



## TRINITY LUTHERAN COLLEGE

### STUDENT ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

**SCOPE:** Whole college

#### PURPOSE

Procedure for managing student absences and enforcing *parents'* obligation to ensure their child/children are enrolled and attend school or participate in their *eligible option* on every school day.

#### RATIONALE

Each parent of a child who is of *compulsory school age* has the legal obligation to ensure their child is enrolled and attends school, on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled and ensure that the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option (Preparatory to Year 10), unless the parent has a reasonable excuse (Refer Appendix E Reasonable Excuses for Legitimate Absences.)

The college has the legal responsibility to notify the Department of Children Services should the college have evidence to support that one or both parents are not fulfilling his/her/their legal obligation in regard to ensuring that the child attends school each day as per the legislative requirement.

From time to time a student may be absent from their educational program. Parents comply with their compulsory schooling or compulsory participation obligation by providing a satisfactory reason for these absences, unless it is not appropriate for documented reasons to contact the student's parents, in which case an explanation should be sought directly from the student. Parents should provide a reason for a child's absence as soon as possible after the absence. Absences for which a satisfactory reason has been provided are considered explained absences, and the student's enrolment is viewed as continuous. An absence for which a satisfactory reason has not been provided is considered an unexplained absence.

Early identification of students, whose attendance is not regular, is crucial to minimising student absences. The college will take reasonable steps to follow-up on unexplained absences as soon as possible. The college may need to work closely with other agencies to support parents to meet their obligations in regard to the enrolment and attendance or participation of their child.

The college may treat a student's enrolment as having ended only if one or more of the following circumstances arise:

- Student has graduated
- Student has been excluded and their enrolment cancelled
- Student has enrolled in another school
- Student is deceased
- Student has permanently moved interstate or overseas with no intention of returning to the college
- There are indicators which point to the student having voluntarily left the college with no intention of attending the college again in the near future (e.g. school has been advised student has left the college to undertake an apprenticeship full-time)

## GUIDELINES

### Expectations with regards to attendance (with cross reference to FFPOS attendance policy):

- a) The college expects students to be in attendance on each school day.
- b) Student attendance is:
  - i. Checked and recorded at least twice daily
  - ii. Monitored regularly and assessed periodically
  - iii. Recorded and calculated over each semester
- c) Late arrival at college will be recorded and will be included in attendance calculations.
- d) All absences from college should be accompanied by a medical certificate if absence affects a senior school assessment item as per Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements; or an explanatory communication from the student's parent/carer or evidence that the leave has been approved by the relevant Head of Campus.

Absences of 10 or more consecutive school days require an application for exception to be approved by the Head of Campus – please see Appendix B. Extended leave of a personal nature requires prior approval by relevant Head of Campus otherwise the absence will be followed up as an unexplained absence.
- e) Any unexplained absence days should be followed up.
- f) On the Junior Years campus, student attendance will be monitored by the student reception staff on a daily basis to assess student attendance patterns. On the Middle & Senior Years campus, student attendance will be documented by Student Reception staff on a daily basis and documented by the Heads of Year to assess student attendance patterns.
- g) Where a breach of attendance is identified a report will be provided to the Heads of Campus/Deputy Head of Campus/Head of Pastoral Care for breach of college attendance policy and may lead to a formal report to child protection agency or other associated agencies.

Students participating in any of the following activities must be recorded as not physically present at a college campus but will not be recorded as absent for the purpose of report cards or school attendance data:

- **College activity** – A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an authorised activity for college purposes. Examples include students performing in college choirs, bands or dance groups.
- **Excursion** – A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an excursion which occurs outside the college grounds and is conducted, organised and/or approved by the college. Excursions include part-day, full-day or multi-day class visits to venues outside the college, and school camps.
- **Natural Disaster** – A student will not be considered absent if they are unable to attend school due to an extreme weather event or natural disaster. This code may be used whether or not the student is continuing with school work while absent and may be used for full or part-day absences.
- **Sport – Representative** – A student will not be considered absent when they are representing the college, district, region, state or nation at a sporting event approved by the college. For non-representative sport, please refer to Appendix E Reasonable Excuses for Legitimate Absences.

