

# 1. Attendance Protocols - Absence, Lateness And Leave

## 1.1 Legal requirements:

- Under The Education Act (1989) – “the Act” - all students enrolled at a school must attend when it is open for instruction, unless there is a justified reason, such as sickness, sudden and serious illness of a parent, or other equally serious situation that means a student cannot attend.
- This is true for all students enrolled at the College, regardless of age, as the school has a legal responsibility to ‘take all reasonable steps to ensure the attendance of students enrolled at its school’ (Section 31(1) of the Act). This means the College has to follow up absences and lateness with appropriate interventions.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for their child’s attendance at school, and it is an offence if this responsibility is not met for students under the age of 16 (section 29 of the Act). In situations where a parent/guardian condones (by lack of action or explicit approval) the absence of a child, then there may be a prosecution, although this is a last resort.
- The other key legal requirement for the College is the need to keep accurate records of attendance [Education (School Attendance) Regulations 1951].

## 1.2. High attendance at school correlates strongly with academic achievement. We are very pleased that most students at Botany Downs Secondary College have attendance levels of over 98% and are giving themselves the best opportunities to achieve great results.

- Attendance rates are reported as a percentage of half days over the number of half days open. Secondary schools have to open a minimum of 180 days (360 half days) a year.
- If a student’s attendance is below 90% then the Ministry of Education regards the student as ‘not regularly attending’ school. 90% attendance means a student misses an average of 1 in 10 days of school, which equates to almost 100 hours of lost instructional time. The College is very worried if attendance falls below exceeds 90%, for obvious reasons.



## 1.3. Students are required to stay in the College grounds during the school day (including interval and lunchtime) except:

- In the case of sickness, dental or medical appointments provided prior approval has been obtained from Student Services, the Guidance Counsellors and/or the School Nurse.
- Students must take any written request or appointment details to Student Services to have an Exit Pass issued at the start of the school day or interval. Students with an Exit Pass must sign out at Student Services and, on return, sign in.
- For any other reason with the prior approval of a Whanau Leader or Senior Leadership Team Member who will issue an Exit pass (student must still sign out/in)
- Year 12 and 13 students who have off-site study approval. Study is marked on a student’s timetable. If the study is Period 1 a student may study at home and come in to school, ready for Period 2. Students with Study periods at any other time must remain on site.

- Year 13 students who have permission to have lunch at Botany Town Centre on Tuesday and Thursday (subject to change).

**Failure to comply with this requirement will result in being deemed out of bounds and/or truant from College.**

#### 1.4. Advising of absences (with an explanation)

- Absence from College for medical or other reasons must be accounted for by caregivers in advance (where appropriate) or other verifiable communication within 24 hours of the student returning to College.
- Whenever possible, parents/caregivers are encouraged to advise the College of an impending absence or lateness ahead of time. When this is not possible, then parents/caregivers are asked to inform the College as soon as possible after the event (e.g. by phone or email on the day of a student's illness, or by note/email on the first day when the student returns to school).
- To advise of absence: Please phone 273 2310, and follow the prompts to leave a message on the absence voice mail before 9:40 a.m. (dial 1 and then leave the absence message). Alternatively, to contact the Attendance Officer directly, enter extension #283. Written communications can be sent to [attendance@bdsc.school.nz](mailto:attendance@bdsc.school.nz). Please provide the student's name, tutor class, and the date of, and reason for, the absence. If no reason is provided, or the reason is an unacceptable reason for absence, it is recorded as an explained, but unjustified, absence.
- The following methods of explaining student absences that will be accepted from parents/caregivers: a written note, an email, a phone call or a face-to-face explanation (noted by staff member in KAMAR), or a text message to the school's 'absence' system, a certificate from a health professional, or completion of a 'Request for Leave' (*refer to Section 1.5*).
- **Absence notifications:** Primary Caregiver One (whoever is listed as first contact) of students who are absent without explanation will receive a SMS (text) notification advising of this and asking for an explanation by replying. Please ensure you reply. The Attendance Officer will update records accordingly.
- Note: An unexplained absence is automatically converted into truancy after 7 days and followed up with accordingly.

#### 1.5. Requests for Leave:

- For planned absences, a Request for Leave is required.
- Application for leave for planned absences must be received one week prior to the start date, unless under urgent circumstances (e.g. bereavement).
- The purposes of the form is to notify teachers of planned absence and to allow parents and students to consider the implications on assessments or preparation for assessments that could be affected by the leave request.
- A "Request for Leave" form is available from Student Services or Office 365 and be submitted to Student Services for a Senior Leadership Team member to consider whether the absence is justified or unjustified.
- According to Ministry of Education guidelines, student leave/absence can be either justified or unjustified (*refer to Section 1.6*)
- There is no obligation for the College to modify assessment dates if they fall in the period of requested leave. For further information, refer to the School's National Qualification Framework booklet.

