RATIONALE

Education in a young person’s life is extremely important in terms of health and well-being, peer relationships and future career options. The Education Act in Tasmania requires that children of school age are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Education Department. It is a legal requirement in Tasmania for every child between the ages of five (5) and seventeen (17) to attend school on a full time basis unless otherwise exempted. Schools are required to maintain an accurate record of student attendance.

St Aloysius Catholic College supports the legislation and believes that students need to attend school every day in order to fulfil their potential and achieve excellence.

The Principal and staff have a duty of care towards students attending the College at any given time. The Principal, as part of his/her day-to-day management of the College, has a responsibility to follow up unexplained absences of students enrolled at the College. The Principal, Campus Directors and class teachers will monitor continued and unexplained absences of students.

Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in their learning, causing them to find ‘catching up’ difficult. Absenteeism contributes significantly to student failure at school.

The St Aloysius Catholic College Attendance Policy aims to ensure students and parents/guardians have a clear understanding of the importance of regular attendance. It is important that students, staff and parents/guardians have a shared understanding of the Importance of attending school.

At St Aloysius Catholic College, we:

- Believe all students should be enrolled at school and attend school all day, every school day.
- Believe attendance at school is the responsibility of everyone in the community.
- Believe non-attendance or truancy can place students in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and life choices.
- Monitor, communicate and implement strategies to improve regular school attendance.

PURPOSE

To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that students are required to attend school and do so regularly, and without unnecessary or frivolous absences.

RESPONSIBILITIES

School Responsibilities

- A safe and supportive learning environment.
- Clear communication of expected dates of attendance.
Develop support structures to enable students to re-engage with their schooling, as applicable.

**Student Responsibilities**
- Punctual, regular school attendance.
- Commitment to learning.

**Parent Responsibilities**
- Ensure the child attends school and that it is seen as a priority.
- Notify school promptly of student absence.
- Ensure a safe and reliable mode of transport to and from school.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

1. All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
2. While illness is reasonable grounds for an absence, shopping excursions or birthday parties are not.
3. Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
4. Parents have a further responsibility to provide either a written note or telephone call informing the College about the absence.
5. The Principal has a responsibility to ensure that attendance records are maintained and monitored at school.
6. All student absences are recorded daily by teachers and are aggregated on our database.
7. Daily telephone calls are placed by the College Office Staff to ascertain the status of absent students.
8. The Principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism are adequately explained. The Principal will contact parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences, using the protocols issued by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office. (See below.)
9. Student attendance and absence data will appear on student end of year reports.

**PROCEDURES AND RESPONSE TO STUDENT ABSENCES**

1. Parents/guardians are requested to telephone the College Office prior to 9.00 am to inform of their child/children’s absence and the reason for the absence. Alternatively, parents may inform the class teacher/s of the absence. If the absence extends beyond one day, parents/guardians are asked to telephone the College Office each day the child is absent.
2. Office staff will contact parents/guardians by 9.30am each day to ascertain the whereabouts of any child who has not been advised as absent by parents/guardians.
3. Parents/guardians are requested to inform the Principal in advance and in writing of any anticipated extended absences from school, e.g. for health, family or holiday reasons.
4. A request is made for a Medical Certificate if the student is absent for 2 or more consecutive days or within one teaching week.

**TRUANCY**

Truancy occurs when a student chooses not to attend school without parental consent. At St Aloysius Catholic College, reports of truancy are taken seriously. Parents/guardians should report any suspected truancy by contacting the College by phone.
PROLONGED STUDENT ABSENCES

Prolonged student absences are generally a matter of:
- Illness/health
- Attendance at intra-state and inter-state competitions
- Family holidays during school terms

Students are not encouraged to be absent without good reason. Long absences and or inconsistent attendance may result in the student failing to meet specific curriculum requirements and consequently affect their overall academic progress and development.

In times of prolonged absences and upon request from the parent/guardian, teachers will provide academic support, appropriate to the student’s needs at the time. Older students have a responsibility to request and complete any missed work ad/or assessments once they have returned to school. Parents/guardians can request work from teachers to be completed at home by contacting the classroom teacher in K-6 years and the homeroom teacher in Grades 7 – 10.

Attendance at Intra-State or Inter-State Competitions

In the event of a student seeking permission to be absent for a prolonged period of time for such competitions, it is the parent/guardian’s obligation to obtain permission by applying in writing to the Principal ahead of time so appropriate staff may be informed.

Please note that students may be advised not to take leave during particular times of the year, depending upon the specific request, for example, during Grade 10 exams.

For older students, it will be their obligation to:
- Obtain work from teachers of all subjects so that study patterns are not interrupted.
- Make sure all written work necessary to meet the requirements of the curriculum is submitted for assessment upon return to school.

Family Holidays in Term Time

There may be occasions when there is an exceptional travel opportunity or cause for travel for the student and family for certain reasons. It is the parent/guardian’s obligation to inform the Principal in writing regarding the intended holiday, giving details of the dates in which the student will be absent from school.

For older students, it is their responsibility to inform teachers of their absence and to complete any missed work and/or assessments in their own time. Teachers generally do not prepare work for students to complete during such absence.

TASMANIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE (TCEO) PROTOCOLS FOR UNEXPLAINED AND UNAPPROVED ABSENCES

1. If a student is absent for five (5) consecutive days and there has been no notification from the parents/guardians, the Office staff will contact the parents/guardians to establish the reason for the child’s absence. A letter will be sent to the parents/guardians asking them to make contact with the Principal to discuss the matter.

2. If a student is absent for ten (10) days in any one school term or if there is a pattern of absence which is of significant concern, a letter is sent to the parents/guardians outlining attendance concerns and asking them to attend a meeting with the Principal.

3. If a student is absent for fifteen (15) days in any one school term, the College will initiate a case management approach, involving a meeting with the parents/guardians, with an emphasis on a plan to support the student’s return to regular attendance. If there is difficulty in contacting the parents/guardians, sending a letter by registered mail may be necessary.
4. The Principal will inform the TCEO when a student has been absent (unauthorised) from school for **fifteen (15) days or more**. The TCEO will ensure that an investigation is made and appropriate measures are undertaken, including prosecution where appropriate.

**EVALUATION**

*This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed as part of the College’s three-year review cycle.*

Implemented: February 2009.