged in appropriate professional learning and planning.
- Student attendance rates are recorded and monitored.

Principles

Loreto College Ballarat acknowledges its responsibility as a registered school under the [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017](#) to maintain a student attendance register recording student attendance at least twice daily and recording any given or apparent reason for student absences.

All students are entitled to an excellent education, allowing each student to reach her full potential so that she can succeed, achieve her aspirations, and contribute fully to her community, now and in the future.

The quality of a student's education should not be limited by where the student lives, the income of her family, the school she attends, or her personal circumstances.

The quality of education should not be limited by a school's location, particularly those schools in regional Australia (Australian Education Act 2013).

Definitions

Student Attendance: Learning is dependent on students being at school, therefore Loreto College Ballarat will ensure students attend and engage in school activities, in accordance with gazetted (Victorian Department of Education) requirements for particular year levels.

Attendance Register: An attendance register will be kept in either print or electronic form for the attendance of all students at Loreto College for each calendar Year. Loreto College Ballarat registers student attendance electronically in SIMON for all lessons.

Term Dates: Loreto College Ballarat endeavour to adhere to the gazetted term dates provided by the Victorian Department of Education. Loreto College Ballarat reserves the right to adjust these dates according to the needs of the school learning environment.

Student Free Days: Student free days are days where students do not attend school, but are designated for staff professional development, school professional development activities, planning, report writing or other as designated by the Principal.

Student Closure Days: Loreto College Ballarat will be closed for designated periods, for school



vacation, emergency situations, for gazetted public holidays or other days as designated by the Principal. A school closure day is a day upon which, in general students and staff are not required to attend school, although some members may be required to engage in closure activities. Closure days would normally have an element of emergency or exceptional circumstances associated with them.

Public Holidays: A holiday is a day upon which neither staff nor students are expected to attend school or engage in school related activities. A holiday is a state-wide gazetted public holiday which falls during term time, or a day taken in conjunction with a locally gazetted custom or practice.

Term Dismissals: Refer to the school calendar for official end of Term and end of year dismissal dates. These are different for different Year levels. Dismissal times and dates are based on educational programs, at the directive of the College Principal and do not always align with the gazetted school year as outlined by the Victorian Department of Education.

Communication: Parents will be advised well in advance for closure days where possible. Loreto College Ballarat will inform parents and the broader school community of term dates and scheduling arrangements for student free days through the College Calendar, Newsletter, Principal letters, and the Loreto College Ballarat App. Emergency changes to school dates will be sent out through email and the College App.

Procedures

Procedures in Schools

- Loreto College Ballarat will, at a minimum, twice daily record attendance, and late arrivals, in the mornings and afternoons; including those days when the class may be off site.
- Mentor teachers will record attendance, and late arrivals, at morning mentor group; including those days when the class may be off site.
- Classroom teachers will record student attendance at the start of each scheduled lesson on a normal school day.
- Classroom teachers will follow up any student who is absent lesson 5 or 6 without notification posted in Simon with assistance from the Mentor Teacher.
- A student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.
- Daily attendance is monitored using the learning management system, SIMON, and a tally of days absent and late arrivals is included on the student's semester reports. The reason for absence will be coded, such as for being sick, medical appointment, school notified, funeral, holidays or other.
- SIMON provides a running tally of attendance accessible by the school, students and parents
- Contact details of parents/guardians will be accurately maintained. Reminders to update contact numbers will be in school newsletters.
- Parents are expected to provide an explanation for students who are absent by 10am. This can be done in by phone, in SIMON or through the College app.
- If a child is absent and no communication has been received from the parent, a phone call will be made by the administration officer by 10am. If no contact is made with the parents/care giver, then the administration officer will inform the principal or relevant wellbeing support staff.
- All records of contact and attempted contact with families regarding student absences will be recorded and the records kept.
- Long term and/or consistent unexplained absences will be followed up by the principal, and parents informed in writing, if the principal deems that the parents have not met their obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*.
- The role description of the administration officer/s will state that they are responsible to follow-up on unexplained absences by 10am or as soon as practical and for maintaining a current register of parent/guardian contact details.
- Student attendance will be accurately recorded on the student report twice per year and unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes will be noted in student file.
- Mentor Teacher and Year Level coordinators will follow up initial concern regarding regular absences.

- Significant absences will be triaged by the Student Wrap Around Team to discuss the most appropriate strategies to support students to return to the classroom.
- Parents should make every effort to book medical (or other) appointments outside of College hours, at weekends or in holiday time.
- If there are exceptional circumstances that parents feel merit their child missing days of school, for reasons other than those outlined above, they must write to the respective Year Level Coordinator at least a month in advance, requesting absence from the College. Year Level Coordinators may authorise up to one day's absence from College. Any requests for absence of up to a week that are judged worthy of consideration, will be passed to a Deputy Principal with any requests for absence for longer than a week being passed to the Principal.
- Students who miss time due to holidays, driving tests or other non-essential reasons may not be set work on the days they miss.
- Significant attendance concerns will lead to discussions about continued enrolment at Loreto College Ballarat.

Out of Home Care Children

Loreto College Ballarat agrees to incorporate the LOOKOUT guidelines as stated in the Victoria Education and Training (VET) guidelines on supporting students who fit the description of Out of Home Care. These students will be reviewed periodically in Student Wrap Around meetings.

Children Missing in Education

If it is believed that a student has significant absences, and this has not been confirmed by a parent carer through appropriate contact the student will be considered a child missing in education (CME). Any student, for whom no contact has been made between home and the school, for ten consecutive school days, will also be considered CME. Throughout the ten-day absence the College will endeavour to contact parents/carers in a range of ways: text alert, phone call, home visits, calling cards left at the residence, speaking to neighbours of the family if the residence looks unoccupied etc. Where a child is absent from school for more than 10 consecutive days the Local authority (LA) will be informed, who may work in partnership with the police to locate the student.

References

- Catholic Church, Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, St Paul Publications, Homebush, NSW, 2002, 14, p. 17, p. 23.
- Public Holidays Act 1993
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cwth.) (ESOS Act).



- Australian Education Act 2013

Related Policies & Procedures

- Loreto College Ballarat Planning the School Year Policy and Procedures
- Loreto College Ballarat Attendance Monitoring Procedures
- Student Attendance: Every Day Counts, Department of Education and Training Victoria