

Guidelines for School Absences

A student who is participating in one of the following activities must be recorded as not physically present at the school site but will not be considered absent from school:

School activity

A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an authorised activity for school purposes. The activity may be off school grounds. Activities may include students performing in the school choir, band or dance group, students participating in a youth parliament or council or a student undertaking community service.

Excursion

A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an excursion which occurs outside the school grounds and is conducted, organised and/or approved by the school. Excursions could include part-day, day or multi-day class visits to venues outside the school or school camps.

Off campus activity

A student will not be considered absent if they are participating in an authorised activity that is away from the school campus. These activities may include flexible arrangements, attendance at a TAFE or other training provider course, or participation in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. These activities will be regular and ongoing in nature.

Approved remote learning

A student will not be considered absent if they are attending school remotely via a model of remote learning that has been authorised by the MACS Director Learning and Regional Services.

Natural disaster

A student will not be considered absent if they are unable to attend school due to an extreme weather event or other natural disaster. This code may be used whether or not the student is continuing with school work while absent from school, and may be used for full or part-day absences.

Sport

A student will not be considered absent when they are representing their school, district, region, state or country at a sporting event approved by the school.

Work experience

A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in a work experience program approved and organised by the school. Work experience programs are available for students 14 years or older. Schools must ensure the appropriate work experience agreements have been completed before students undertake work experience.

The following circumstances absences will be considered reasonable where an excuse has been given:

Illness

It is reasonable that a child may be absent from school when they are genuinely too ill to attend.

On any single day of absence due to illness, or within two days of the student's return to school, a parent/guardian/carer should provide the school with an explanation for the absence, in line with the schools agreed processes for notifying of student absence. This may take the form of a written explanation note containing the student's name, date/s of absences and reason for absence, a verbal explanation through either a phone call or visit to the school, or a medical certificate.

If a child who is prevented by illness from attending school for a period longer than 10 consecutive school days, the MACS Regional General Manager (or delegate) has the power to grant an exemption from compliance with the requirements of compulsory schooling or compulsory participation.

Infectious or contagious disease

It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if the child is, or is a member of a class of persons, that is subject to a direction or order given about an infectious or contagious disease or condition.

Medical or dental treatments or procedures

It is reasonable for a student to be absent to attend a medical or dental appointment. This should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from a parent/guardian/carer.

Sport

Principals should use their professional judgement to determine if it is reasonable for a student to be absent from school to participate in a sporting event where they are not representing their school, district, region, state or nation, taking into consideration the type of event and the organising sporting body.

Suspension

A suspension is a reasonable excuse for absence and the following applies:

- if a student is suspended for five days or less the principal must take reasonable steps to ensure the student is given school work to complete during the suspension
- if a student is suspended for more than five days, the principal must arrange for the student's access to an educational program that allows the student to continue with their educational program during the suspension
- if the student is suspended with a recommendation for negotiated transfer or expulsion, the principal must arrange for the student's access to an educational program that allows the student to continue with their educational program during the suspension.

Apprentice or trainee through the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) or a vocational education and training program (VET)

It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if an arrangement has been made through the VCAL or a VET program.

Funeral

Attendance at a funeral or to attend to Sorry Business or Sorry meetings may be considered as a reasonable excuse for absence. Parents/guardians/carers should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible.

There may also be circumstances where a child is kept out of school due to grief of a close family member. In such circumstances, the school should work with families to encourage them to have the child attend school to maintain a sense of normalcy. These situations should be handled with respect and sensitivity and should be underpinned by the interests of the child.

Legal

It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school where the child is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements.

Holiday

Parents/guardians/carers should be encouraged to plan holidays for students during gazetted school holiday periods and pupil free days. Principals should use their professional judgement in determining whether a holiday is a reasonable excuse for a student absence, taking into consideration family circumstances, distance to be travelled, length and frequency of holidays. A principal has the delegated power to grant an exemption from the requirement of attendance at a school where the exemption will apply for less than one school year.

The following circumstances will be considered absences for which there is NOT a reasonable excuse given:

Unexplained absence

When no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school by the parent/guardian/carer, or the student if they are living independently.

Leisure activities

Undertaking a leisure activity such as shopping, visiting friends and relatives, fishing or camping, is not considered a reasonable explanation for an absence from school.

Any other reason for absence

The principal should use their professional judgement in determining whether other reasons given by the parent/guardian/carer, or the student if they are living independently, are reasonable explanations for a student's absence. If the reason given is not a reasonable excuse the principal should document the decision and record the student as absent.

Policy information

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving authority	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	14 September 2022
Risk Rating	High
Date of next review	April 2023

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned Framework	Care, Safety and Welfare of Students
Related documents	Attendance Policy – 2022 – Schools
Superseded documents	MACS Guidelines for Absences – v1.0 – 2021
New policy	