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Saint Joseph's School Attendance Management Plan 2026-2028

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Overarching Attendance Objectives and Strategic Priorities

Regular school attendance is fundamental to academic success, social development, and overall wellbeing of our tamariki. Consistent attendance ensures that students can build strong educational foundations and continuously engage in their learning. The New Zealand government has established a national target of achieving 80% regular attendance, defined as students attending school at least 90% of the time, by the year 2030. This benchmark, which allows for no more than one day of absence per fortnight, is a key driver of our school's attendance strategy.

At Saint Joseph's School, our approach is guided by our core values and a commitment to ensuring every child can have the opportunity to succeed. This plan outlines our multi-year strategy to monitor, support, and improve student attendance, ensuring that every tamaiti can strive to reach their full potential.

Baseline Data Informing our Attendance Management Plan

This plan is informed by a comprehensive analysis of attendance data from 2025 and 2026. The most recent data from **Term 1, 2026**, provides a critical baseline for our strategic targets. Compared with Term 1, 2025, attendance patterns have shifted slightly downward overall. Regular attendance has declined by 5 percentage points (from 73%

to 67%), indicating fewer students attending consistently. At the same time, there has been an increase in students in the irregular absence category, up 7 points (from 16% to 23%), along with small rises in moderate absence (+3 points to 4%). Chronic absence has decreased slightly by 1 point (to 5%), suggesting a modest improvement at the most severe end. Overall, the data points to a movement away from regular attendance into more inconsistent attendance patterns.

Term 1 2026 Attendance Data

Attendance Category	Percentage of Students	Comparison to Term 1, 2025	
Regular Attendance (>90%)	67%	▼ 5%	73
Irregular Absence (80-90%)	23%	▲ 7%	16
Moderate Absence (70-80%)	4%	▲ 3%	7
Chronic Absence (<70%)	5%	▼ 1%	4

The data indicates that **medical reasons are the leading cause of absence**, accounting for **approximately 48%** of all absences among students with attendance below 90%. Alongside this, a **significant proportion of absences remain unexplained (around 20%)**, highlighting a gap in recorded information and a need for improved follow-up and communication with families.

There is also a **notable level of explained but unjustified absences (approximately 21%)**, such as holidays, which represent avoidable time away from school and contribute meaningfully to reduced attendance. In contrast, **justified absences make up only about 3%**, indicating they are a relatively minor contributor overall.

Overall, while some absence is unavoidable due to medical needs, the data shows that **over 40% of absences are either unexplained or discretionary**, suggesting a clear opportunity to strengthen tracking processes and reduce avoidable absence through improved engagement and clearer expectations.

What Would Success Look Like?

Success would be reflected in a reduction in overall absence rates, **particularly through a shift away from avoidable and unexplained absences**. With clearer, more consistent recording and follow-up so that nearly all absences have an identified reason would significantly decrease in the current ~20% of unknown absences. At the same time, explained but unjustified absences (~21%) would reduce, as families demonstrate greater understanding of the importance of regular attendance and limit discretionary time away from school.

While medical absences (~48%) may remain a key factor, success would also involve **supporting students to return promptly and minimising disruption where possible**. Overall, success would be seen in a higher proportion of students moving back toward regular attendance, underpinned by stronger communication, clearer expectations, and improved accountability around attendance.

Annual Targets

To counteract the recent decline and realign with the national goal, we have set the following aspirational targets for 2026-2028. These targets are ambitious and signal a whole-school commitment to reversing the current trend.

Student attendance targets for regular attendance, moderate absence and chronic absence.			
Measure Ministry targets	2026 Target	2027 Target	Today
Percentage of ākonga attending school regularly (attending more than 90%, an average of 9 days a fortnight)	70% 11∇	75% 16∇	59%
Percentage of ākonga who are moderately absent (attending more than 70% up to 80%, missing two to three days a fortnight)	6% 6Δ	4% 8Δ	12%
Percentage of ākonga who are chronically absent (attending 70% or less, missing three or more days a fortnight)	5% 5Δ	3% 7Δ	10%

While no particular cohort of students are over represented in the negative statistics, there are families of students who have higher levels of absence. Many times this seems to be due to family needs, and students taking on caregiving roles for other family members, or going on family holidays during term time. The key to success will be balancing empathy with clarity—understanding family pressures while consistently reinforcing that attendance matters and is non-negotiable long-term. Success will come from strong relationships, early intervention, and reducing avoidable absence through shared responsibility. Some ways to counter this may be:

1. Strengthen relationships and understanding

- Have early, non-judgemental conversations with families where attendance is declining.
- Acknowledge pressures (e.g. caregiving, financial constraints, travel needs) while reinforcing the importance of daily attendance.
- Use a “we’re here to help” approach, not compliance-first messaging.

2. Provide support for caregiving situations

- Identify students taking on caregiving roles and connect families with:
 - External agencies or community support
 - School-based pastoral care
- Where appropriate, develop individual attendance plans that prioritise getting the student to school as often as possible, even if flexibility is needed short-term.

3. Clear expectations around holidays

- Communicate clearly (and repeatedly) that term-time holidays impact learning.
- Share simple data or examples showing the learning lost over time.
- Consider requiring pre-approval processes and follow-up conversations for extended leave.