### Circumstances where legal obligations of parents for compulsory schooling and compulsory participation do not apply

Under the following circumstances the legal obligations of parents in regard to **compulsory schooling do not** apply:

- The child is prevented from attending school because he/she is subject to a direction or declaration in relation to an infectious or contagious disease or condition
- The child is suspended or excluded from the college
- The child has established a training contract for an apprenticeship or a traineeship. A copy of the contract is provided to the school or region as evidence of this apprenticeship or traineeship (*s204, Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, EGPA*)
- An exemption has been granted by the college

## Guidelines to address chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy

The issue of absenteeism is complex and covers a range of behaviours, including chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy. It is important for schools to investigate the patterns and underlying causes of non-attendance so that appropriate strategies that address the specific type of absenteeism can be implemented.

There is no quick and simple solution, nor a “one-size-fits-all” approach to address absenteeism. However, partnerships between schools, parents and the local community can assist in reducing absenteeism.

School attendance management practices are crucial to minimising absences. Schools should:

- Identify absences quickly,
- Follow-up promptly, and
- Send clear messages to students and parents that attendance is vital

It is widely recognised that attendance problems are best managed by early identification and intervention.

### Types of absenteeism and possible responses

Terms	Examples	Possible Responses
<b>Chronic absenteeism</b>	<p>Persistent or habitual absence or lateness.</p> <p>Students with high levels of absences, variously defined as 10% or more school days absent in a term.</p> <p>Parents may provide explanations for absences, but these explanations may be considered unreasonable.</p>	<p>Parents and family members play an important role in assisting the student to reintegrate back and remain engaged in school. Schools may wish to advise parents/carers of the below by letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notify parents of their legal obligations and the importance of schooling and of continuity in learning from the early years</li> <li>• Encourage parents to participate in parenting skills training (e.g. organisational skills)</li> <li>• Encourage the development of supportive networks, with other parents (e.g. establish a parent's club)</li> <li>• Encourage parents to seek support from and communicate regularly with teachers and the school.</li> </ul>
<b>School refusal</b>	<p>A form of chronic absenteeism</p> <p>Parents often are aware of the absenteeism but are unable to address it.</p> <p>Students who are almost completely unwilling or unable to attend school because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their past school experiences</li> <li>• Psycho-social reasons related to clinical levels of anxiety</li> <li>• A developed habit of absence</li> </ul>	<p>The school gathers information about the student and family to help understand the nature of and reasons for the absences.</p> <p>The school implements strategies to address issues where appropriate.</p> <p>School support staff such as Heads of Campus/Deputy Heads of Campus, Heads of Pastoral Care, Heads of Year and other pastoral care teachers.</p> <p>Where appropriate the school refers students and parents to relevant professionals (e.g. Counsellors and psychologists) for programs according to the individual student's needs.</p>

<b>Tuancy</b>	<p>Disengagement from school</p> <p>May be accompanied by alienation from the school culture</p> <p>Unexplained absences from school perhaps without the knowledge of the parent/s</p>	<p>Where the reasons for truancy pertain to aspects of the school (e.g. poor relationships with teachers), the school implements strategies to address these aspects.</p> <p>The college alone may not be able to address all of the needs of the student (e.g. domestic violence at home, child abuse, etc.). The college may work with the family and liaise with other agencies such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Children Services</li> <li>• Queensland Police Child Protection Investigation Unit, and</li> <li>• Other relevant non-government organisations.</li> </ul>
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## Responsibilities

### Parents:

- 1) Ensure their child arrives at college or commences their educational program on time every day
- 2) Ensure their child attends college or their educational program every school day
- 3) Minimise disruption to their child's school day so their child has the best opportunity to learn
- 4) Contact the college prior to any planned absences
- 5) Provide an explanation (preferably in writing) for each absence, either before or as soon as possible within 2 days of the child's return to college, in accordance with the college's communication processes.

