

Whereabouts Unknown (Everyday Counts) Policy



The Hazard – Whereabouts Unknown

A student is considered whereabouts unknown if:

- they have been absent for 10 consecutive school days
- multiple attempts to contact their parent/guardian/family have failed
- no alternative education destination can be identified for them

Common reasons for persistent absences from school of a school aged student include boredom at College, embarrassment and frustration at poor performance, fear of bullying or harassment, drug dependence, family stress or conflict, homelessness and defiance of authority.

Frequent absences 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 College, becoming involved in delinquency and criminal activity and ultimately, reducing their adult employment prospects.

Every Day Counts

Every Day Counts emphasises the importance of children and young people attending school everyday and provides schools and families with tools they can use to promote full time school attendance.

Lavalla Catholic College's Procedures

In line with our legal obligations, Lavalla Catholic College has developed detailed policies and procedures to manage our obligations relating to Enrolment and Attendance of Students. Refer to our *Student Enrolment Policy* and *School Attendance Policy*.

This policy has been developed specifically to manage issues relating to frequent student absences.

Lavalla Catholic College's Policy

Lavalla Catholic College is committed to the management of regular College attendance and providing a safe and positive learning environment which promotes engagement and participation.

It is our policy that:

- All unauthorised absences from College 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;
- Strategies to improve a student's attendance are developed and implemented with the College community considering the needs of students; and
- Early intervention strategies and family support programs will be provided.

Management of Non-Attendance – Immediate

College absenteeism is monitored closely.

Parents/guardians are required to contact the College prior to College 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, Student Services reviews absentee notifications to identify any students who 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 by 10am parents/guardians are forwarded a text message to their mobile phones in the following terms:

Lavalla Catholic College records indicate that your child [*insert name*] is absent from College without explanation. Please contact us as a matter of urgency.

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

If this is not successful, student services will make contact via telephone with any of the contacts listed. If no verbal verification has taken place with any contact, a voice message will be left with one of the contacts. Where the absence remains unexplained, the matter will be reported to the head of house for investigation and follow up.

If a student who is marked present is then found to be absent after 10am, their parent/guardian will be called and informed. Student services will make contact via telephone with any of the contacts listed. If no verbal verification has taken place with any contact, a voice message will be left with one of the contacts. Where the absence remains unexplained, the matter will be reported to the head of house for investigation and follow up.

Management of Non-Attendance – Parental Notifications

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

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

Persistent Non-Attendance

Where absences are recurrent the College 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 unexplained absences. Where appropriate, the College will work with the parents/guardians and the student to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

When students meet the criteria of whereabouts unknown the principal will:

- Consult with relevant CEO/Sale staff and their Education Consultant prior to making a referral to the Department of Education and Training (DE&T) School Attendance Officer as per the agreed Attendance processes.
- Make a referral to the School Attendance Officer (Department of Education and Training, regional Director) for further investigation.
- Fill out the Whereabouts Unknown Referral Form and send this to the relevant School Attendance Officer. This form can be found on the CEVN website under *Curriculum & Student Support/Student Services/Student Wellbeing/School Attendance – Everyday Counts. Implementing Reforms to Attendance and Enrolment*.

Employees' Responsibility

All employees 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 truant behaviour they arise this with their homeroom/LA teacher and/or head of house/wellbeing leader via email.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- Development and implementation of a whole College strategy to encourage regular attendance and to reduce student absences;
- 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 College by implementing programs that develop social and emotional skills, peer tutoring, mentoring and anti-bullying strategies;

- Establishing positive home-College relationships to assist parents/guardians to support their child's attendance at College;
- Effective incident notification procedures;
- Effective communication procedures;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.