

Nelson College Policy

Legislation



1.1 ATTENDANCE

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Contact: Headmaster

Group: Leadership Team

Date effective: Aug 2016

Review date: Aug 2019

Reviewed by: LT

Policy Statement

Nelson College will provide a safe emotional environment for all students and provide appropriate procedures for maintaining attendance records and ensuring the attendance of the students on our roll.

Policy Rationale

The *Attendance Regulations (1951)* require a school board of trustees of each state and integrated school in New Zealand to maintain attendance records.

The *Education Act (1989)* requires schools to ensure the attendance of the students on their roll and to minimise truancy and to provide a safe emotional environment for students.

Responsibilities for implementation:

- Board of Trustees
Will delegate responsibility for the implementation of the policy to the Senior Leadership Team.
- Leadership Team
Will ensure the Policies and Procedures relating to attendance are communicated to all staff, students and parents.
- Deputy Headmaster
Will implement the procedures and processes as detailed in the policy and associated appendices
- Guidance & Deans Team
Will provide appropriate feedback and support to staff and the Leadership Team.
- Teachers
Will be aware of the policy and will follow the associated procedures.

Procedures

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

1. Student attendance for every teaching session will be recorded in the school's SMS by class teachers or the attendance officer. (henceforward referred to as the 'Office')
2. During Homeroom Period at the start of the day. Homeroom Teachers will record student attendance and absences, using the SMS or for relievers ...on a pre-printed Form List which they will send to the Office. At the beginning of period one the Office will enter the data into the SMS.

Each period teachers will take an alphabetical list of all students with absentees clearly identified and entered into the SMS. At the end of the week the Office will put a printout of each Homeroom class' attendance in the pigeonholes of all Homeroom Teachers.

Procedures for the follow up of non-attendance are attached as an appendix flow chart.

ABSENCE CODE

3. All absences will initially be recorded as '?' by the Teachers or the Office, unless they have received prior notification of the absence, in which case they will use the appropriate symbol under the Attendance Code 2008.

UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

4. When a student is marked absent for Homeroom, Period one and Period two, and that absence hasn't been explained beforehand, the Office will attempt to contact a parent/caregiver by phone, email or text message. If an explanation is received by the Office, the SMS will be updated with the Attendance Codes 2008.
5. If the Office has been unable to find a reason for a student's absence the Home Teacher/Dean/DP will subsequently record the reason for the absence in the SMS, using the Attendance Codes 2008.

IMPENDING ABSENCE

6. Whenever possible, parents/caregivers will be encouraged to advise the school of an impending absence ahead of time. When this is not possible, then parents/caregivers will be asked to inform the school as soon as possible after the event (e.g. by phone on the day of a student's illness, or by note on the first day when the student returns to school).
7. If parents/caregivers advise the school of an impending absence of five school days or more, and request work to be provided for the student, then the Homeroom Teacher will collect work from the student's subject teachers and arrange for it to be sent to the student. Work will not normally be provided for absent students under any other circumstances.
8. In addition to a verbal explanation from a parent/caregiver over the phone in response to the Office's call, the following methods of explaining student absences, either before or after the event, will be accepted from parents/caregivers:
 - i. a phone call
 - ii. a face-to-face explanation
 - iii. a note, or a text message to the school's 'absence' phone,
 - iv. an email message to school
 - v. a certificate from a health professional (as defined by the Principal)

NOTE: Parents should be requested to provide:

- vi. the student's name and form class
- vii. the date of and reason for the absence

CAREGIVER CONTACT

9. If the absence remains unexplained when the student returns to school, the Homeroom Teacher will seek to obtain an absence note through the student. The process outlined in the appendix will be followed.

UNJUSTIFIED ABSENCE

10. When an absence is deemed (in terms of school policy) to be 'unjustified', the Dean (or Office) will contact the parents/caregivers, either by phone or email. The aim of this contact is to alert parents/caregivers to the fact that the absence falls outside what is acceptable to the school.

ESCALATION POINTS

11. If a student is referred to the Dean for 'unjustified' absences, the Dean will consult the DHM who will consider referring the matter to the Truancy Service or other relevant agency in consultation with the Headmaster.
12. Frequent truancy(as defined in this policy) and/or attendance rates below 80% will constitute the implementation of more formal support processes to assist the student in attending school more regularly.
These processes may or may not include the involvement of the MOE or other support agencies.
13. The school will, where appropriate, also engage the use of the Rock-On program and processes (which involves other agencies including the Ministry of Education, Police, Child Youth and Family, Attendance Services) to assist in improving attendance rates of frequently truant students.

STATISTICS

14. The DHM will review the school's attendance/absence statistics regularly and, where there is a concern, will discuss it with the relevant class teacher or Dean or HOD, with a view to agreeing on a strategy to deal with the concern. The DHM will also analyse the data in terms of gender, ethnicity, year levels, etc and will draw to the attention of the Headmaster any negative patterns that may emerge, together with a proposed strategy on how to address them.

ENROLMENT PACK

15. Information on attendance requirements and absence protocols will be given to parents/caregivers as part of the school's Enrolment Pack. This information will also be placed on the school's website and a reminder notice will be put in the school Newsletter at least once a year. If generic problems arise from time to time over student absences, then a further notice about the issue(s) will be put in the school Newsletter. The DHM will be responsible for all this information.

ROLL AUDIT

16. In order to comply with the requirements of a roll audit, all class teachers will complete paper returns for five days around 1 March and 1 July (ie for the two school days prior to the date in question, on that date, and for the two school days immediately after that date). On these days pre-printed class lists will be used for every period and signed by the class teacher. They will be collected each period and collated by the Student office who will input the information into the SMS, and who will also check that those class teachers inputting their own information into the SMS have entered it correctly and completely.

HEADMASTER'S DISCRETION

17. In the case of a student who is engaged in learning that is taking place not under the direct supervision of the school, the Headmaster will use his discretion to decide as to whether the student will be marked as present or absent from school.

Each case will be taken on its merits. When the Homeroom Teacher/Dean/DHM becomes aware that this situation has arisen and requires a ruling from the Principal, (s)he will make application to the Principal who will make an appropriate decision.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- *Explained absence*: An absence for which the explanation is accepted by the school as the reason for the absence. The decision on whether an explained absence is 'justified' or 'unjustified' will be largely determined by the school's attendance policy. (See note below)

- *Justified absence*: An explained absence within the school's policy as an acceptable reason for the student to be away from school.
- *Unjustified absence*: An absence that is either unexplained or, explained but the explanation is not within the school's policy as an acceptable reason for the student to be away from school.
- *Intermittent unjustified absence*: One or more unjustified absences totalling less than two hours within a school day
- *Overseas*: The student is known to be overseas and the Principal has documentation confirming his/her intention to return to the school within 15 weeks.
- *Truancy*: The total of all of a student's unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences.
- *Frequent truancy*: Truancy that occurs on more than 20% of the half days which the school is open taken over a four-week period.
- *Attendance rate*: A percentage based on the: (number of half days for which the schools was open, less the sum of all absences) divided by the number of half days in the time period:
 - i.e. $100\% - (\text{Justified absences} + \text{Unjustified absences} + \text{Intermittent absences} + \text{Overseas absences})$

NOTE: Any generic guidelines used by a school to determine whether an absence is 'Justified' or 'Unjustified' do not preclude the Principal from using discretion over any specific student absence.