

# SIENA COLLEGE CAMBERWELL STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY



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POLICY TITLE: STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

## DEVELOPED / REVIEWED BY

College Executive  
Heads of House  
Sienna College Policy Committee  
MACS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools)

## REVIEW SUMMARY

All schools must have documented procedures for monitoring school attendance. Principals should contact the MACS Regional General Manager for assistance in addressing complex attendance and exemption matters.

## DOCUMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This document was first developed by Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy, Antonella Rosati, and Human Resources Manager, Sarah Egan, in June 2022 based on a review and revision of the current suite of policies supporting the updated Child Safe Standards 2022.

## RATIONALE

In accordance with the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006* (Vic.) (the Act) and the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic.), school attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted by the Department of Education and Training. Sienna College applies this regulation to all students enrolled at the College, regardless of age.

Whilst ensuring student attendance at the College is a legal obligation of parents/guardians/carers, supporting students to attend the College each day is the shared responsibility of all parents/guardians/carers, students, the College, and the wider community.

Attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. Positive engagement with schooling enhances academic and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people. Attending the College every school day for the whole day enables students to participate in the College educational program as well as develop their social skills. Regular attendance enables the College to:

- plan an organised educational program that is delivered in a consistent way and has continuity
- facilitate shared student learning experiences that support the educational program
- monitor student progress and adjust the educational program to meet student needs. All schools must maintain attendance records, identify, and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain student attendance.

## DEFINITIONS

<b>attendance</b>	A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the College (for example an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program at another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of funding (if appropriate) and the student's Personalised Learning Plan.
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<b>parent/guardian/carer</b>	Includes a guardian/carer and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the <i>Family Law Act 1975 (Cwlth)</i> and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.
<b>unexplained or unapproved absences</b>	<p>A principal can approve or not approve any absence, based on the requirements of the <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</i>, an individual school policy or on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>The Act provides some examples of what a reasonable excuse is for the purposes of explaining a school absence and includes, amongst other considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illnesses and accidents</li> <li>• Unforeseen and unexplained circumstances</li> <li>• If the absence was a result of complying with another law</li> <li>• The child is receiving distance education through a registered school</li> <li>• The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment</li> <li>• The child has been suspended or negotiated transfer/expelled</li> <li>• The child is attending or observing a religious event or obligation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Unexplained Absence</b> Sienna College will record an absence as unexplained if no explanation about the absence is given to the College by the parent/guardian/carer of the student. If the parent/guardian/carer does not contact the College to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the College must attempt to contact the parent or legal guardian either by phone or in writing and seek a clarification for the absence. If no contact can be made with the parent/guardian/carer of the child within 10 days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and a note will be made in the child's file. A parent/guardian/carer can contact the principal at any time after the recorded absence to provide an explanation.</p> <p><b>Unapproved Absence</b> In general, Sienna College may record an absence as unapproved when no reasonable explanation has been given for the student's absence. If a reason given for a student absence is not approved by Sienna College, then the College will notify the parent/guardian/carer in writing.</p>
<b>exemption</b>	<p>The <i>Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)</i> allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in certain circumstances, where the student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• will be participating in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full-time basis</li> <li>• is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry.</li> </ul> <p>An exemption from school attendance and enrolment may also be granted where leaving school is in the best interests of the student. All applications for exemptions are considered on a case-by-case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision, the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the student's educational progress, wellbeing and development are</p>

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	<p>also considered. A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.</p> <p>Exemptions, including written approval for student attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time, can only be authorised by the MACS Regional General Manager in conjunction with the College Principal.</p>
<b>personalised learning plan</b>	<p>Are a way of mapping where a student is now and developing a clear pathway to where they want to be. It is also a way of predicting any obstacles, such as dealing with grief, and putting in place ways of considering options.</p>

## PRINCIPLES / GUIDING PRINCIPLES

<p>All schools must maintain attendance records, identify, and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain student attendance.</p> <p>All schools must have documented procedures for monitoring and recording school attendance. Schools must record student attendance in every class in secondary schools and must record, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to meet legislative requirements, discharge schools' duty of care for all students, and meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students). All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above.</p> <p>Siena College should contact their MACS Regional General Manager for assistance in addressing complex attendance and exemption matters.</p>
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## PROCEDURES

