

Attendance Policy



Purpose

In accordance with the [Education Training and Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)](#) (the Act) and the [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic.\)](#), school attendance is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted (refer to **Appendix 1: Guidelines** for absence and [Exemption from School Attendance or Enrolment](#), Department of Education and Training (DET), 2021).

Whilst ensuring student attendance at school is a legal obligation of parents/guardians, supporting students to attend school each day is the shared responsibility of all parents, students, the school and the wider community.

School attendance is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. Positive engagement with schooling enhances academic and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people ([eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)). Attending school every school day for the whole day enables students to participate in the school's educational program as well as develop their social skills. Regular attendance enables the school to:

- plan an organised educational program that is delivered in a consistent way and has continuity
- facilitate shared student learning experiences that support the educational program
- monitor student progress and adjust the educational program to meet student needs. All schools must maintain attendance records, identify and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain student attendance.

Scope

Details and procedure within this policy are applicable to schools and students enrolled in a Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic School (MACS).

All schools must have documented procedures for monitoring school attendance (**see Appendix 1**).

Principals should contact the Regional General Manager for assistance in addressing complex attendance and exemption matters.

Definitions

Attendance

A student is considered to be in attendance at school when onsite and/or involved in an offsite curriculum program or other activity organised by the school (for example an excursion or camp). A student is also considered to be in attendance when the student is engaged in a re-engagement program or another school part time to make up full time attendance and the schools or settings have agreed the time fractions, allocation of Student Resource Package (or other funding) and the educational plan for the student (see **Appendix 2: Guidelines for absence**).

Parent/guardian

Includes 'a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975 (Cwlth)* and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides'.

Unexplained or unapproved absences

A principal can approve or not approve any absence, based on the requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)*, an individual school policy or on a case-by-case basis.

The Act provides some examples of what a reasonable excuse is for the purposes of explaining a school absence and includes, amongst other considerations:

- Illnesses and accidents
- Unforeseen and unexplained circumstances
- If the absence was a result of complying with another law
- The child is receiving distance education through a registered school
- The child is undertaking approved education, training and/or employment
- The child has been suspended or negotiated transfer/expelled
- The child is attending or observing a religious event or obligation.

Unexplained Absence

A principal will record an absence as 'unexplained' if no explanation about the absence is given to the school by the parent or carer of the student.

If the parent/guardian does contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the school must attempt to contact the parent or legal guardian either by phone or in writing and seek a clarification for the absence.

If no contact can be made with the parent or other carers of the child within 10 days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and a noted will be made in the child's file. A parent or legal guardian can contact the principal at any time after the recorded absence to provide an explanation.

Unapproved Absence

In general, a principal may record an absence as 'unapproved' when no reasonable explanation has been given for the student's absence. If a reason is given for a student absence is not approved by the principal than the school will notify the parent or legal guardian in writing.

Exemption

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* allows exemptions from school attendance and enrolment to be granted in certain circumstances, where the student:

- is a child who turns 6 (compulsory school age) while attending kindergarten
- will be participating in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full time basis
- is employed or seeking employment during school hours in the entertainment industry

An exemption from school attendance and enrolment may also be granted where leaving school is in the best interests of the student.

All applications for exemptions are considered on a case by case basis, with the student's best interests as the guiding principle for decision-making. In making a decision, the potential benefits or negative consequences of granting the exemption to the student's educational progress, wellbeing and development are also considered. **A student must continue attending school until an exemption is granted.**

Note: No exemption is required if a student is not of compulsory school age (6 to 17 years of age).

Exemptions, including written approval for student attendance and enrolment to be exempt or reduced to less than full time, can only be authorised by the Regional General Manager in conjunction with the school principal.

- refer to the Department of Education and Training (DET) [Exemption from school attendance and enrolment](#) guidance for further information.

School Attendance Officers

In the context of attendance, DET School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices and Infringement Notices.

- Refer to DET [Infringement notices](#) guidance for further information.

