Attendance Policy & Procedures

Register of Daily Attendance

General Procedures Statements

The Principal of *Mount Sinai College* maintains a register, in a form approved by the Minister, of the enrolment and daily attendance of all students. This register includes all information required under Section B7: *Enrolment and Attendance* of the NESA *NSW Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools Manual*.

Student absences and variations to attendance are recorded using the Minister's prescribed codes.

Mount Sinai College actively monitors student attendance data and implements appropriate intervention strategies to address unsatisfactory attendance.

In New South Wales, compulsory school age is from 6 to 17 years. Under Section 23 of the *Education Act 1990*, parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure their child is enrolled and attends school or is registered for home schooling. Failure to meet this obligation constitutes an offence.

Where a parent/carer of a student of compulsory school age seeks an exemption from attendance or enrolment, the Principal will process the application in accordance with NSW Department of Education guidelines. The Principal may exercise the Minister's delegation under Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990* to grant or cancel a Certificate of Exemption in specified circumstances.

Staff are regularly informed of their legal responsibilities for marking the roll, and TASS (the College Management System) generates a daily report of unmarked rolls for follow-up by the Receptionist.

Attendance registers are maintained within TASS and retained until the student reaches 25 years of age.

Recording and Monitoring Student Daily Attendance

General Procedures

The class teacher will record present and absent, in TASS for every student in their class by recording attendance in the Daily Attendance section at the beginning of Period 1 (8.20 am) and after lunch.

The Receptionist records a partial absence if a student is absent for a part of the day (at the beginning of Period 1, late to school or left early in the day (at time of leaving campus) or was absent for a portion of the middle of the day (at time of leaving campus).

Late Arrival and Early Departure of Students – Procedures

The Minister's 'P' code is used when a student is absent for a part of the day, late to school, left early or was absent for a portion of the middle of the day. This is also accompanied by a reason code, e.g. S, L, M, and the time that the student arrived at or left school. This record is made at the time the student arrives at school and/or leaves the campus.

If a student arrives late to school or leaves school early, or leaves campus for part of the day, they must report to the Receptionist or the self-check-in kiosk and obtain a printed slip which will be presented to the classroom teacher. Partial absences are recorded in TASS by the Receptionist. All students arriving late must make their way to the office to sign in. All students leaving early must be accompanied by a parent or carer.

Unexplained partial Absences

In the case of unexplained early leave or partial absence during the school day, students will not be permitted to leave until a parent/guardian has verified the early leave or partial absence. A request will be made by the Receptionist for the parent/guardian to provide a response via phone, email, note or via the Parent Portal on TASS, providing specific times and details of the partial absence. In the case of a student being late to school, the Receptionist will request from the parent/guardian a response via phone, email, or a note with the reason for the student's lateness. The parent/guardian will be followed up with this request for a written reason for the lateness within 7 days, preferably on the day of partial absence for the student.

If the parent/guardian has not provided an explanation within 7 days, the students will be registered as an unexplained absence.

Monitoring absences and following up unexplained absences – Procedures

In the case of a student's absence, the Receptionist will contact the parent/guardian and request their submission - via phone, email, or the Parent Lounge – of the reason for the absence. This should occur on the day of the absence, or within 7 days of the student's absence.

If the parent/guardian has not provided an explanation within 7 days, the Principal or their delegate will take all reasonable measures to contact the parent/guardian within 2 days after the 7-day timeframe has elapsed.

All correspondence regarding students who are late to school, leave early, have a partial absence during the day or have a whole day absent from school, will be stored in electronic format in the student's TASS file. All information in TASS is backed up to the Cloud every day.

When an absence is initially classified as unjustified and continues to be unjustified or unapproved by the Principal, the student's attendance will be recorded with the Minister's Code 'A' in TASS.

Monitoring attendance data – Procedures
Attendance data is monitored by:

- Recording attendance at set times every school day in TASS
- Having class teachers marking the rolls each day at the set times and checking the data in TASS
- Deputy Principal

All records for the monitoring of an individual student's attendance are stored on the student's file in the notes section on TASS.

Strategies to Improve Attendance – Procedures
The College uses a range of strategies to try to improve engagement in College learning. These include:

- Announcements (Assemblies) about the importance of being on time to school and being at school every day.
- Emails and messages to parents/guardians about their legal responsibilities to have their child attend every day of school.
- The questioning of any requests for leave that involve activities that could be undertaken during the holidays.
- Distribution of the *AIS Compulsory School Attendance – Information for Parents and Carers* (each year)
- Continual Professional Development for teachers to develop engaging and interesting units of work.