This may take the form of:

- A medical certificate
- A written explanation containing the student's name, date of absence(s) and reasons for absence(s)
- A verbal explanation to the college through either a phone call or visit to the school
- Any other form of communication agreed by the Head of Campus
- Ensure their child follows the college's recommended processes and procedures for late arrival and early departure:
  - For Middle Years students – Parents/carers must be present at Student Reception to sign their student in late or out early.
  - For Senior Year students – Students must provide a written explanation from their parent/carer prior to sign in late or out early.
- Notify the college if their child will be late using the college's recommended communication processes. This may take the form of:
  - Accompanying the child to the college
  - Phoning the college
  - Providing the child with a signed and dated note

### Head of Campus/Heads of Wellbeing/Pastoral Care/Heads of Year/Pastoral Care teachers:

- Inform parents of their legal obligations about enrolment and attendance
- Implement strategies to manage student enrolment, absences, chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy using the guidelines to address chronic absenteeism, school refusal and truancy
- Monitor student absences and identify when a student is absent for three or more consecutive days, or where there is a pattern of persistent unexplained absences, or where a student's attendance rate is reasonably considered to be unsatisfactory

- Take reasonable steps to follow-up unexplained absences as soon as possible, or ideally within three days of the absence
- Continue to work with relevant agencies to engage with the student and their family with the aim of returning the student to the college
- Follow appropriate processes for enforcing parental obligation in regard to attendance

#### **Heads of Campus:**

- Follow appropriate processes for enforcing parental obligation in regard to:
  - Enrolment
  - Attendance
  - Compulsory participation
- Keep a record of the reports made to external authorities for Principal

#### **Appendices:**

**Appendix A: Reminder notice to parents: Procedures for notifying student absence**

**Appendix B: Application for Exemption from School Attendance**

**Appendix C: Student Attendance Guidelines – Appendix C**

For staff only. Available on the MyUnity Staff Policies & Procedures Page.

**Appendix D: Staff Procedures for Following Up on Student Absences**

For staff only. Available on the MyUnity Staff Policies & Procedures Page.

**Appendix D1 – Ashmore Road Campus**

**Appendix D2 – Cotlew Street Campus**

**Appendix E: Reasonable Excuses for Legitimate Absences**

#### **Reference:**

**Education Queensland website:**

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/management/Pages/Managing-Student-Absences-and-Enforcing-Enrolment-and-Attendance-at-State-Schools.aspx>



## Appendix A:

### REMINDER

#### PROCEDURES FOR NOTIFYING STUDENT ABSENCE

If it is known in advance that a student will be absent on a certain day or part of it, parents are requested to send a note prior to that day, as appropriate, to the relevant Student Reception Office and Class Teacher.

If a student is to be unexpectedly absent (i.e. sick etc.) **parents are requested to telephone the relevant school reception between 8.00 and 8.45 am** informing the school of the reason for the absence. This should be followed up by a written note from the parent upon the student's return to the college. It would be most helpful if parents could remember to phone the school **by 8.45 am** to reduce the number of phone calls from the college to follow up on un-notified absences or unnecessary text messages regarding student absences from the college. Details below are for Junior/Middle and Senior School:

**Phone: ABSENTEE HOTLINE 5556 8207**

**OR**

**email: [absentee@tlc.qld.edu.au](mailto:absentee@tlc.qld.edu.au).**

(The college will send an email reply to confirm and verify the notification)

#### SIGNING IN/OUT

Cotlew Street campus: The normal school day commences at 8.40 am, and concludes at 3.00 pm (2.45 pm for Prep students).

Ashmore Road campus: The normal school day commences at 8.35 am, and concludes at 3.15 pm.

If students arrive late, please ensure that the student is signed in at the office prior to going to the classroom. Likewise, if a student needs to be excused for any reason, please sign your child out and ensure the teacher is informed.

Under the Commission for Children and Young Person and Child Guardian Act (2000) the college is obliged to notify the Child Protection and Investigation Unit (CPU) if a student is absent an excessive number of times without appropriate reason/s.

