

## STUDENT ATTENDANCE

### Background

Student attendance is critical to a student's academic success. The Alberta *School Act* supports this belief in section 12 (b) by stating that a student shall, "...attend school regularly and punctually." Section 20 (d) clearly makes it the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that students have the opportunity to meet the standards established by the Minister of Education. Furthermore, the Catholic Church's Canon 806 states that academic standards in Catholic Schools will be at least as high as in other schools in the area. Since regular student attendance positively impacts these expectations, the standard for expecting students attending Holy Spirit Catholic Schools remains high. As such, it is clearly incumbent upon all educators within the Holy Spirit School Division to monitor learning environments so that the regular attendance of students is assured. Most importantly, it is a fundamental responsibility of parents to expect that students will attend school regularly and to support our schools when interventions are required to rectify attendance problems.

### Value and Core Commitment Link

#### "Excellence in Learning"

- "We provide opportunities for each and every student to discover and become the person God created him or her to be."

#### "Our Collaborative Community"

- "We share the responsibility of education with our students, parents, teachers and the parish community."
- "We encourage and appreciate the active involvement of all who share in the mission of educating students in our schools."

#### "Stewardship"

- "We ensure our resources and efforts best serve the educational needs of all our students."
- "We ensure that decisions are both fact and Policy based."
- "We support and provide processes which promote fair and objective decision making."
- "We communicate in an open and transparent manner."
- "We are receptive to our stakeholders."

### Procedure

1. The school's policies and procedures will recognize and emphasize the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

2. Truancy is defined by either a lack of notification of circumstances affecting attendance by a parent or student, or by absenteeism that is clearly avoidable. The school's expectations and interventions will be dedicated to addressing such issues.
3. Unavoidable absences may occur because of illness, accident, medical or dental attention, and compassionate or other special circumstances recognized within the *School Act*.
4. Students missing instructional time are responsible for attending to learning expectations addressed in their absence.
5. The Principal has the authority to make arrangements with parents regarding arrangements for absenteeism linked to circumstances that are beneficial to the well-being of the student, providing such arrangements to do no impinge upon the student's ability to be successful in school.
6. When students, who are 16 years of age or older, are truant from school, progressive discipline and counseling is expected to be exercised in addressing the matter. In such cases, to the extent with which it is possible, arrangements are to be made with a parent to cooperatively pursue alternative programming solutions to address the matter.
7. The school's practices and procedures for dealing with students who are truant must reflect the following:
  - 7.1 Efforts to work directly with the student to resolve the issue;
  - 7.2 Ongoing communication and consultation with parents concerning truancy problems;
  - 7.3 Progressive interventions engaging in a range of strategies.
8. The standards for addressing truancy through solution focused, communicative, and consequence focused interventions have been established through the provincial attendance Board, and are as follows:
  - 8.1 All related policies stress the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
  - 8.2 School practices and guidelines reflect expectations and procedures for addressing absenteeism;
  - 8.3 Students and parents being well-informed of attendance problems and consequences as situations arise;
  - 8.4 Reasonable efforts being made at the jurisdiction level to address attendance issues before making a referral to the Attendance Board.

9. Referrals of serious attendance problems for a student, who is under 16 years of age and is failing to attend school as required by law, will be made to the Director of Support Services. The following intervention strategies will have been exercised at the school level, prior to a referral being made:
  - 9.1 Evidence that the student has been placed in the appropriate educational program, with the necessary support to further success;
  - 9.2 The necessary support to further success;
  - 9.3 Engagement of school counseling services;
  - 9.4 Engagement of additional internal or external agencies as recommended by divisional support services;
  - 9.5 Documented meetings with the student, parents, and staff to identify the cause or causes for non-attendance or the exploration of alternative educational placements;
  - 9.6 Documentation of all efforts to address attendance problems;
  - 9.7 Engagement in the following required intervention approaches:
    - 9.7.1 Telephone calls to the home
    - 9.7.2 Letters informing parents of attendance concerns;
    - 9.7.3 Meetings with the students;
    - 9.7.4 Meetings with the parents.

Consideration of the application of these strategies is outlined through an Absentee Resolution Framework, specified in APPENDIX A.

10. When the Director of Support Services is of the opinion that all attempts to enforce students attendance under Section 126 of the *School Act* has not been effective, the Superintendent of Schools as the divisional “attendance officer,” will be informed of such concerns and a referral to the Provincial Attendance Board will be expedited.