

SALAMAH COLLEGE
Education Faith Discipline



STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Reviewed June 2022

RATIONALE

Regular attendance at school is crucial if students are to develop their talents. Salamah College, in partnership with parents, is in charge of maintaining the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, school staff as part of their duty of care, share that responsibility in monitoring and responding to part or whole day absences.

AIM

The School aims to encourage a positive and supportive learning environment for all the students by following the attendance policy which students along with parents and School staff work together to make sure that all enrolled students attend their classes and other scheduled educational activities. The school has in place intervention strategies such as home visits and offering students incentives to improve their attendance at the school.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Section 22 of the [Education Act \(1990\)](#) states that it is the duty of the parent of a child of [compulsory school-age](#) to cause the child:

(a) to be enrolled at, and to attend, a government school or a registered non-government school, or
(b) to be registered for home schooling with the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) and to receive instruction in accordance with the conditions to which the registration is subject.

All students who are enrolled at school, regardless of their age, are expected to attend that school whenever instruction is provided.

Section 24 of the Act requires principals to maintain an attendance register (roll) in a form approved by the Minister.

The Attendance Register must be available for inspection during school hours by a Board inspector or by any authorised person, who may require the principal of the school to furnish a copy of the register or any part of it, *Education Act 1990* section 24 (2).

Under the NSW *Education Act*, schools are required to ensure that individual students meet certain attendance standards. This includes mandatory attendance for students less than 17 years of age unless exemptions are applicable.

In response to the national agenda and changes to the *Education Act* resulting from the Wood Royal Commission and the new School Leaving Age, significant changes to school processes and practices around student attendance are required.

In January 2010 the NSW Government raised the mandatory school leaving age to 17 years.

From January 2012, all NSW schools will be required to use the state attendance codes to record student attendance on the attendance register or roll.

In introducing the attendance codes, the NSW Minister for Education has delegated the power to grant or cancel Exemption Certificates to non-government School Principals within strict guidelines. This delegated authority ensures that Independent School Principals have the same level of authority as principals in government schools. It allows principals to provide an Exemption Certificate for students to be exempt from attending school for up to 100 days in a year or an exemption to leave school following the completion of Year 10 to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Following are the dates for the amendments to the procedures for the granting of a certificate of exemption from the requirements of the *Education Act (1990)* for compulsory enrolment and attendance at school:

- 28 March 2011 to reflect amendments to the *Education Act 1990*, including completion of education under special circumstances for the purposes of section 21B(5) (d) of the Act.
- 30 August 2012 to reflect changes in delegations.
- 3 February 2015. On this update the capacity to grant exemption for the purpose of holidays or travel outside of vacation period was removed.

Delegates	Powers – Exemption from Attendance at School (Note: Delegates cannot delegate this power)
DEC	Granting of an exemption from school attendance totalling more than 100 schools days in a twelve month period for any one student. Please contact Robyn Yates at AIS for further information on 9299 2845.
Principals	Granting of an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 100 days in a 12 month period for any one student.
	Powers – Exemption from Attendance at School (Note: Delegates cannot delegate this power)
DEC	Granting an exemption from school enrolment provided certain conditions are met. Please contact Robyn Yates at AIS for further information on 9299 2845.

Sentral Software

The SENTRAL software, which gets backed up twice daily as a normal procedure at the School, is the method used by Salamah College to keep records. A copy of the backup is kept in the School's safe and another is kept with the Principal. Sentral retains the register of enrolments indefinitely thus meeting its legal obligation of retaining the register for a minimum of five (5) years before archiving. It

also retains the register of daily attendance indefinitely thus again meeting its legal obligation of retaining the register of daily attendance for a minimum of seven (7) years after the last entry was made. SENTRAL maintains a register of enrolments and a register of attendance including the following information for each student:

- Name, age and address
- The name and contact telephone number of parent(s)/guardian(s)
- Date of enrolment and, where appropriate, the date of leaving the school and the student's destination
- For students older than six (6) years, previous school or pre-enrolment situation

Where the destination of a student below seventeen (17) years of age is unknown, the School will notify a Department of Education and Communities officer with home school liaison responsibilities of the student's full name, date of birth, last known address, last date of attendance, parents' names and contact details, an indication of possible destination, other information that may assist officers to locate the student, and any known occupational health and safety risks associated with contacting the parents or student.

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

General

- The school uses the "SENTRAL Software" for all record keeping in relation to students' attendance and absence. "SENTRAL" maintains our student enrolments and acts as our students' electronic register.
- Parents are requested to contact the school either by phone or by note whenever a child is absent or late.
- The parent of any child without explanation will be contacted by letter or phone requesting an explanation for any absence on the second day of absence, this is to ensure that students are not absent without their parents knowledge or consent.
- No student is allowed to leave the school grounds during school hours without a note. All students' parents must also sign the Register when leaving early. Parents who are collecting students should do so directly from the office.
- Students who arrive at school after 8:45am (secondary) and 8:40am (primary) must report to the office to collect a late slip, and then go to their classroom. When students receive a late slip they will be marked on the roll as present but late, and the late arrival will be recorded in the "Late Arrival Register" followed by an entry on SENTRAL
- No student should arrive at school before 8:00 am.
- Class teachers are directly responsible for monitoring daily attendance.

