



# New Madinah College

## Attendance Policy

### **POLICY**

Under the *NSW Education Act*, schools are required to ensure that individual students meet certain attendance standards. This includes mandatory attendance for students under 17 years of age unless exemptions are applicable.

The Principal of a registered non-government school must keep a register, in a form approved by the Minister, of the enrolments and daily attendances of all children at the school. More information on attendance requirements and exemptions, and the school principal's role in this is provided in this policy.

New Madinah College follows the Department of Education and Training policies and procedures in regard to student attendance.

An electronic copy of the Register of Enrolments and the Register of Daily Attendance will be stored off-site and renewed every term. The Register of Enrolments will be retained for a minimum period of **five (5) years**, and the Register of Daily Attendance will be retained for a minimum period of **seven (7) years**.

## MONITORING DAILY ATTENDANCE/ABSENCE OF STUDENTS

Each class of students will have a daily class roll which is the responsibility of the class teacher in conjunction with the teacher's aide. At the beginning of each day Teachers mark their rolls on Compass portal.

The College Administration staff monitor the daily attendance and absences and prepare a daily Absentee List which is placed on the noticeboard in the staffroom each day.

## ATTENDANCE REGISTER CODES

New Madinah College staff use the below common codes approved by the Minister of Education to record student's attendance status:

Symbol	Meaning
a	The student was absent for the whole day
Pa	The students was late or was absent for part of the day. The time of arrival or departure must be recorded.
A	The student's absence is unexplained or unjustified. This symbol must be used if no explanation has been provided by parents within 7 days of the occurrence of an absence or the explanation is not accepted by the principal It is at the principal's discretion to accept or not accept the explanation provided.
S	The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical or paramedical appointment. In these cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a medical certificate is provided or</li><li>- the absence was due to sickness and the principal accepts this explanation. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.</li></ul>


<b>L</b>	An explanation of the absence is provided which has been accepted by the principal. This may be due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- misadventure or unforeseen event</li> <li>- participation in special events not related to the school</li> <li>- domestic necessity such as serious illness of an immediate family member</li> <li>- attendance at funerals</li> <li>- travel in Australia and overseas</li> <li>- recognised religious festivals or ceremonial occasions.</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	The student was suspended from school
<b>M</b>	The student was exempted from attending school and a Certificate of Exemption has been issued by a delegated officer.
<b>F</b>	The student is participating in a flexible timetable and not present because they are not required to be at school. This could include participation in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HSC Pathways Program</li> <li>- Best Start Assessments</li> <li>- Trial or HSC examinations</li> <li>- VET courses</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	The student is absent from the school on official school business. This symbol is recorded where the principal approves the student leaving the school site to undertake, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work experience</li> <li>- school sport (state and national events)</li> <li>- school excursions</li> <li>- student exchange</li> </ul>
<b>H</b>	The student is enrolled in a school and is required or approved to be attending an alternative educational setting on a sessional or full-time basis.

## UNEXPLAINED ABSENCES

All absences from New Madinah College must be explained with a phone call, SMS message, email, parental note, medical certificate or confirmation of appointment attended slip. For absences of 3 days or more due to illness or injury, a medical certificate must be provided.

At approximately 10.00am each day Administration staff check the Attendance Rolls on Compass portal to ensure all teachers have marked their class roll. Administration staff immediately contact by phone, SMS or email the parent/guardian of students who are absent from school advising that their child did not arrive at school and requesting an explanation.

An Attendance Notifications Register is kept for monitoring unexplained absences. If the parent/guardian has not explained the absence of their child within 2 days of them returning to school an Absence Notification Letter is sent home.



Parents/guardians are required to explain their child's absence/s within seven (7) days. The NSW Education Act requires all absences that have not been explained within seven calendar days to be permanently recorded as 'unexplained'.

There are a limited number of reasons which justify an absence from school. In some circumstances, even though a reason has been provided, the absence will still be recorded as 'unexplained' because the reason does not count as a valid reason as per Department of Education policy.

