

The Importance of Punctuality and Attendance at School



Sacred Heart
Girls' College
HAMILTON

Why Being on Time and Attending School is Important

Going to school every day and being on time helps students learn better and stay confident. Missing school or being late can make it hard to keep up and understand lessons. It can also affect friendships and future opportunities. Good attendance instils responsibility and helps students succeed in school and life. All of us - parents and teachers - should expect and encourage students to attend school regularly for a better future.

Regular attendance and **punctuality** are essential for overall development and academic success. Missing school, even for a few days or arriving late consistently, can lead to significant gaps in learning, making it difficult for students to keep up with their peers. Over time, frequent absences or lateness can affect a student's confidence, social skills and future aspirations. Establishing good habits of punctuality and daily school attendance encourages self-discipline, personal responsibility, and a strong work ethic that will benefit students throughout their lives. **Please help us:** when we all prioritise consistent attendance at school, we all contribute to the best possible educational outcomes and future success. Let's work together to be better!

We might think that one or two days a week doesn't seem much.

Let's add up...one day = 20%

If a student misses:	That equals:	Which is:	Over 13 years of schooling, this is:
1 day per fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years
1 day per week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over 2.5 years
2 days per week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over 5 years
3 days per week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly 8 years

How about 10 minutes late a day? Surely that won't affect a student's attendance or learning?

If a student misses:	That equals:	Which is:	Over 13 years of schooling, this is:
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1.5 weeks per year	Nearly half a year
20 minutes per day	1 hr 40 mins per week	Over 2.5 weeks per year	Nearly one year
30 minutes per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly 1.5 years
1 hour per day	One day per week	8 weeks per year	Over 2.5 years

Source: Ministry of Education

Now the legal bit – for parents and students

The law of New Zealand is very clear: you must send your children to school - full time, until the age of 16. The only exceptions are: sickness (including dental/medical treatment), attending a funeral, an emergency that requires the student's presence, or a student is representing their country at an officially sanctioned sport or cultural competition or event (eg Te Matatini, the Olympic Games). **These absences are 'Justified'.**

At times, opportunities present themselves for all kinds of wonderful experiences, which parents can justify: overseas experiences, family occasions etc. However, the law is clear 'students must attend school'. Therefore, even with the Principal's approval, if a parent makes the choice not to send their child to school, that absence will be coded as 'Explained'. Please understand that this is considered 'Unjustified' because it does not meet the 'exceptions' stated in the legislation (above). Where parents make their choice, no matter the reasons, it will fall under the unjustified category (for the ministry's statistics and the media's headlines). For our school, attendance makes a difference: it is key to our Learning Behaviours, which contributes to our "Age Quod Agis" celebration of success. A teacher cannot make a judgement of behaviour if a student is absent from class.



.....

Learning for all students at SHGC is: full time; face to face; on-site. There are no options for online learning. We understand that parents will make choices that you are free to make and defend, however, when we do not hear from you about your child's absence, that's when things get serious: we follow up on all **Truancy**.

What can I do if I am struggling to get my child to attend school?

First, we understand. There are genuine reasons for some young people to do their best to avoid school. However, allowing your child to stay away from school might bring immediate short-term relief, but, if they continue to miss school, returning can feel harder and harder as they fall behind with their learning and begin to feel socially isolated from their friends and teachers. Very quickly, a habit of school avoidance can set in.

From our experience, students rarely 'grow out' of this; and the longer they stay home, the harder it is to get back to a school routine. In fact, staying home makes things worse: it prevents the growth of coping skills. So, it's important to remember that school is more than credits and awards; it is a place of formation where we learn to navigate the challenges of life: and for teenage girls, happy, healthy friendships are essential to their development and maturity. A sense of belonging is crucial: being at school supports this positive mindset.

Please contact us so we can support you and your child to re-engage in school. Our Dean Team will work closely with you both to co-construct a plan of support for re-engagement with school and learning.

What about attendance and co-curricular activities during the school day?

There is great value and enrichment of learning beyond the classroom and the school day. However, the impact of this absence needs to be balanced alongside a student's attendance, punctuality and engagement. Therefore, we require all students to have an attendance rate of 90% or more to participate in the school's cocurricular and/or extra-curricular activities that take students out of class or school during the day.

The threshold of 90% ensures that students are actively engaged in their learning while also benefiting from the enrichment opportunities the school provides.

We understand that there may be exceptional circumstances that lead to attendance falling below the threshold. In such cases, students will be required to discuss this with their Dean and seek approval from the Senior Leadership to attend any co-curricular events, such as tournaments, if they wish to be involved. This additional step allows us to consider individual circumstances and make informed decisions that prioritise the student's academic progress and their participation in co-curricular events.