- All absences are carefully monitored and followed up by referring to appropriate personnel as required.

Sickness

- Parents are requested to phone the office before 8:45am (secondary) and 8:40am (primary) or send a note with another member of the family if a child is to be absent from school. Any unexplained absences will be investigated after this time.
- Parents are required to inform the class teacher in writing of reasons for their child's absence the first day the child returns to school.
- Parents are requested to notify the school immediately if it is known that a child's absence is likely to exceed one week.

Unexplained Absence

- The parents are contacted on the third day of absence for a verbal explanation. If the school is unsuccessful in contacting the parents a note is left on the SENTRAL stating (unable to contact parents).
- If the child is still absent the following day another attempt is made to contact the parents, and a note is left on the SENTRAL if we are still unsuccessful.
- The school will try all emergency numbers on file in an attempt to have direct contact with the parents.
- After the child has been absent from school for a week (5 consecutive days) a letter is sent home asking parents to contact the school immediately to provide an explanation. (A copy of the letter is kept in the student's file) and a request for a visit by a school representative to the student's family home is suggested to check on the child without causing any discomfort to family or child.
- If there has been no response from the parents within three days from the date of the first letter sent to parents, a second letter is sent via registered mail informing them that the matter will be forwarded to the Department of Education and Communities officer with home school liaison responsibilities.

The School will complete the contact Department of Education and Communities officer with home school liaison responsibilities informing them of the situation and the concerns the school may have.

Student Destination Unknown Notification

- As the student has left the school and the school destination is unknown, the school should **download the relevant form from RANGS (the form is attached to this email) , complete and email to attendance@det.nsw.edu.au** This email address will alert the HSLO. Please see the relevant section below.
- Every time an attempt is made to contact the parents a note of the date and the time the attempt was made is kept.

Exemptions

Reasons for Exemption- General Principles

- Procedural fairness must be accorded to an applicant. If the delegate is considering refusing granting an exemption, the parent should be given an opportunity to respond to the delegate's concerns before a final decision is made. This opportunity should be offered to the parent in writing.
- If an applicant wishes to appeal against a decision made by a delegate, the appeal would go to the next more senior delegate.
- For most exemptions parents make an application by completing an *Application for Exemption from Attendance/Enrolment at School*. This must be made in writing and in advance (Appendix A). Parents can seek assistance from the principal or delegate when completing an *Application for Exemption from Attendance /Enrolment at School*.
- The parent is not required to apply for an exemption in cases of the child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under the *Public Health Act 2010*. The principal may grant a *Certificate of Exemption* for the period determined by relevant authorities under this Act.
- A delegate can refer the granting of an exemption to a more senior delegate where they identify circumstances that may make this more appropriate.
- If there is any case where there are circumstances that may not be considered by these Procedures and an exemption appears to be in the best interest of the child, the case should be referred to the Executive Director (Schools). The Executive Director (Schools) should discuss the case with the Director, Student
- Engagement and Interagency Partnerships prior to an exemption being granted.
- A delegate can cancel the *Certificate of Exemption* where they identify circumstances that they believe warrants this action. For example, where the conditions attached to the exemption are not being met or cease to apply.
- Schools are to retain copies of all documentation relating to the exemption in the student's file until the student reaches the age of 25, or for 7 years, whichever is greater, and then destroy.

When are family holidays considered reasonable grounds for exemption?

Refer to 1.1.2 of *Guidelines for Exemption from School (2009)*. Certificates of Exemption from the compulsory education requirements of the *Education Act 1990* may be granted by a delegated officer when it has been clearly demonstrated by the applicant that an exemption is in the student's best interests in the short and long term and that alternatives to exemption have been considered. For example, in some cases, application for Distance Education may be more appropriate than seeking an exemption from school attendance.

Exemption from Attendance at School

1. Reasons for granting Full Day Exemptions from Attendance at School

Principals may grant exemptions due to:

- Exceptional circumstances (including the health of the student where sick leave or alternative enrolment is not appropriate)
- The child being prevented from attending school because of a direction under the *Public Health Act 2010*. (*The parent is not required to complete an application for exemption*)
- Employment in the entertainment industry
- Participation in elite arts or elite sporting events

For any other matter not covered by the above points, the delegate must consult the next most senior delegate in their reporting line.

Note: Students travelling during school terms are not to be exempt. If the principal accepts the reason then leave is granted and the 'L' code should be used, consistent with the implementation of National Standards for Student Attendance Data and Attendance Register.

The attendance register must indicate full day exemptions with the code 'M'.

