



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **1 PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY**

- 1.1 Minaret College (college) is committed to ensuring the college, students and their parents comply with their legal obligations in relation to the college attendance. The college believes that high levels of school attendance are essential for learning.
- 1.2 The attendance policy sets out the principles and framework governing the college's behaviours and activities that enact the college's legal responsibilities and which support students in attending the college. The policy, together with the policy implementation documents listed in section 9, should be read and understood by all those connected to the college.

### **2 PRINCIPLES**

- 2.1 The college places a high priority on student attendance in the belief that attendance is essential for learning.
- 2.2 The college understands that attendance is impacted by the partnership that is formed between the family and the college.
- 2.3 The college keeps and retains accurate records of student attendance that comply with its regulatory requirements.
- 2.4 The college, in discharging its duty of care, is committed to ensuring unexplained and unexcused absence is communicated promptly and followed up with students and parents.

### **3 AIMS OF THE POLICY**

- 3.1 To encourage and set high expectations in relation to attendance.
- 3.2 To eliminate unexplained or unexcused absence.
- 3.3 To develop strong partnerships with parents and carers in which the importance of attendance and punctuality is a shared goal.
- 3.4 To comply with the requirements of Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic), to monitor attendance, to maintain an attendance register and to report on attendance data to parents and to the authorities as required.

## **4 LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE**

- 4.1 Duty of Care
- 4.2 *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
- 4.3 *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic)
- 4.4 Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards
- 4.5 Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) School Attendance 2014 Guidelines – applies to all registered schools in Victoria, including non-government schools
- 4.6 Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

## **5 KEY DEFINITIONS**

- 5.1 The enrolment register records the students admitted to the college. The college is required to maintain an enrolment register that is accurate, up-to-date and contains the information required by the minimum standard. The college is also required to implement processes and procedures to ensure the register is up to date. The enrolment register determines those students for whom attendance must be registered and monitored.
- 5.2 The Executive Principal means the Principal of the College, or the Principal's authorised representative.
- 5.3 Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of seventeen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at school or in registered home schooling.
- 5.4 Under certain limited conditions, parents may apply for an exemption from attendance.
- 5.5 The attendance register is the record of the attendance of all students. The college is required to record the attendance at the college of any student of compulsory school age and of all enrolled students at least twice on each school day and to note any reason given or apparent for the absence of the student from the college.
- 5.6 In addition, the college must monitor the daily attendance of each student, identify absences of a student from college including classes, follow up any unexplained absences from college or from classes on the day of a student's absence and notify parents regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. The college must also identify the person(s) with responsibility for monitoring daily attendance, maintain current contact details for parents and guardians and accurately record attendance on student files.
- 5.7 The School Attendance Guidelines 2014 state that attendances and absences must be recorded on a half-day basis (primary schools) and for every class (secondary schools) and the reason given or apparent for the absence of the student from the college must be noted.
- 5.8 'A student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction'.

- 5.9 Vic DET's Regional Directors act as School Attendance Officers for all Victorian schools, including non-government schools.
- 5.10 The VCAA states that the school must determine attendance requirements for VCE and VCAL students.
- 5.11 The Annual Report to the School Community must include a report on student attendance.
- 5.12 The Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s 37) requires student enrolment and attendance records to be retained for seven years after end of school year in which the last entry was made. Student attendance records may be audited by either state or commonwealth authorities in order for the authorities to monitor payments made on the basis of student numbers or on the basis of particular categories of students.
- 5.13 Records of enrolment and attendance are required for annual data returns for the Australian Government non-government schools and the Victorian school census under Australian Education Regulation 2013 (s 77).

## **6 SCOPE**

- 6.1 The application of the policy is relevant to the Executive Principal, college staff, students and parents.

## **7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 7.1 The Board is responsible for authorising the attendance policy.
- 7.2 The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring that the college complies with the School Attendance 2014 guidelines as set out by Vic DET and which apply to all registered schools, including non-government schools.
- 7.3 The Executive Principal is responsible for:
  - a) developing strategies that ensure the culture of the college is one in which attendance is given high priority
  - b) developing strong partnerships with families so that the importance of school attendance is a shared commitment.
- 7.4 The Executive Principal is responsible for:
  - c) Ensuring that an attendance register is maintained that accurately records student attendance twice per day for primary schools and student attendance in every class (period X period) for secondary schools.
  - d) Defining what constitutes lateness and how that will be monitored.
  - e) Implementing procedures to record the reason (if any) given by a parent for a child's absence and for determining 'if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations'.
  - f) Use their discretion whilst following the guidelines as set out in the college's attendance procedures to 'decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting

- their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').
- g) Determining the attendance requirements for VCE and VCAL students.
- 7.5 The Executive Principal is responsible for:
- a) Ensuring procedures are implemented so that parents are promptly informed of any absence, including absence from any college -approved activity.
  - b) Notifying parents if the Executive Principal's decision is that the reason for the student's absence is an unexcused absence.
  - c) Ensuring procedures are in place to follow up all unexplained absences.
  - d) Ensuring accurate and comprehensive records are kept of contacts and attempted contacts between the college and parents following an unexplained absence.
- 7.6 The Executive Principal is responsible for developing strategies to respond to poor attendance, persistent absenteeism and college refusal.
- 7.7 The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring the college has clear requirements, guidelines and procedures relating to long, frequent or repeated family holidays.
- 7.8 The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring 'school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns on a school', class and 'individual basis'.
- 7.9 The Executive Principal is responsible for:
- a) Advising parents when an exemption from attendance may be required and supporting parents to apply for the exemption.
  - b) Referring concerns about a student with persistent unexplained absence to the School Attendance Officer.
  - c) Ensuring the attendance register is capable of providing 'evidence for any enforcement proceedings, including' the issuing of an 'Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school'
- 7.10 The Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring the college reports student attendance to the college community at least once a year.
- 7.11 Parents are responsible for ensuring their child attends the college. If their child is absent from the college for all or part of a school day, parents are required to provide an explanation for their child's absence.
- 7.12 Teaching staff, including Casual Relief Teaching staff, and staff leading college-approved activities are responsible for keeping accurate and timely attendance records following the college's procedures.

