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Student Non-Attendance

The Hazard - Student Non-Attendance

Student non-attendance is the absence from school of a school aged student, without the consent of parents/guardians, during school hours.

Common reasons for student non-attendance include boredom at school, embarrassment and frustration at poor performance, fear of bullying or harassment, drug dependency, family stress or conflict, homelessness and defiance of authority.

Student non-attendance can compound the problems of students who are already behind in class as a result of behavioural, emotional or learning difficulties. They gradually fall further behind in their studies and jeopardise their chances of completing their education.

This increases the risk of students dropping out of school, becoming involved in delinquency and criminal activity and ultimately, reducing their adult employment prospects.

Enrolment & Attendance Policies

In line with our legal obligations, St. Francis of the Fields has developed detailed policies and procedures to manage our obligations relating to Enrolment and Attendance of Students. Refer to our Student Enrolment Policy and Student Attendance Policy.

This policy has been developed specifically to manage issues relating to student non-attendance.

St. Francis of the Fields' Policy

St. Francis of the Fields is committed to the management of regular school attendance and providing a safe and positive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation.

It is our policy that:

- All unauthorised absences from school are unacceptable;
- High expectations of attendance will be made known to all students;
- Processes for unexplained student absences are implemented to reduce absenteeism and ensure the safety of students;
- Student- Non-Attendance prevention strategies are developed and implemented with the school community considering the needs of students; and
- Early intervention strategies and family support programs will be provided.

Management of Non-Attendance - Immediate

School absenteeism is monitored closely to identify students who are failing to attend school as required.

To avoid suspicion, parents/guardians are required to contact the school prior to school commencement time to explain their child's absence, late arrival or request for early leave.

All teachers are required to take a roll call in every class. Any student absences are recorded by the class teacher.

Where a student is absent the school, administration reviews absentee notifications to identify any students that are absent where no notification of absence has been received from a parent/guardian.

Where a student is absent without explanation and cannot be located within an hour parents/guardians are forwarded a text message to their mobile phones in the following terms:

St. Francis of the Fields records indicate that your child [insert name] is absent from school without explanation. Please contact us as a matter of urgency.

If the student's parents/guardians do not contact the school within one hour of sending the text message, attempts will be made to call the parents/guardians and confirm the location of the student.

Management of Non-Attendance - Parental Notifications

Where parents repeatedly fail to notify the school of legitimate absences, the school will write a letter to parents requesting that they comply with the school's notification procedures.

In cases of serious non-compliance, the school may request that the parents/guardians attend a meeting with the Principal to discuss the importance of parental notifications in ensuring the safety of all students.

Persistent Non-Attendance

All students found to be consistently failing to attend school as required, will be subject to the consequences as outlined in the Discipline – Student Policy.

Where absences are recurrent the school will investigate the student's absences having regard to factors such as the day of the week, the class, subject or year level and particular social group that may affect their attendance.

Parents/guardians will be contacted to discuss issues which may be related to student's non-attendance. Where appropriate, the school will work with the parents/guardians and the student to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

Whole School Approach- Strategies to Reduce Student Absence and Lateness

St. Francis of the Fields adopts a number of prevention strategies that are in line with the Victorian Government's Every Day Counts Program. The following table provides strategies proven by schools to reduce student absence and lateness. St. Francis of the Fields adopts the strategies that are appropriate for the school's environment.

Teaching Staff Responsibilities -Engagement Strategies for Teachers

Teaching Staff are expected to:

- Encourage all students in the class to take responsibility for each other's safety;
- Model and develop a culture of trust;
- Model effective timekeeping practices, for example returning work promptly, arriving and finishing classes on time;

- Communicate and promote the school's attendance expectations regarding the importance of attending school every day and arriving on time by:
 - Talking to students about why it is important to be at school and discuss the school's attendance policy.
 - Talking positively about regular attendance.
- Contact parents to follow up student absence to:
 - Ensure that all teachers are responsible for contact.
 - Use agreed timelines and protocols across the school and within teams for parent contact.
 - Provide for long-term absences through classroom teachers organising meaningful work as required.

Workers' Responsibility

All workers are responsible to ensure that:

- Students are made aware of the importance of regular attendance and notification of absences;
- Accurate records of student attendance are maintained; and
- Where they have suspicions relating to possible behaviour that is thought to be associated with non-attendance, they raise this with their Principal.

Signage

The following posters are displayed throughout the school:

- Every Day Counts Poster (Primary School)

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- Development and implementation of a whole school strategy in line with the Victorian Governments 'Every Day Counts' Program to encourage regular attendance and to reduce non-attendance;
- Implement strategies to address specific needs of each individual student, according to their reasons for non-attendance;
- Development and promotion of positive relationships within the school by implementing programs that develop social and emotional skills, peer tutoring, mentoring and anti-bullying strategies;
- Establishing positive home-school relationships to assist parents/guardians to support their child's attendance at school;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.