Principles and Procedures

Responsibilities for school attendance

Parent/guardian

Parents/guardians must enrol a child of compulsory school age at a registered school and ensure the child attends at all times when the school is open for instruction, unless exemption from attendance has been granted. For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Students

Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled during normal school hours every day of term, unless there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or the student is registered for home schooling and has partial enrolment.

Principal

The principal must ensure:

- daily attendance of each student enrolled at the school is recorded at least twice a day in primary schools and for every class in secondary schools
- any absences of a student from school, including classes, are identified
- reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded in writing
- explanations for absences that are provided, are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act
- follow up any unexplained absences of a student by **contacting the parent/guardian of the student as soon as practicable on the same day**
- parents/guardians are notified promptly regarding a student's unsatisfactory school or class attendance. If, upon being notified of their child's absence or contacted to seek an explanation, a parent reports that the child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day(s)
- if contact cannot be made with the parent, contact should be made with the emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school
- information regarding a student's unsatisfactory attendance at school or classes is recorded on their student file
- parents/guardians are informed of their responsibilities around attendance and initiatives aimed at promoting parental awareness of the importance of children attending school every day are implemented

- attendance improvement strategies, interventions and levels of adjustment are implemented where the absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational achievement and development, including an Attendance Student Support Group, Personalised Learning Plan, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan
- strategies for supporting attendance of students in out-of-home care, experiencing homelessness, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) families, overseas students, students with disabilities, students with cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds and newly arrived families are implemented
- **MACS is to be advised prior** a referral to a DET School Attendance Officer when a student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months without a reasonable excuse for absence
 - refer to the '**Everyday Counts**' flowchart on the CEVN webpage: <https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Student-Support/Attendance>)
- referral processes are implemented to Child FIRST or Child Protection, MACS and the School Attendance Officer where required.
 - refer to Child Protection and Child Safe Standards (PROTECT)

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Procedures for monitoring school attendance

Appendix 2: Guidelines for absences

References

- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. [School attendance guidelines](#)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2020. [Exemption from School Attendance or Enrolment](#)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2020. [Seven attendance improvement strategies](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic.\)](#)

Resources

Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines

'**Everyday Counts**' on the CEVN webpage:

<https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Student-Support/Attendance>

Related MACS policies

- Enrolment Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy and related CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Duty of Care Policy