2. Reasons for granting Part Day Exemptions from Attendance at School

- The Education Act 1990 gives the Minister or delegate the power to grant a *Certificate of Exemption* from the requirement to attend school during the times specified in the Certificate.
- For students participating in the entertainment industry, elite arts or elite sporting programs who are required to attend regular activities/training during school time an *Application for Exemption from Attendance* must be completed and submitted to the principal for approval prior to commencing the program.
- Students may participate in school based programs including behaviour management transition plans.
- For part day exemption due to the requirements of a health care plan, the principal should seek the parents' consent to obtain information from health professionals responsible for the health care of the child.
- Students participating in school programs may be granted part day exemptions for periods of time not exceeding the equivalent number of full school days. Close monitoring of exemption periods is necessary so that the approval period is not exceeded.
- The attendance register must indicate part day exemptions with the code P/M.

3. Reasons for Leave

Leave may be granted for the following reasons:

- Misadventure or unforeseen event
- Participation in special events not related to the school
- Domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member
- Attendance at funerals
- Travel in Australia and overseas
- Recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.

As at 27 February 2012, the process for considering an application for exemption is:

- Put the parental application on letterhead and give to the parent to complete
- Review the parent's application against the criteria in the DET guidelines
- Put the certificate of exemption on school letterhead and complete for the parent (if the application is supported)
- Give the original certificate to the parent

Keep a copy of the application, certificate and Minister's delegation on the student's file.

Roll Marking

The School uses "Sentral software" to record student attendances/absences. Teachers are to complete the "Roll group with Attendance Grid form" each morning. These forms are to be sent to the office to be recorded by office staff on "Sentral".

1. Class Rolls must always be marked accurately. Principals are required to maintain an attendance register (roll) in a form approved by the Minister (Education Act 1990 section 24).
2. Teachers should be conversant with the school's Policies and Procedures.
3. Parents or carers should be informed that it is their responsibility to:
 - a. ensure that their child attends school regularly
 - b. explain the absences of their children from school promptly.
4. The first and last day of attendance each term should be marked with an 'X'.
5. The **exception method** (marking absences only) is to be followed as shown:
 - a. place a lower case 'a' in the day's column against the name of the absent student at the time
 - b. when the declaration of student attendance is made
 - c. subsequently, when the declaration regarding the nature of leave is made, either **A, S, L, E, M, F, B** or **H** is written above the 'a', for example:

A	S	L	E	M	F	B	H
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a

6. The following entries should be made

- First and last day of attendance each term (see 4) X
- Absence declared (absence included in absence return) a
- Absence for part of a day (see 11) P
- Absence unexplained after 7 days or unjustified A
- Absence on official school business (absence not included in absence return) ... B
- Absence due to suspension (absence included in absence return) E
- The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required at school. This could include participation in:
 - HSC pathways program
 - Best Start Assessments
 - Trial or HSC examinations
 - VET courses
- if the child is of or above the age of 15 years-paid work or a combination of approved education or training and paid work. (absence not included in absence return)

..... F
- The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to attend an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis H
- Absence with leave – reason accepted by the principal (absence included in absence return) L
- Absence with approved exemption (absence not included in absence return)

..... M
- Absence owing to sickness or as a result of medical or paramedical appointment (absence included in absence return) S
- Public holidays and other days on which the school is not open for instruction are indicated by a vertical broken line in the column for that day.

7. No codes other than **a, A, S, L, E, P, M, F, B** or **H** are to be used in marking the roll.

8. The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within seven days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal. It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.

An **A** should be recorded for the day.

9. The symbol '**B**' is used where a student is absent from the school site on official school business. This may include work experience, student exchange, school sport (regional and state carnivals), and school excursions.
10. The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required at school. This could include participation in:
- Tutorial centre and programs
 - HSC pathways program
 - Best Start Assessments
 - Trial or HSC examinations
 - VET courses

An **F** should be recorded for the day.

11. The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full time basis. The symbol is recorded where a student accesses education settings separate to their mainstream school such as:
- behaviour schools
 - juvenile justice
 - hospital schools
 - distance education

An **H** should be recorded for the day.

12. Under Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990*, the Minister may grant a Certificate of Exemption. This power is delegated, subject to the Guidelines on the AIS website, to principals, in relation to granting of an exemption from school attendance for periods totalling up to 50 days in a 12 month period for any one student. An **M** should be recorded for the day.

13. Absences on an occasion (i.e. part of a day) or unjustified lateness or fractional truancy is shown by placing '**P**' next to '**a**' in the day's column against the name of the student when the absence is determined.

When the reason for the part absence is determined, either **A, S, L, E, M** or **B** is to be placed above the '**a**', for example:

A S L E M B

Pa Pa Pa

Details of Partial Absences i.e. times and dates are to be recorded in the “Details of Absences on Occasions” which follows the Term 4 section of this roll. Partial absences are not included in tallies of absence returns.

14. The number of absences for each student are to be counted and recorded at the end of each term. Exemptions (**M**), flexible timetable (**F**), official school business (**B**), absence from home school due to attendance at a specialist education setting (**H**) and partial absences (**Pa**) are not to be included in tallies and Absence Returns.

15. In the column headed ‘Special notes’ comments such as ‘speech therapy Tuesdays’ or ‘medical history – no exertion’ may be made. Confidential notations should not be included.