#### 1.6. Classification of absences – justified and unjustified

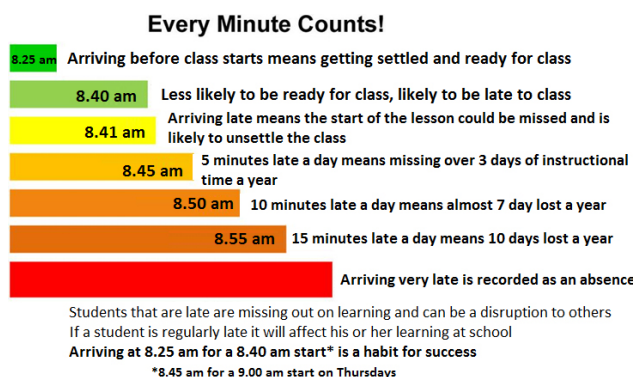
- Absences can be either 'justified' or 'unjustified' regardless of if they have been explained. The College has to abide by the Ministry of Education classifications of absence.
- **Justified absence** includes illness/injury preventing attendance, a significant event preventing attendance, regional or national sporting/cultural representation, bereavement, visiting a seriously ill relative, attendance at a citizenship or graduation ceremony, or other exceptional family circumstances.
- **Unjustified absence** includes holidays in term time or other absences that are explained but not allowed under the Ministry of

Education guidelines, such as taking care of siblings, needing to work at home, the bus was late, etc. If the leave request extends a school term holiday, then it is generally unjustified.

- Sometimes it is hard to be definitive as families may combine both unjustified and justified reasons into one event, e.g. a wedding held during a school holiday to justify leaving early; this is likely to be classified as a holiday in term time, and therefore as unjustified.
- Note that all absences from class count as absences regardless of whether they are justified or unjustified, so all absences affect the attendance rate in the same way. Truancy is based on unexplained and/or unjustified absences only and includes skipping a class, a half day or full day of classes. In some cases, if the reason provided for the absence (by a parent/caregiver or a student) is unacceptable then it will be considered as a truancy, for example staying home to study for a test, or to complete an assignment, or being 'too tired to come to school', etc.
- Note: The webportal includes live attendance information and records present in class as P and absences as either J – justified or U – unjustified. If there is a blank it means the roll is yet to be marked.

### 1.7. Punctuality (at the start of the day)

- Being on time for means getting the most from lessons, and will typically mean a student is ready to learn. This means aiming to arrive 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start of the day and being ready to learn with all the right materials.
- A student who is late to school may not be ready to learn, will miss instructions, and may disrupt the class on entry. Every minute counts. If a student is absent 5 minutes once a week that is equivalent to missing 1.5 hours of instruction. Being late by 5 minutes once a day adds up to 16 hours (or 3 days) of lost instructional time.
- Students arriving late to school, because of tardiness or before-school appointments must sign in at the Student Services Centre. Students will receive a date-stamped Late Pass to show classroom teachers. The office will record the lateness, and record the time and note if the reason is justified (for example a dental/medical appointment or unjustified (for example, catching a later bus).
- If the lateness is due to a dental/medical appointment then please present the appointment slip to Student Services when signing in.
- The College is aware that occasionally other circumstances cause a lateness outside of the control of the student or parent/guardian. For an individual this would be expected to be a rare event, but in such circumstances, provide a suitable explanation to the office (i.e. written note/email). This will be recorded by the office.
- Students who are very late to school may be recorded as absent. For instance if the student arrives with only 15 minutes of the class then it is more accurate from a time sense to record the student as absent.
- Parents/guardians of students who are late without a justified explanation will receive an email notification advising of this. Names and absence/late notes are sent to Whanau Tutors/Mentors and Leaders who will follow up on unauthorised or unexplained lateness.



### 1.8. Consequences for lateness and unjustified/unexplained absent (truancy)

- Students who are late or have unexplained or unjustifiably absence (i.e. truancy) from College or any class during the school day may be subject to consequences to encourage a change in behaviour.
- For example, after three 'late to school' emails a student may receive a school detention to reflect on the importance of punctuality, or catch up on work missed. An email will be sent to parents/guardians informing of the consequence.

- For example, if a student is truant then a parent/caregiver will be notified and the student may receive a school detention to reflect on the reason missing class is disadvantageous, or catch up on work missed.
- Should the lateness or truancy become more regular, then a family conference may be convened to discuss how the student, parent/guardian and College can work together to encourage adherence to the attendance/punctuality requirements.

### **1.9. Lateness (at other times):**

- If students are late at any other time, they should have a note to explain why from a staff member (e.g. meeting with another teacher). If not, the class teacher must mark the student as late.
- If a student does not have a late note from a teacher, then they need must be reminded to bring a note next time. Sending a student to 'get a note' at this time is not acceptable as it just reinforces the lateness. Any explanation must then be provided to the whanau tutor or whanau leader.
- If students are significantly late without reason (beyond 5 minutes) then their whanau leader will be notified.