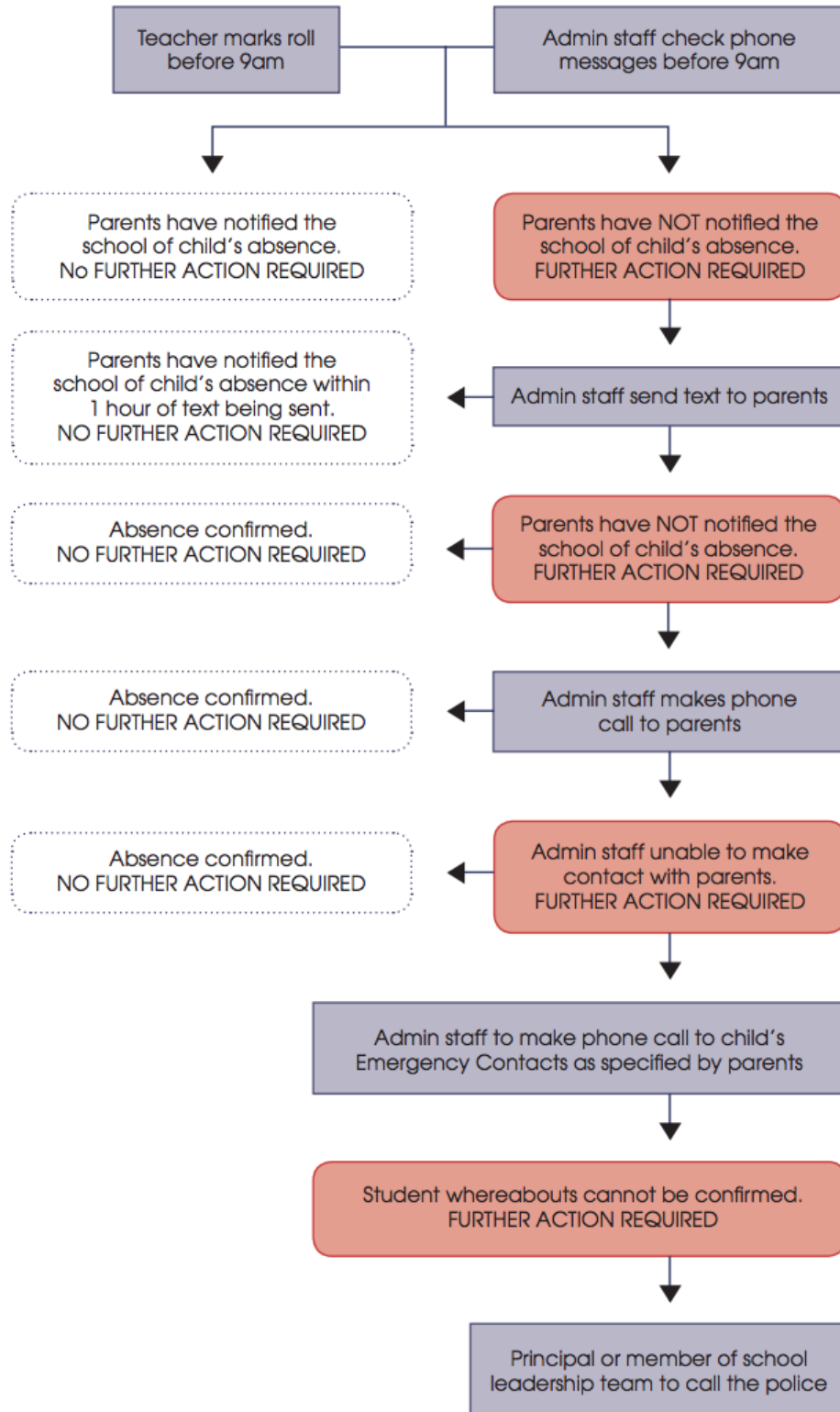
Appendix 1: Procedures for monitoring school attendance

1. Notification of an absence can be made by calling the office no later than 9.00am on that day on (03) 59839374 and leaving a message on the school answering machine.
2. Parents/guardians/carers are required to notify the school by 9.00am of the reason for any absence from school on the day of absence.
3. Where the reason for absence is known, the reason is recorded by the School administration staff and the teachers are notified of the absence and reason for this.
4. Attendance at the school is checked twice daily by School administration staff.
5. The attendance reports are accessed by the School administration staff to follow up students who are absent without explanation. Parents must provide an explanation if their child is absent where there is no exemption in place. St Joseph's Primary School, Crib Point, Principal will determine whether the reason for the absence is acceptable and ensure that the reason for the absence is recorded in writing.
6. If a student is absent without explanation, the school will contact the parent/guardian/carer for an explanation as soon as possible on the day of absence by the School administration staff.
7. Information about the number of days of absence are recorded on student files and on student reports by the School Leadership team.
8. Where the rate of absenteeism is of concern, the school will follow up with the parents/guardians/carers by a phone call and then a follow up email or text message from the School Leadership team].
9. Parents are required to provide up-to-date contact details and notify the school of any changes to contact details or address.

10. **Unexplained Absences:**

In the event that contact is not made with the school on the morning of the absence and the absence is reflected in the daily attendance records, the school will make immediate contact with the parents to inform them of this occurrence. Contact will be made with parents via phone and a request made for an immediate response to explain their absence. This will occur prior to 9:30am. Where a parent fails to respond to the initial contact by the school within 1 hour, a second attempt by school administration staff to contact them will be made. In the event that this communication remains unsuccessful, a subsequent attempt by school administration staff to contact individuals identified as the student's emergency contact will be made. The school will make all reasonable attempts to determine the location and wellbeing of the student. If, following contact, the student's safety has been established, but no explanation has been provided within 10 school days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and will also be noted in the student's file.

