STUDENT ATTENDANCE

1. GOVERNANCE & LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

1.1 Divisional Attendance, Presence, and Engagement Committee

As mandated by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (MEECL) provincial policy directives, Swan Valley School Division (SVSD) maintains a dedicated Divisional Attendance, Presence, and Engagement Committee. This multi-stakeholder committee ensures that divisional procedures remain responsive, culturally safe, and grounded in local community needs.

- **Committee Structure:** SVSD establishes a divisional committee comprising representatives from division administration (Presence & Engagement Facilitator and Student Services Achievement Coordinator), principals or vice principals from local schools (one representative from SVRSS, one representative from Benito/Bowsman/Minitonas, and one representative from Taylor/Heyes/ESRSS), and community partners (CFS/Knowledge Keeper/Elder).
- **Operational Mandate:** The committee identifies local factors contributing to student absenteeism, monitors enrolment and attendance data, and informs ongoing strategies and interventions within the divisional attendance plan.
- **Standing Agenda Items:** Student attendance data and monitoring are required standing agenda items at senior administration meetings and school-based support team meetings.

1.2 Governing Provincial Legislation & Policy Directives

This administrative procedure aligns with the following provincial statutes, regulations, and educational standards.

Governing Legislation:

- The Public Schools Act (PSA, C.C.S.M. c. P250) - Mandatory attendance for children from compulsory school age (7 years or turning 7 by December 31) until age 18. Parents are legally responsible for ensuring regular attendance, and principals are mandated to report unexcused absenteeism to the local attendance officer after reasonable opportunity for parental compliance.
- The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act (C.C.S.M. c. P143.5)
- The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) & The Personal Health Information Act (PHIA)
- The Education Administration Act
- The Human Rights Code

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Supporting Documents

- Safe and Caring Schools: A Policy Directive and Action Plan to Enhance Student Presence and Engagement (MEECL, 2023)
- Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan: A Roadmap in Response to the Recommendations of the Commission on K to 12 Education (MEECL, 2022)
- An Indigenous Education Policy Framework (MEECL, 2022)

- Policy Directive Enhancing Proactive Supports to Minimize the Use of Seclusion (2021) & Provincial Code of Conduct (2017)
- Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (MEECL, 2022): Establishes the statutory framework for Student-Specific Planning (SSP)
- Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Resource Teachers in Manitoba Schools
- Manitoba Pupil File Guidelines

Research Reports

- Report of the Commission on K to 12 Education – Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future (2020)
- Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) Special Report – A Place Where it Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine (2019)
- Addressing Chronic Absenteeism in Manitoba: An Action Plan for Student Presence (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2022)

2. CORE PHILOSOPHY & KEY DEFINITIONS

2.1 Core Philosophy & Relational Principles

Relationships First: Presence and engagement begin with reciprocal, respectful relationships among students, families, and school staff. Elders and Knowledge Keepers may be added to the student's support network with parental permission and a signed release of information form.

Collective Responsibility: Student success, presence, and well-being are the shared responsibility of all who support children and youth.

Prohibition of Exclusionary Practices: Swan Valley School Division explicitly prohibits the use of suspensions, expulsions, or withdrawals as responses to student absenteeism. Disciplinary exclusions are counterproductive; the sole focus must remain on inviting students back, identifying root barriers, and providing support.

Holistic Well-Being: Learning environments support student well-being and the achievement of Mino-pimatisiwin / Mino Bimaadiziwin (The Good Life).

2.2 Common Definitions

To ensure consistency across all SVSD schools, the following standardized terminology applies:

Presence: Physical or plan-approved participation in designated school or classroom learning activities. A student may be present even if not physically in a regular classroom if participating per their Student-Specific Plan (SSP).

Engagement: A student's attitude toward schooling, participation in activities, disposition toward learning, and socializing—expressed through a genuine sense of belonging.

Regular Attendance: Attending and participating in learning consistently, missing no more than 5 days across the entire school year.

Absence: Time when a student is not in class or school activities while not on suspension/expulsion.

- **Excused Absence:** Absence with them mutual consent of the school principal and parent/guardian.
- **Unexcused Absence:** Absence without the mutual consent of the school principal and parent/guardian, regardless of parental knowledge.

Chronic Absenteeism: Unexcused absence accounting for 10% or more of instructional days in a term (Kindergarten to Grade 8) or 10 or more unexcused classes in a single course (Grades 9 to 12).

Severe Chronic Absenteeism: Unexcused absence accounting for 20% or more of instructional days in a term (Kindergarten to Grade 8) or 20 or more unexcused classes in a single course (Grades 9 to 12).

Student-Specific Plan (SSP): A formal planning, record-keeping, and communication tool aligned with provincial standards (Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming).

