



# Mount St Benedict College

## COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

All children from six years of age and under the minimum school leaving age of 17 years are legally required to attend school.

In New South Wales, all children from six years of age are legally required to attend school or be registered for home schooling. After they complete Year 10 and until they turn 17 years of age, students then have the following options. They may also be in:

- Further education and training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship);
- Full time, paid employment of an average 25 hours per week; or
- A combination of both of the above.

### **Must I send my child every day? YES**

Children are expected to attend all school activities, on time. Regular attendance

- helps your child develop the skills needed to access the world of work and other opportunities
- helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- ensures your child can make and keep friendships.

### **What if my child has to stay away from school?**

If your child has to be absent from school, you must notify the College and **provide a reason** for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may

- SMS a text message to 0407 461 087 or
- send a note when the student returns to school.

A small number of absences may be accepted by the Principal. For example, if your child has to

- go to a special religious ceremony
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (e.g. a funeral)
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.
- For any other absences e.g. overseas trip, elite sports person, an Application for Leave Form must be lodged to the Principal in advance. These forms are available on request and will shortly be placed on the College website.

### **What are school Principals responsible for?**

Principals help to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of your child. Principals have to keep accurate records of student attendance and the reasons for any absences.

Principals are responsible for accepting or not accepting a parent's explanations for their child's absences.

Principals can request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences even where they are explained by parents as being due to illness.

When absences are unexplained by parents, or the explanations are not accepted by the principal, schools work together with parents to help address the issue. The main aim is to sort out what is preventing the child from getting to school and putting strategies in place to help.

Sometimes, the school will ask other agencies to assist.

### **What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?**

It is important to understand that the Department of Education may take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unacceptable absences from school. Some of the following actions may be undertaken.

- Attendance meetings and compulsory attendance conferences

Parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a meeting with school personnel and other regional officers. The aim of the meeting is to help identify strategies to support the child and family. Other agencies may also be asked along to help.

If the school and other regional officers have tried to help improve a child's attendance, without success, parents (and sometimes their child) can be asked to go to a compulsory attendance conference. The conference will be run by a trained conference convenor. The aim of the conference is for the school, parents (and sometimes their child) and other identified agencies ("the parties") to further identify the issues which are impacting on a child's attendance.

The outcome of a compulsory attendance conference is for the parties to agree to certain actions to improve the child's attendance. These actions are written in the form of undertakings.

- Applications to the Children's Court – A Compulsory Schooling Order  
Legal compliance can be sought through an application to the Children's Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The aim is to assist a family and/or child to address the issues which are preventing satisfactory school attendance but has the added force of a Court's powers.
- Prosecution in the Local Court  
If all attempts by schools and regional support staff fail to improve a student's attendance, action can be taken in the Local Court and the result can be fines up to a maximum of \$11,000.
- A report may be made to the Department of Community Services.

**For further information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:**

- <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/a-z/attendance.php>

**About the school leaving age see the website address:**

- <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/leavingschool/index.php>