## ***What are valid reasons?***

The two most common acceptable reasons for student absence are 'sick' and 'leave'.

**Sick:** The student's absence is due to sickness or as the result of a medical appointment. Principals may request a medical certificate in addition to explanations if the explanation is doubted, or the student has a history of unsatisfactory attendance.

**Leave:** The student's absence is due to an incident such as a serious illness of an immediate family member or attendance at a funeral and the explanation provided has been accepted by the Principal.

## ***Family holidays***

Families are encouraged to travel during the NSW school holidays. If travel outside of NSW school holiday periods is necessary, the family must apply to the Principal for approval beforehand. If the family does not apply for leave, or it is not approved, the absences from school will be considered 'unexplained'.

## ***Partial absences***

Students are expected to be at school in time for the morning assembly. If a student is late to school, they are required to sign in at the front office and are expected to provide a reason for their lateness in the form of a note from their parent/guardian. If a valid reason is not provided, the absence will be recorded as 'unexplained'.

If a student needs to leave early (e.g. for a doctor's appointment), they are required to bring a note from home and take it to class with them to show their teacher when it is time for them to leave. Students leaving early are to go to the front office where they will be signed out of school. Students who do not sign out properly will have their leave recorded as 'unexplained'.

If a student is feeling sick they should talk to their classroom teacher first who will send the student to sick bay if necessary. If office staff feel it is in the student's best interest to go home, they will contact the parent/guardian to be picked up. Students are not to use any form of communication to organise being picked up during school hours.

## **EXPLAINED ABSENCES**

Explained absences received at the front office are inputted as a comment in the Attendance Register sheet for all staff to view. If the parent/caregiver contacts the Principal, a Teacher, or Administration staff member to advise of their child's absence, this information is to be immediately noted on the Attendance Register sheet by the staff member who has been contacted.

## NOTIFYING PARENT(S) AND/OR GUARDIAN(S) REGARDING POOR SCHOOL AND/OR CLASS ATTENDANCE

A minimum of 80% total attendance for each term is required at New Madinah College. If a student's absence accumulates to 12% of the term, the following procedure is followed in order to encourage an improved rate of attendance:

Absence Percentage	# of Days	Action
12%	6 Days	<b>Step 1:</b> Administration staff will phone the student's parent/caregiver advising of the fact of poor attendance. The aim of the phone call is to advise the parent of their obligation of ensuring satisfactory attendance to school.
15%	7.5 Days	<b>Step 2:</b> A letter or SMS message is sent to the parent/guardian of the student organising an interview with the Principal to discuss the poor attendance record. A copy of this letter is to be maintained in the students file.
18%	9 Days	<b>Step 3:</b> A 'Warning Letter' posted to the student's residential address warning of the possibility of the termination of enrolment if the child's attendance is not improved.
20%+	10+ Days	<b>Step 4:</b> Reporting to the Department of Education. The possible termination of enrolment for failure to improve attendance rate.

## ATTENDANCE RECORD KEEPING

New Madinah College must keep daily student attendance records.

Teachers and/or aides are to keep accurate electronic records and provide comments, where necessary. Any student absentee notes or doctor's certificates will be filed in the student's file and placed in date order.

All absences must be explained and substantiated with a phone call, SMS message, parental permission note, medical certificate or confirmation of appointment attended slip. This information will be placed in the student's file. Administration staff are responsible for updating absence information, using the common codes as approved by the Minister of Education in 2012 and revised in 2014. Accompanying documents will be placed in the student's file.

Student attendance records will remain available in the Attendance Register sheet for reports/monitoring and future references as required. At the end of each term Administration staff finalise the current Attendance register sheet and generate a new Attendance Register sheet for the next term. These records are saved in the Attendance folder under Attendance Registers.