3. DIVISION-WIDE PREVENTATIVE & PROACTIVE PRACTICES

3.1 Culturally Safe Environments & Circle of Courage

SVSD embeds culturally responsive practices and the Circle of Courage® positive youth development framework to build resilience and a sense of belonging for every learner:

- **Spirit of Belonging** (I am loved): Fostering kinship and trust.
- **Spirit of Mastery** (I can succeed): Cultivating an inborn thirst for learning.
- **Spirit of Independence** (I have the power to make decisions): Building responsibility.
- **Spirit of Generosity** (I have a purpose for my life): Developing concern for others.

3.2 Public Awareness & Parent Communication

Preventing absenteeism requires transparent, division-wide messaging that sets clear expectations and builds community trust:

- **Public Information Campaigns:** Broad communication of attendance expectations, the benefits of regular attendance and support options via attendance brochures, mail-outs, social media campaigns, local newspaper ads, posters, and community bulletin boards.
- **Proactive Parent Messaging:** Proactive communication ensures parents understand attendance thresholds so automated phone calls, letters, or door knocks are anticipated.

3.3 Barrier Removal & Direct Student Supports

SVSD actively identifies and removes non-academic barriers that prevent regular attendance:

- **Accessible Busing Services:** SVSD provides bus transportation to students residing closer than 1.6 km from their home school and offers curbside busing services to address physical accessibility and student-specific needs.

- **Direct Barrier Support:** Outreach letters and intervention meetings explicitly inform families of available in-school supports, including but not limited to counselling, food/nutrition programs, clothing, school supplies, transportation assistance, and contact details for community supports.
- **Pedagogical Engagement:** Creating engaging, inclusive learning environments through explicit instruction, Responsive Classroom practices, effective literacy strategies, strong student-adult relationships, and recognition of positive attendance habits.

3.4 Staff Professional Development & Administrative Systems

SVSD invests in system readiness and staff capacity to streamline attendance tracking and intervention via:

- **Professional Development:** Staff receive targeted training to build capacity and ensure school teams are prepared to respond to attendance concerns through both proactive prevention strategies and effective interventions.
- **Standardized Attendance Coding Legend:** Implementation of a division-wide coding legend to ensure consistent recording across all schools.
- **Administrative Tools & Scripts:** Training teachers on the CLEVR MB Attendance form, providing structured communication scripts for 3-day calls, and PowerSchool training for school administrative secretaries and principals to generate weekly monitoring reports and automated 5-day threshold letters.

4. DOCUMENTING, MONITORING & ENROLMENT TRACKING

Data forms the foundation of SVSD's attendance strategy. Accurate tracking enables early warning and timely intervention before attendance patterns become entrenched:

Daily Recording & Archives: Teachers record daily attendance accurately. Permanent records are archived according to PSA and FIPPA regulations.

- **Enrolment Register & Unclaimed Pupil Files:** Principals, with senior administrative support, compare enrolment registers year-over-year, review unclaimed pupil files, and monitor departmental homeschool reports to ensure all expected students are accounted for.
- **Early Warning Systems:** School Principals or Vice Principal, and the Presence & Engagement Facilitator provide continuous analysis of attendance data trends to identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism before patterns become entrenched at the school level and supported by the Presence & Engagement Facilitator.
- **Monthly Superintendency Reporting:** The Presence & Engagement Facilitator submit a monthly absentee report to the Superintendent following the conclusion of each teaching month, which will be a standing agenda item at the Divisional School Principal Meetings. These reports should be accompanied by data measuring the effectiveness of attendance interventions and preventative practices to inform future planning to support student attendance.
- **Annual School Board and Community Reporting:** The Presence & Engagement Facilitator will report annually to the Board of Trustees, and a summary of that report will be posted to the Division’s website.

5. ATTENDANCE THRESHOLDS & ESCALATING RESPONSE MATRIX

SVSD employs a graduated, predictable response matrix based on absence duration and category. Responses escalate progressively from automated notifications to personal contact, school team reviews, case management, and home visits.