4. Improve visibility and follow-up

- Reduce the “unknown” absences by:
 - Prompt same-day follow-up systems
 - Clear processes for recording reasons
- This helps distinguish between avoidable vs unavoidable absence and target support more effectively.

5. Targeted communication and education

- Run attendance awareness campaigns (newsletters, meetings, student voice) that:
 - Emphasise cumulative impact (missing 1 day = X hours lost learning)
 - Reinforce that attendance is a shared responsibility

6. Incentives and positive reinforcement

- Recognise and celebrate:
 - Improved attendance
 - Consistency, not just perfection
- This helps shift the culture from compliance to positive engagement.

7. Flexible support, not lowered expectations

- Where genuine family need exists:
 - Offer short-term flexibility (e.g. phased return, support plans)
- But maintain a clear message: regular attendance is the goal for all students.

Date Range	Thu 1st Jan 2026 TO Wed 25th Mar 2026							
	Regularly attending		Irregular absence		Moderately absent		Chronically absent	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
All	54	59	18	20	11	12	9	10
Female	27	57	9	19	8	17	3	6
Male	27	60	9	20	3	7	6	13
Māori	9	47	5	26	3	16	2	11
Other	19	83	2	9	1	4	1	4
Pacific	12	50	5	21	5	21	2	8
Pākehā	14	54	6	23	2	8	4	15

Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plan

This Attendance Management Plan is a key component of our school's broader Strategic Plan and is integrated into our Annual Implementation Plan. It directly supports our strategic goals related to student wellbeing and academic achievement.

Attendance Policy

Saint Joseph's School has established procedures to accurately record, monitor, and follow up on student attendance. As required by the Education and Training Act 2020, all students aged six to sixteen must be enrolled and attend school regularly. The Board of Trustees is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to ensure enrolled students attend when the school is open for instruction.

Whānau hold a legal obligation to ensure their children's attendance and are expected to:

- Notify the school of any absence or lateness as soon as possible.
- Schedule appointments and trips outside of school hours or during holidays where feasible.
- Collaborate with the school to address any attendance concerns.

Attendance Management Procedures

Recording Attendance:

- **Kaiako (Teachers):** Mark rolls on the E Tap SMS twice daily, before 9:05 am and 1:50 pm.
- **Tari (Office):** The Administration Clerk checks registers, follows up on unexplained absences via text message, and updates attendance codes as information is received.
- **Whānau:** Notify the school of absences via phone, letter, or in person.

Monitoring Practices:

- The Principal and relevant staff will review attendance data weekly to identify patterns, coding errors, and students tracking towards different absence thresholds.
- Attendance data and trends will be reported to the Board of

Trustees twice per term. - The plan will be reviewed termly in response to the *Every Day Matters* reports.

Absence Thresholds and Stepped Attendance Response (STAR)

Our response to absenteeism is structured around a tiered approach, ensuring that support is tailored to the needs of the student and whānau.

Tier	Attendance Level	Whānau Responsibilities	Kura (School) Responsibilities
Good	< 5 days absence	Reinforce good attendance habits.	Communicate regularly with whānau about attendance.
Worrying	5-10 days absence	Contact school to discuss reasons for absence.	Contact parents to discuss impact on learning and offer in-school support.
Concerning	10-15 days absence	Participate in meetings to develop a support plan.	Hold meetings to analyze reasons for absence and co-create a support plan.
Very Concerning	15+ days absence	Engage with support plan and external agencies.	Request support from Attendance Services or other agencies as needed.

Communicating with Whānau

Open and ongoing communication with whānau is critical to improving attendance. Our school will use a variety of channels, including newsletter, class and school dojo reminders, and direct phone calls, to keep whānau informed. In cases of escalating concern, we will utilize Ministry of Education resources to guide our communication and intervention strategies.

School Stepped Attendance Response Activities

Below is our stepped attendance response for responding to individual student absence.

Good Attendance	Worrying Attendance	Concerning Attendance	Very Concerning Attendance
Less than 5 days absence in a school term	Up to 10 days absence in a term	Up to 15 days absence in a term	15 days or more absence in a term
Whānau	Whānau	Whānau	Whānau
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure student attends every day they are able • Reinforce good attendance habits • Support other whānau to reinforce good attendance habits • Follow school attendance management plan and procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return student to regular attendance • Contact school to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning • Support student to catch up on missed learning • Engage in supports offered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return student to regular attendance • Participate in meetings with school to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan • Implement strategies at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return student to regular attendance • Engage in support plan • Participate in regular meetings
Kura	Kura	Kura	Kura
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with whānau about every absence • Maintain contact details of all parents • Provide students with regular updates on their own attendance • Report regularly to whānau on attendance of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parents to discuss reasons for absence and impact on learning • Support student to catch up missed learning where required • Use in-school resources as appropriate to remove barriers, eg: counsellor, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parents to escalate concerns • Hold meeting to analyse reasons for absence and to collaborate on a support plan • Develop and implement a support plan tailored to the reasons and circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact parents to inform of escalated response • Request support from Attendance Service or other agencies as needed • Participate in multi-agency response • Maintain implementation