## **8 COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY**

From time to time, the College will make public statement to demonstrate its commitment to the importance of high levels of attendance and the role that parents play in supporting the college to reach this goal.

Policy implementation documents setting out the strategies and actions required to implement this policy are:

- a) Setting out decisions as to the different types of absences and their recording (Appendix A)
- b) Attendance register and recording of absence reasons (Appendix B)
- c) Detailed procedure for following up and monitoring of absences (Appendix C)

## **9 POLICY REVIEW**

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed in three years, or earlier, if required.
- 9.2 The Board will require the Executive Principal to report on the implementation of the Attendance Policy as part of the Board's discussion of its Annual Report to the college community.

## **10 LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES**

- Duty of Care
- Enrolment Policy
- Enrolment Terms and Conditions
- Student Promotion Policy
- Parent and Student Code of Conduct
- Student Discipline Policy
- Suspension and Expulsion Policy
- Truancy Policy

## **DOCUMENT CONTROL**

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### APPENDIX A: COMMON REASONS FOR ABSENCES

Minaret College has adopted the following table from the Department of Education school attendance Guidelines that apply to all Victorian schools, including non-government schools for common reasons for absences.

	Parent approval required	School required to confirm reason is authentic	Reasonable excuse for parent	General advice for principals	Basis in ETR Act for reasonable excuse	Follow up required
Illness or accident	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Medical/dental appointment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if appointment cannot be scheduled outside school hours	2.1.3(fa)	No, unless absences become excessive
Attending or observing a religious event or obligation	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(f)	No
Suspended	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(d)	Yes (suspension guidelines)
Bereavement such as a death of a family member, attendance at a funeral and/or related mourning activities (sorry business)	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve	2.1.3(fa)	Offer and provide support as required
Truancy	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(e)	Meetings, Attendance Improvement Plan

	Parent approval required	School required to confirm reason is authentic	Reasonable excuse for parent	General advice for principals	Basis in ETR Act for reasonable excuse	Follow up required
School refusal	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents and school are working on plan to address cause	2.1.3(fa)	Yes – meetings to identify and address the cause
Family holiday	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents notify in advance. School policy should be developed for long or frequent/ repeated holidays	2.1.3(fa)	Student Absence Learning Plans developed in conjunction with classroom teachers
Required to comply with another law	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(ii)	No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required
Cultural observance	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parent notifies in advance	2.1.3(fa)	No
Leisure (shopping, visiting relatives)	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Do not approve	2.1.3(fa)	No
Unforeseen event	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied event was unforeseen and prevented attendance	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Unavoidable cause	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied event was unforeseen and prevented attendance	2.1.3(a)(i)	No

	Parent approval required	School required to confirm reason is authentic	Reasonable excuse for parent	General advice for principals	Basis in ETR Act for reasonable excuse	Follow up required
Other – special event or participation in elite sporting events/training	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Case-by-case basis	2.1.3(fa)	No
Exemption	No	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(g)	Ensure any conditions of exemption are met. Monitor attendance at other provider
Employment in the entertainment industry	Yes	Yes (through approving exemption)	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(g)	Yes, to ensure conditions of exemption are complied with



**APPENDIX B: ATTENDANCE REGISTER AND RECORDING OF ABSENCE REASONS**

Minaret College uses Sentral

- School attendance to record primary school attendance twice daily (am and pm)
- Class PXP - to record secondary period by period attendance
- Absence is recorded as explained or unexplained.  
 Explained absence is where notification and explanation has been received from parent regarding absence.  
 Unexplained absence is where no notification /explanation received from parents

The below reasons are used to record an **unexplained** absence:

Reason	Legal Absence?	Circumstances for use
Absent (W)	Yes	Teachers to use when marking roll and student is not present and an explanation is yet to be provided by the parent.
Unjustified (A)	Yes	If no explanation is provided for an 'unexplained absence' within 5 school days it will move automatically to 'unexplained unjustified'.

The below reasons are used to record an **explained** absence:

Reason	Legal Absence?	Circumstances for use
Sick (S)	Yes	Absent due to illness/medical reasons including external medical appointment.
Unjustified (J)	Yes	Typically used for partial absences (eg. Traffic was bad, Dad slept in). May also be used when a reason is given by the parent which lacks reasonable justification for the absence.
Adhoc Leave (D)	Yes	Leave that parent decides to take without pre-approval.
Pre-Approved Leave (P)	Yes	Extended leave that has been pre-approved as per the extended leave process. This can be entered in advance when the leave is approved by the HOS.
School Business (U)	No	Excursions/Incursion or Work experience.
In-School-Suspension (I)	No	To be entered by Coach when a suspension is decided.
Out-Of-School Suspension (E)	Yes	To be entered by Coach when a suspension is decided.
Bereavement (B)	Yes	Funeral, personal bereavement
Flexible Timetable (F)	No	Include flexible timetable, VET activities.
College Bus Late (O)	Yes	To be used for late arrivals when College is late. This will typically be entered by the Admin team when students arrive late.
COVID 19 Health Concerns (C)	Yes	To be used if a parent is choosing to not send their child to school due to concerns about COVID-19 after the year level of that child has returned to face-to-face learning.

