



## IMPLEMENTATION OF SMS SYSTEM FOR STUDENT ABSENCE NOTIFICATIONS

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Roleystone Community College will be implementing a new system that will use mobile phone Short Message Service (SMS) to send text messages to parents/guardians/caregivers to notify them of an unexplained absence or late arrival of their child. SMS may also be used to provide information to parents such as school community notices and emergency/unplanned events such as school closures.

From 11 October 2021 parents will be informed by SMS to their mobile phone each time their child is absent and an explanation has not already been provided to the school. If your child is absent and a reason has been provided before the time the SMS is due to be sent, you will not receive a text message.

We are introducing SMS communications to build on existing attendance procedures and to ensure that parents are notified as soon as possible if their child is absent from school without an explanation. This system has been shown to assist in making schools (and parents) more aware of where students are, and improve student attendance. These factors will enhance learning opportunities for all students and contribute to their safety.

### ADVANTAGES OF USING SMS TO COMMUNICATE TO PARENTS

- **Faster Communication:** It takes a long time for school staff to individually make phone calls to each parent. By using SMS, schools can get important messages to parents faster and can send a message to one or more people instantly. Parents can also use this system to notify the school of their child/ren's absence to avoid receiving a text message. The school can be contacted by SMS 24/7.
- **Cost effective:** It can be expensive, from a monetary and time perspective, for school staff to individually phone large numbers of parents regarding student absences. SMS communication to parents will be less expensive for the school and for parents replying via SMS. It also removes the need for parents to wait in telephone queues to provide an explanation for a student absence. The requirement for the school to issue absentee follow-up letters will also decrease.
- **Emergency Message:** If there is an emergency situation that requires rapid communication to parents this can be achieved using SMS. This communication would not usually be possible without the use of SMS.

Please see over for the answers to some frequently asked questions.

Regards,  
Mike Burns  
Associate Principal

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SMS COMMUNICATIONS

### *As a parent, what do I need to do?*

You will be notified when the school is going to commence the use of SMS. If you know your child is going to be absent, please call the school well before the set SMS sending time which will be 11.00am every day. If you do not contact the school, the SMS system will automatically send you a text message advising you that your child is not at school. If you do not wish to receive SMS communication regarding student unexplained absences, please contact the school to discuss other options for receiving this information.

### *How do I reply to an SMS message from the school?*

When you receive an SMS about an absence, reply to the number and make sure that the text includes the student name, date of absence and reason for absence. Do not call the number as it is an automated system, using a virtual number which is not manned by a person. **Sample SMS Reply Message: Jane Citizen, 11 Feb, sick**

### *What will it cost me?*

Standard SMS charges apply, depending on your mobile phone carrier and plan. The cost of an SMS is usually cheaper than a local telephone call.

### *What if my mobile number changes?*

Please notify the school immediately if your mobile number changes.

### *What if there is a custodial order preventing contact?*

The parent/guardian with legal custody of the child must provide evidence to the school in the form of a court order for the school to legally deny a parent/guardian access to any information about their child.

### *What are the requirements for notification of student absences?*

It is a legal requirement that parents contact the school regarding any student absences or reasons for lateness. If an explanation for the absence has been provided prior to each morning, then parents will not receive an SMS.

Parents need to be aware that this system is an additional absence follow up service only. There will be times when parents may not receive a text message due to technical issues. In cases where you are concerned about your child's attendance, please contact the school directly on 9391 6222. We recognise there may be some teething issues being a new system to the school, and request your support as in the long term the system will improve the efficacy and recording of absences.

If you have any other questions regarding the SMS Communications plan for Roleystone Community College, please call for more information.

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