Formal strategies for attendance improvement include:

- Promoting high expectations for attendance
- Creating a welcoming, engaging and safe environment
- Fostering positive relationships with staff and peers
- Meeting with the student and parents
- Referral to the K-2 and 3-6 Coordinators or to the Learning Support Coordinator to identify and implement strategies that address the learning and social-emotional support needs for the student.
- Development of a school-based attendance improvement plan with the student and parents
- Engaging identified groups of students in programs that support regular attendance and punctuality.
- Referral to the school psychologist
- Requesting and sharing information and working collaboratively with other government or non-government agencies including the AIS
- Use of interpreters and translated materials, if needed.
- Seeking advice about culturally appropriate responses from relevant services and working collaboratively with them.
- Regular communication with parents.

Other possible formal processes that may be initiated include:

- Compulsory Schooling Conferences as directed by either AISNSW or the Children's Court for the purpose of ensuring a student is provided with compulsory education.
- Written agreed commitments regarding action that can be made to resolve the student's unsatisfactory attendance.
- Application for a Compulsory Schooling Order to the Children's Court can be considered where previous measures have been unsuccessful in improving student attendance.
- Prosecution in the Local Court if all other avenues have been exhausted.

Leave Approval

Mount Sinai College determines what type of leave is allowed and the length of time permissible. Applications for Approval of leave during term time are directed to the Principal who will make decisions regarding the granting of leave.

Procedures

The term 'Leave' is used to explain a misadventure or unexpected event, participation in special events not related to the school, domestic necessity (such as serious illness of an immediate family member, attendance at funerals, recognised religious festivals) or ceremonial occasions. It is also used when a family applies to the school to travel during the school term and is granted approval prior to departure. From the beginning of 2015, family holidays and travel are no longer considered under the *Exemption from School – Procedures*. Travel outside of vacation period (term break) is considered an *absence*, for statistical purposes.

Applications for Student Leave (from Attendance at School) will only be approved if the circumstances align with the legislative provisions of Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990* (the Act).

A Certificate of Leave will not be issued where the Principal is aware that a student has been the subject of a Child Protection report made to Department of Child Justice (DCJ) and for whom unresolved issues concerning a risk of harm remain.

The Principal has the discretion to reject a reason for travel (during term time) if it is not in the best interests of the student. Educational, social and participation reasons should be specified on the application.

Domestic or international travel for the purpose of a family holiday, family business, bereavement or other reason should be specified on the application.

The Principal or their delegate will consult with parents/carers about the intention of the travel in the case of 'family holidays' and encourage parents to take holidays with their child during school vacation periods.

Where the Principal considers that travel is appropriate during the school term, the parent/guardian will submit a leave application form (available from the Parent Lounge of the College website) and submit to the Receptionist or Principal's PA, four

weeks in advance. Should the application for leave be approved, the student absences will be recorded as "L" Leave.

The Principal may request travel documentation, such as itinerary or e-ticket to accompany the application.

The Receptionist/Secretary will ensure that parents/carers are supported with the completion of the application and provide a translation service if required.

Parents/Guardians can download the 'Application for Student Leave-Travel' from the TASS Parent Portal on the College website.

Parents/guardians whose children need to be absent from school for reasons other than illness, injury or personal emergency must apply in writing, using the 'Application for Leave.' This form is to be submitted to the Receptionist or Principal's PA four weeks prior to the first day of requested absence. The Principal may request travel documentation, such as itinerary or e-ticket to accompany the application.

An application for Leave should be submitted four (4) weeks prior to the first requested day of absence.

Retrospective leave

The parent/guardian may be granted retrospective leave if Application for Leave form is received within 7 days of the first day of absence from the College.

If the application is not received within 7 days of the first day of absence, the absence is deemed to be 'unjustified'. If the application comes after the 7 days, then the Register of Attendance record will remain 'unjustified', but a copy of the application will be placed on the student's file in TASS as an explanation of the student's absence.

The application for Leave, along with the Principal's decision will be recorded on TASS by the Receptionist.

On accepting an Application for Student Leave, a Certificate of Leave is issued by the College. Once executed, the Certificate is returned via email to the applicant and an e-copy is placed on the student's TASS record. The application's approval is sent via email to the parent/guardian by the Receptionist. If the application is not approved, a letter explaining the reason will be sent to the student's parent by the Principal's PA. A copy will be saved on the students TASS record.

Where the Principal considers that the travel is appropriate during school term, the Principal will inform the parent that the application is accepted, and the absences will be recorded as "L" – Leave. If a Certificate of Leave is not granted and the student does not attend school for the dates on the application, the leave should be recorded on TASS as "A" - Unjustified.