## RECORD KEEPING PROCEDURE

The method and procedure that will be used to maintain a register of daily attendance will include the following steps:

Steps	Action	Responsibility	When
Rolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily rolls are prepared within an Attendance Register sheet before the start of the school term for the term.</li> </ul>	Administrator	Before the start of each term
Mark Rolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers mark roll call rolls using correct codes on Compass Portal.</li> <li><a href="http://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Services/GovtRegs/Attendance/Documents/NSW%20Attendance%20Register%20Codes.pdf">http://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Services/GovtRegs/Attendance/Documents/NSW%20Attendance%20Register%20Codes.pdf</a></li> <li>Absences to be marked carefully using the correct codes</li> <li>Teachers mark attendance at the beginning of the day</li> <li>Student absentee notes are filed in the students file or other relevant document to substantiate reasons for absences documented and put in the students file.</li> <li>Administration staff generate an Absentee List and put on the noticeboard in the staffroom.</li> </ul>	Teachers  Administrator	Daily  Daily
Follow up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents/Carers of students absent phoned and or sent SMS for an explanation of absence.</li> <li>Absence Notifications Letter sent home after 2 days of the student returning to school.</li> </ul>	Administrator  Administrator	Daily  If not received
Amendments to Rolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administration reviews absentee notes and amends the Attendance Register sheet as applicable.</li> <li>Students that arrive to school late or students that leave school early due to sickness etc. are to sign in/out at the front office in the Students Sign In/Out Register. These absences are then amended in the Attendance Register sheet.</li> </ul>	Administrator	Daily
Monitoring Poor Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Attendance Register sheet reviewed each term and parents of students absent for close to 20% of the term are phoned to discuss improving the unsatisfactory attendance.</li> <li>The 4 steps for 'Notifying Parents of Poor Attendance' are followed.</li> </ul>	Administrator	Term-by-Term basis



# New Madinah College

## Student Exemptions Policy

### EXEMPTIONS FROM ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

In accordance with EDUCATION ACT 1990 – SECT 25 – Certificate of exemption from attending school (CoE) which exempts students from Part 5 of the Act and states:

- (1) The Minister may grant a certificate of exempting a child from the requirement of this Part that the child be enrolled at and attend a government school or registered non-government school or be registered for and receive home schooling, if the Minister is satisfied that conditions exist which make necessary or desirable that such a certificate should be granted.
- (2) A certificate of exemption under this section may be given subject to conditions and may be limited in its operation to a period specified in the certificate.
- (3) A certificate of exemption under this section may be limited to exemption from the requirement to attend a school during the times specified or referred to in the certificate.
- (4) A certificate of exemption under this section may be cancelled by the Minister.

**New Madinah College will abide by the Minister's delegation to exercise the above clauses.**

In introducing the attendance codes, the NSW Minister for Education has delegated the power to grant or cancel Exemption Certificates to non-government school principals within strict guideline. This delegated authority ensures that independent school principals have the same level of authority as principals in government schools. It allows principals to provide an Exemption Certificate for students to be exempt from attending school for up to 100 days in a year or an exemption to leave school following the completion of Year 10 undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship.

The Principal needs to strictly adhere to the processes and conditions outlined in the Exemptions Guidelines in order to legally apply the exemption.



## PROCEDURE

The process for considering an application for exemption is:

1. Application forms for exemptions are provided by the College to parents.
2. Review the parent's application against the criteria in the AIS guidelines
3. Supplementary documentation must be provided by parents with applications where necessary.
4. Exemptions from attendance at school and exemptions from enrolment at school must be referred to the Principal in all cases for consideration.
5. Give the original certificate to the parent
6. Keep a copy of the application, certificate and Minister's delegation in the student's file.
7. The Principal will be responsible for issuing exemptions.

Processes have been developed to enable all schools in NSW to access legal recourse where all attempts at resolving poor student attendance have failed. In determining a course of action under this legislation, principals should also refer to the requirements under the Keep Them Safe legislation.

In line with 2015 changes to the *Education Act*, independent schools are able to access legal recourse to resolve poor student attendance. Information is available to advise schools on access to Director General's Conference with parents and Compulsory Schooling Orders through either a Local Court or the Children's Court.