**Appendix B:**

**Application for Exemption from School Attendance**

(Complete for anticipated student absence of 10 or more consecutive school days or absence from school camps)

**Part A – to be completed by applicant**

<b>Student Details</b>		
Student Name		
Student DOB	Year Level	
<b>Parent/Carer 1 Details</b>		
Name		
Address		
Phone Number		
<b>Exemption Details</b>		
What dates is the exemption sought for?	Start:	End:
Total number of school days exemption sought for:		
For what reason is the exemption sought?		
Medical condition / illness / hospitalisation	[ ]	
'Carer' responsibilities	[ ]	
Extended travel	[ ]	<i>Please attach any supporting evidence or comments separately</i>
Family reasons	[ ]	
Other (please provide details separately)	[ ]	
<b>Signatures</b>		
Signature of parent/carers		Date
<b>Additional Information</b>		
Once this form is submitted to Trinity Lutheran College, the Head of Campus/Principal will communicate their decision in writing to the applicant within 10 days.		
If required, additional information may be sought from the applicant and timeframes will be extended accordingly. This will be appropriately communicated to the applicant.		

## Part B – to be completed by Head of Campus/Principal

Previous Exemption Details		
I have previously granted the following exemptions for the applicant for <b>this year</b> :		
1. Start:	End:	Number of school days:
2. Start:	End:	Number of school days:
3. Start:	End:	Number of school days:
Total number of exemptions:		Total number of school days student exempted:
<i>Note, if the period of the exemption that is the subject of this application would, if it were granted, cause the total period of exemptions granted for the student to be more than 110 school days in the current year, the Head of Campus/Principal cannot make a decision regarding this application. Instead, an application must be made to the Office of Non-State Education at the Department of Education and Training on their approved form.</i>		
Exemption Decision		
<p><b>Granted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> I grant the exemption for this student as requested, to apply as follows: Start: _____ End: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> *I grant the exemption for this student for a lesser period than what was requested, being: Start: _____ End: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> *I grant the exemption for this student with the following conditions:		
<p> <i>For students in the compulsory participation phase:</i>            The exemption is:    Full [ ]                      Partial [ ]                      If partial, the exempt FTE is [ ]</p> <p><i>The exemption may apply until the end of the compulsory participation phase, or until an earlier time. Please ensure that you have indicated this clearly in the relevant section above.</i></p>		
<p><b>Not granted</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> *I do not grant the exemption for this student		
Signature of Head of Campus/Principal:		Date:
Title:		

Please complete the appropriate response to send to the applicant.

For exemptions granted as requested, sending a copy of this form to the applicant is sufficient.

**Once complete, this form and any supporting evidence or comments must be kept on the student's electronic file for at least 5 years and a copy sent to the applicant.**

**Copies to Pastoral Care Teacher and Student Reception**

## Appendix E:

### REASONABLE EXCUSES FOR LEGITIMATE ABSENCES

The following circumstances will be considered legitimate absences for which a reasonable excuse has been given:

**Illness** – It is reasonable that a child may be absent from school when they are genuinely too ill to attend. On any single day of absence due to illness, or as soon as possible within 2 days of the student's return to school, a parent should provide the college with an explanation for the absence, in line with the college's agreed processes for notifying of student absence. This may take the form of a written explanation through either a phone call or visit to the college, or a medical certificate. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required.

**Infectious or contagious disease** – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if the child is subject to a direction or order given about an infectious or contagious disease or condition.

**Medical or dental treatments or procedures** – In some circumstances it may be reasonable for a student to be absent to attend a medical or dental appointment during school hours, however parents are encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours if possible.

**Holiday** – Holidays during term are actively discouraged. Parents should be encouraged to plan holidays during gazetted school holidays and student free days. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required.

**Religious observance** – In some circumstances it may be reasonable for a student to be absent to participate in a special religious observance. These absences should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from the parent.

**Sport – Non-representative** – The Principal will use their professional judgement to determine if it is reasonable for a student to be absent from school to participate in a sporting event where they are not representing the college, district, region, state or nation, taking into consideration the type of event and the organising sporting body.

**External Suspension** – Suspension is a reasonable excuse for absence. The teacher will take reasonable steps to ensure the student is given work to complete during suspension.

**Commonwealth Law** – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if a Law of the Commonwealth allows a child to carry on an activity other than attending school.

**Funeral** – Attendance at a funeral or to attend to sorry business or sorry meetings may be considered a reasonable excuse for absence. Parents should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible. There may also be circumstances where a child is kept out of school due to grief of a close family member. In such circumstances, the college will work with families to encourage them to have the child attend school to maintain a sense of normalcy. These situations will be handled with respect and sensitivity and will be underpinned by the interests of the child.

**Legal** – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school where the child is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements.