

POLICY: MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE (MLA)¹

1. A Medical Leave of Absence (MLA):
 - 1.1. Refers to the absence from school due to a physical or mental illness for longer than one week. There may be absences for less than one week in which the school will apply this MLA.
 - 1.2. It results from a student being unable to meet the day-to day-requirements of student life.
 - 1.3. It may be requested for by a student, the student's family or by the school (even if the student is over 18). The approval of such request however remains with the school (see below).
 - 1.4. Applies where the medical needs of the student are beyond the capacity of the school to provide the necessary support to the student.
2. The school counsellor or nurse may initiate a conversation about a potential MLA with a student and their family. The school nurse is involved in cases of physical illness while the school counsellor is involved in cases due to mental illness. An MLA may be required when:
 - 2.1. There is an immediate concern about a student's health, safety or general well-being.
 - 2.2. When there is a longer-term indication that the student is not functioning well at school (a large number of missed classes, an inability to participate in afternoon activities, an inability to thrive, etc.).
 - 2.3. There is a concern about the health, safety or general well-being of any other person in the community.
 - 2.4. There is inappropriate public behaviour or sharing of personal medical circumstances / conditions (including through social media) that causes undue alarm within the school community.
3. Any member of staff that is concerned about the health, safety or general well-being of a student that they think might warrant an MLA, shall immediately refer such concern to the school counsellor or nurse or Deputy Principal (Pastoral) for follow up (as above).
4. The MLA is approved on behalf of the school by the Deputy Principal (Pastoral). The DPP will lead the processes required for the successful implementation of the MLA and coordinate all communications with the relevant parties. This is to ensure consistency of communication.
5. Once the school has determined that an MLA is warranted:
 - 5.1. The student and their family will receive a medical leave agreement that must be signed and returned to the school.
 - 5.2. The agreement will stipulate the expectations and requirements the student must meet during the absence, the procedures the student must follow in order to be considered for a return to school and any requirements once back at school. This may include any required treatment, the taking of any medication and any other requirements for a successful return to school. Further a return to residential accommodation at school may be reassessed.
 - 5.3. The school will require consent for the release of information (including any relevant medical information) with all parties (including any consulting health care professionals) involved in the treatment of the student while s/he is on leave.
6. When a student returns to school after an MLA:
 - 6.1. A meeting of the relevant care team (typically the counsellors, nurse, Phase Coordinator (PC) and tutor) will discuss a "Back to school" plan for discussion with the returning student and their family if relevant. This is to ensure that any proposals, especially regarding academic and residential arrangements are possible before discussion of same with the returning student.

¹ With acknowledgements to St Georges School, Newport, Rhode Island, USA.

- 6.2. A "Back to school" support meeting will be convened with the student and the relevant care team to agree the plan of action to reintegrate the student successfully into the academic, social and residential life at school.
 - 6.3. A support group will be set up for the student which will include the counsellors, the nurse (if needs be), the PC and the Tutor. The support team will stay in contact with each other with regular updates and/or concerns with respect to the student's managing their return to school.
 - 6.4. Once a student has been successfully reintegrated, the support group will become redundant although support for the student will remain available.
 - 6.5. Though a student on an MLA is excused from attending classes, the student must make arrangements to make up missed material while on leave if possible, or upon return to school. While the school will strive to minimize academic disruption, it may require that a student amend their academic programme if it is considered that a prolonged absence will make it impossible for the student to complete course requirements. Any such amendment will be approved by the Deputy Principal (academic). It is noted that there may be extra costs (school and or IB / IGCSE) associated with any such amendment for the account of the student.
7. An MLA is supportive in nature and not a punitive measure:
 - 7.1. The requirements laid out are designed to help the student perform productively and safely at school.
 - 7.2. It is not used to threaten or coerce a student into compliance. Every effort is made to ensure the student and their family understand the need for an MLA due to illness.
 8. It is noted there may be circumstances that warrant the school acting in accordance with the School Code of Conduct at the same time as any requirements concerning an MLA.
 9. The school will determine what communication to the family, staff and or third party (for example, National Committee, police, etc.) is prudent in any MLA involving a student, respecting the confidentiality of the student and family concerned. This is particularly important in circumstances where a student has been the victim of a crime or other serious trauma.
 10. If the student and / or family are unwilling to follow any of the requirements of the school, the school entirely at its own discretion will notify the student and / or family of the termination of the contract of enrolment with immediate effect if necessary, for the safety of the student or others in the school community. It is also noted that a family may decide to withdraw a student from school due to illness.

Approved by CMG: 01 October 2018
Amended by CMG: 27 January 2020