<p><b>Parent/guardian/carer</b></p> <p>Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school (Siena College) and always ensure the child attends when the College is open for instruction, unless exemption from attendance has been granted, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment. For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation on each occasion to the College.</p> <p><b>Students</b></p> <p>Students enrolled at Siena College are expected to attend during normal school hours every day of term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment.</p> <p><b>Principal and/or Delegate</b></p> <p>The principal and /or Delegate must ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• that Siena College has an attendance policy</li> <li>• attendance records are maintained – daily attendance of each student enrolled at the College is recorded for every class (and that records are kept in accordance with applicable recordkeeping standards, including the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards)</li> <li>• any absences of a student from the College, including classes, are identified</li> <li>• reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded in writing</li> <li>• explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act</li> <li>• follow up any unexplained absences of a student by contacting the parent/guardian/carer of the student as soon as practicable on the same day</li> <li>• parents/guardians/carers are notified promptly regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. If, upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent/guardian/carer reports their child was not living with them on that day, the school should</li> </ul>
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ensure they notify another parent/guardian/carer who was responsible for ensuring the child attended the College on the relevant day/s

- if contact cannot be made with the parent, contact should be made with the emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the College
- information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes is recorded on their student file
- parents/guardians/carers are informed of their responsibilities around attendance
- initiatives are implemented which aim to promote parental/guardian/carer awareness of the importance of children attending the College every day
- attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development, which may include Attendance Student Support Group, Personalised Learning Plan, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan
- strategies are implemented for supporting attendance of students in out-of-home care, students experiencing homelessness, students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families, overseas students, students with disabilities, students with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and newly arrived families
- The MACS Regional General Manager is to be advised prior to a referral to a DET School Attendance Officer required when a student has been absent from the College on at least five full days in the previous 12 months without a reasonable excuse for absence
  - refer to the Every Day Counts flowchart on the CEVN webpage:  
<https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Student-Support/Attendance>
- implementation of referral processes to Child FIRST or Child Protection, MACS and the DET School Attendance Officer where required.
  - refer to Child Protection and Child Safe Standards (PROTECT).

## RESPONSIBILITY

- Principal (Primary responsibility)
- Deputy Principal Wellbeing and Strategy
- All Sienna College Teaching Staff

## RELATED LEGISLATION

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)
- Education and Training reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)

## RELATED SIENA COLLEGE POLICIES

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy June 2022
- Student Behaviour Policy June 2022
- Student Pastoral Care Policy July 2022
- Supervision Policy September 2022

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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Department of Education and Training (Vic.) 2021 School Attendance Guidelines
- Department of Education and Training (Vic.) 2020 Exemption from School Attendance or Enrolment
- Department of Education and Training (Vic.) 2020 Seven Attendance Improvement Strategies

## RISK

In the Committee's deliberations it is important to consider the College's main strategic processes and the identification of associated risks. Some sample questions are included for referral.

Answers are to be documented as part of the policy.

1. **Faith and Catholic Identity.** Identify any risks to Catholic Identity or Dominican charism of the school. How will this policy harm or enhance either?
2. **Reputation.** Identify if there are any reputational risks to the College. How will this policy impact Siena and wider communities?
3. **Financial.** Identify any financial risks to the College. How will this policy impact the financial stability of the College?
4. **Contemporary Learning and Teaching.** Identify any risks to learning and teaching. How will this policy impact the academic performance of the College?
5. **Wellbeing.** Identify any risks to safety and wellbeing. How will this policy impact the mental and physical wellbeing of the College community?
6. **Community Engagement.** Identify any risks to building community engagement. How will this policy impact community relationships?
7. **Governance and Leadership.** Identify any risks to governance and leadership in the College. How will this policy affect the strategic direction of the College?

Do any risks identified above warrant changes to the proposed policy? If so the policy should be referred back to the developer/s.

## NEXT REVIEW

July 2025

## POLICY LOCATION

<https://sienacentral.siena.vic.edu.au/homepage/3452>

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