Exemptions

Mount Sinai College ensures compliance with Section 25 of the *Education Act 1990* by implementing procedures for the **granting, refusal, monitoring, and cancellation of exemptions from attendance and enrolment**.

The Principal, as the Minister's delegate, is responsible for:

- Approving or refusing exemption applications
- Cancelling exemptions where conditions are not met
- Ensuring appropriate records are created, maintained, and retained

All exemption processes are conducted in accordance with NESA requirements and recorded in TASS.

The process for exemption from attendance or enrolment has some commonalities. Mount Sinai chooses to have a general exemption process and then distinguish between the two forms of exemptions. An exemption from attendance under the Minister's delegation cannot be granted for the purpose of travel.

General exemption procedures:

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 Principal's direction under the *Public Health Act 2010*. (Note that in the case of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, the school is required to advise an unvaccinated student not to attend until advised to do so. The parent is not required to complete an application for exemption).
- employment in the entertainment industry
- participation in elite arts / sporting events (i.e. national/international sport events, elite programs run by national and international organisations, talent identification programs run by NSW Dept of Sport and Recreation.

Powers – Exemption from Attendance at School (not travel)	**Minister's Delegate (Note: Delegate cannot delegate)**
Student engaged in employment in approved entertainment industry activities	- Principal - Full or part days up to 100 days in a 12-month
Student participating in elite arts or elite sporting events (Refers to national/international sports events, elite programs run by national and international	

organisations, talent identification programs run by NSW Dept of Sport & Recreation).	period for any one student - More than 100 days in a 12-month period for any one student
Exceptional circumstances (including health of the student where sick leave or alternate enrolment is not appropriate)	
Powers - Exemption from Enrolment at School	
Age	Principal
Health, learning or social needs, or disability	
Completion of Education under Special Circumstances – not apprenticeship or traineeship	Refer NESA website.

Exemption from enrolment

A parent/guardian who wishes to apply for an exemption from school for their child must first organise a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue and the processes needed. At this meeting, if the parent/guardian wishes to proceed they will be provided with the required forms that need to be filled in and they will be offered help to fill them in if required. Their application for Exemption from Schooling is directed to the principal. A parent may also request an application form from the Principal's PA prior to the meeting.

Applications must be submitted **prior to the enrolment variation**. Exemptions **cannot normally be applied retrospectively**, except in documented exceptional circumstances.

Supporting Documentation

Age: The Principal will require proof of enrolment or participation in preschool and the child should be involved in a transition-to school program as a condition of their exemption.

The **health**, **learning** or **social needs, or disability** of the student: The Principal will require a statement in support of the exemption from the child's medical specialist and the child should be involved in a transition-to-school program as a condition of their exemption.

Elite Sports: Documentation confirming the acceptance and participation in the chosen sport at the elite level with details of requirements for continued enrolment in the Elite Sport.

Procedural fairness must be afforded to an applicant. If the Principal is considering rejecting the application for exemption, the parent will be given an opportunity to respond to the Principal's concerns before a final decision is made. This opportunity may be offered to the parent in writing or verbally and a response from the parent will be expected within 48 hours of them being informed of the Principal's decision.

The parent/guardian is informed in writing and issued with a Certificate of Exemption (Attendance/Enrolment) if the application is successful. If unsuccessful a letter stating that the application was unsuccessful will be provided to the parents/guardian.

Exemption from attendance and monitoring exemptions – procedures:

The Deputy Principal will monitor the attendance of students who have been granted exemptions from attendance to attend specialist programs by checking with the organisation responsible for the student as to attendance and compliance with the organisations Rules and procedures.

Records of monitoring the student's attendance at the external organisation are stored in TASS.

Exemption from enrolment – procedures:

When may an exemption from enrolment be considered?

A. Age, where a child turns six years on or after 1 October or later in a school year and is engaged in:

- full time preschool education at an accredited preschool for the remainder of that school year
- full or part-time accredited preschool programs for students with disabilities leading to enrolment and full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school not later than six months after the child's sixth birthday.

Note: The Principal may require proof of enrolment or participation in the preschool and the child should be involved in a transition-to school program as a condition of their exemption.

B. The health, learning or social needs or disability of a child necessitating the continuation of an individual program supported by medical specialists not longer than six months after the child's sixth birthday.

Note: The Principal may require a statement in support of the exemption from the child's medical specialist and the child should be involved in a transition-to-school program as a condition of their exemption.

C. Students attending full-time Vocational Education - *Not applicable to Mount Sinai College*

Policy & Procedures Review

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