Unexplained Absence Flow Chart:



11. Where an explanation is received, the accurate cause of the absence must be recorded.
12. Information about the number of days of absence are recorded on student files and on student reports by [admin staff.]
13. Where the rate of absenteeism is of concern, the school will follow up with the parents/guardians

by making contact and supporting both the family and student as required. Resources are available to support this.

14. Parents are required to provide up-to-date contact details and notify the school of any changes to contact details or address via Operoo.

Procedure for late arrival at school

The Procedure for students who arrive at school later than the scheduled starting time, is as follows.

Any students arriving late are expected to have their parents or guardian sign them into the school admin Ipad system at the front office.

Procedure for leaving school before the normal departure time

The school's process for students who leave at school prior to the scheduled finishing time is as follows. Parents email, text or ring the Front Office and inform the Office Staff that their child will be collected early. Parents also contact the classroom teacher via the same method.

Procedures for communicating about attendance expectations to parents/guardians/carers

The school's process for communicating with families about the expectations for attendance at school is through the Enrolment Pack provided when a student is enrolled in the school. The Principal communicates with parents during the year regarding attendance expectations.

Attendance record keeping

In accordance with the Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006 requirements and the school's moral obligation to ensure the safety & welfare of students under its care, the school must:

- » Record every child's attendance twice per day via the Admin system. This will be completed by the classroom teacher before 9:00 am & 2:30pm;
- » Make all reasonable attempts to determine the location and wellbeing of the student as specified in the *unexplained absence flow chart*.
- » Record reasons for absence, and record the absence as "unexplained" if no reason has been provided (update the records once a reason is established);
- » Determine if the explanation provided for a student's absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. The Principal will use their discretion in making this decision;
- » Determine if the reason for the student's absence is acceptable and any follow up is needed to support the child's education and wellbeing;
- » Notify the parent/guardian if the absence has not been approved;
- » Keep records of all attempts to contact parents/ guardians in relation to attendance;
- » Record attendance of any student who only attends half a day (two hours or more);
- » Monitor attendance and develop improvement strategies for attendance where necessary;
- » Take further action (at their discretion) if a student reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absences within a school year;
- » Report the annual rates of school attendance.

Attendance Improvement Strategies:

St Joseph's Primary School Crib Point regularly monitors attendance and absence patterns, and reviews the explanations to determine students at risk of poor attendance or who may become disengaged.

Where attendance concerns are identified, the school will meet with the parents to formulate improvement strategies.

Improvement strategies will be considered where:

- » There has been a significant number of parent approved, health-related issues;
- » The absence is having a significant impact on a student's educational attainment, achievement and development;
- » A student has been truanting (absent without parental consent);
- » A parent reports that a student refuses to attend school;
- » There has been no explanation for the student's absence;
- » A parent repeatedly fails to provide a reasonable excuse for their child's absence.

Improvement strategies will be implemented as an early intervention approach to identify any underlying issue affecting attendance and support the school can offer to assist the student's ability to attend school.

To ensure the appropriate improvement strategies are identified the school will:

- » Further investigate the reasons for the student's absence (the actual reason may differ to the explanation initially provided);
- » Organise a meeting with the parent and a relevant teacher or other staff member at the earliest opportunity to identify the issues related to the non-attendance and to plan for improvement;
- » Ensure they notify a parent in writing each time the school considers they have not provided a reasonable excuse for the absence.

The impact of absences on a student's educational attainment, achievement and development will depend on a number of factors. The following factors will be considered when identifying appropriate improvement strategies for individual students:

- » Number of days of absence;
- » Number of consecutive days of absence;
- » Reason for the absence;
- » Time of year;
- » Age of the student;
- » Type of learning that will occur outside school.