Threshold	Absence Category	Mandatory Action & Relational Intervention	Responsible Party
1 Day	Unexcused	Automated phone call notification sent home via Student Information System (PowerSchool).	PowerSchool SIS
3 Days	Unexcused	Personal check-in call to parent/guardian using the divisional communication script to identify underlying barriers.	Classroom or Designated Teacher
5 Days	Unexcused & Excused (EP code – Excused by Parent)	Automated 5-day attendance report letter sent to guardians via PowerSchool, paired with an attendance brochure outlining offered supports (counselling, nutrition, clothing, supplies, transportation, community supports).	School Secretary / PowerSchool
8 Days	Unexcused	Personal phone call from designated teacher inviting parents and the student to a face-to-face school meeting. If meeting unsuccessful: Conduct home visit.	Designated Teacher, Facilitator, and/or Home School Liaison (HSL)
10 Days (Chronic Absenteeism)	Unexcused	**Formal Chronic Absenteeism Response**: School Team review; assignment of Case Manager (Resource Teacher or Presence & Engagement Facilitator); establish/update Student-Specific Plan (SSP); face-to-face meeting requested. If contact fails: Outreach to emergency contacts, service providers, and home visit.	Principal, School Team & Assigned Case Manager
	Excused (EP)	Automated **chronic absenteeism** attendance report letter sent to guardians via PowerSchool, paired with an attendance correspondence stating the number of absences and impact of chronic absenteeism.	School Secretary / PowerSchool
20 Days (Severe Chronic Absenteeism)	Unexcused	**Formal Severe Chronic Absenteeism Response**: School Team meeting booked with guardian and student to review the absences, interventions (SSP), and next steps with the guardians and school team.	School Secretary / PowerSchool
	Excused (EP)	Automated **severe chronic absenteeism** attendance report letter sent to guardians via PowerSchool, paired with an attendance correspondence stating the number of absences and impact of severe chronic absenteeism.	School Secretary / PowerSchool
Attendance Monitoring and Response			
Bi-Weekly	Unexcused	School Support Team reviews attendance data every 2 weeks. If no attendance growth occurs, initiate face-to-face meeting or home visit.	School Team / HSL / P & E Facilitator
Monthly	Unexcused and Excused	Monthly Attendance Reports automatically generated and emailed to parents via PowerSchool with attendance information brochures.	PowerSchool Automated System

6. GRADUATED INTERVENTIONS & MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION

6.1 Case Management & Student-Specific Planning (SSP)

When a student enters Chronic Absenteeism (10 days K–8 / 10 classes Gr 9–12), a structured case management approach is initiated:

- **Case Manager Assignment:** Upon reaching chronic absenteeism, the Principal assigns a dedicated Case Manager as a stable point of contact.
- **Core Team Student Specific Plan Meeting:** In alignment with Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Resource Teachers, the Case Manager coordinates a core team meeting (including parents) to complete an SSP that identifies root barriers (academic, social-emotional, family, transportation, or safety) and outlines tailored interventions.

6.2 Restorative Practices & Conflict Resolution

When interpersonal conflict and bullying within the school environment are recognized as major drivers of student disengagement and refusal. SVSD schools actively employ restorative practices and restorative justice approaches to repair relationships, resolve conflict, build empathy, and create a safe environment that invites students back.

6.3 Multi-Agency Escalation Protocol for Severe Chronic Absenteeism

When absenteeism reaches Severe Chronic Absenteeism, parents are struggling to support the student and/or in-school interventions yield insufficient progress, formal multi-agency escalation occurs:

1. **In-School Team Review:** The Case Manager and Student Support Team assess in-school interventions with external agency partners.
2. **Division Notification:** If severe chronic absenteeism persists, the Principal notifies the Student Services Achievement Coordinator.
3. **External Agency & Provincial Outreach:** The Coordinator initiates formal notifications to:
    - Child and Family Services (CFS).
    - Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning (MEECL) School and Community Support Unit, when an external agency is involved but the student is still displaying chronic absenteeism.
4. **Information Sharing & Informed Consent:** Coordinated multi-agency support operates under The Protecting and Supporting Children (Information Sharing) Act, adhering to parental informed consent guidelines per Manitoba Pupil File Guidelines, FIPPA, and PHIA. If an Elder or Knowledge Keeper is involved, then the guardian must sign a release of information form.

7. ARTICULATED ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Ensuring regular presence and engagement is a shared responsibility across all levels of the education system:

7.1 Students

- Attend school and classes regularly and punctually.
- Comply with the school code of conduct and complete required learning activities.
- Participate in Student-Specific Planning (SSP) as developmentally appropriate.

7.2 Parents / Guardians

- Ensure regular school attendance in compliance with the Public Schools Act.
- Promptly notify the school regarding student absences.
- Attend school meetings and participate in SSP sessions when attendance concerns arise.

7.3 Teachers

- Maintain accurate daily attendance records.
- Conduct timely communication with parents and principals regarding attendance concerns.
- Execute proactive check-in calls (e.g., 3-day calls) and participate in SSP planning.

7.4 Principals & School Designates

- Oversee school-wide attendance procedures and publish annual attendance policies to families.
- Assign Case Managers and oversee SSPs for chronically absent students.
- Lead school-based attendance initiatives and be responsive to monthly absentee reports.

7.5 School Division Administration

- Ensure appropriate educational programming and division-wide policy implementation.
- Provide specialized personnel (Presence & Engagement Facilitators, Home School Liaisons, and Student Services Achievement Coordinators).
- Maintain the Divisional Presence and Engagement Committee and ensure culturally safe learning environments across all schools.

7.6 Provincial Government (MEECL) & External Partners

- MEECL: Collects and analyzes provincial attendance data, supports implementation through the School and Community Support Unit, and updates policy directives.
- Community & Government Agencies (CFS, Health, Justice): Participate in multi-agency case management, share relevant info under statutory protocols, and align community services to reduce barriers to attendance.