

1. Rationale:

The *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, the *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007* and the *Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013* require children of school age (six to sixteen years) resident in Victoria are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless they are receiving approved home tuition, correspondence education, or have been granted an exemption by the Regional Director.

2. Aims:

To maximise student learning opportunities and performance by ensuring that children attend school regularly, are punctual and value their learning time at school.

3. Implementation:

- 3.1 Education is a sequential process. Absences often mean students miss important stages in the development of learning, causing them to find 'catching up' difficult. Contributing significantly to the student's lack of opportunity to achieve their potential.
- 3.2 All enrolled students are required to attend school unless reasonable and valid grounds exist for them to be absent.
- 3.3 Illness is reasonable grounds for an absence - shopping excursions or birthday parties are not.
- 3.4 Parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and are only absent if ill or if absolutely necessary.
- 3.5 Parents have a further responsibility to provide a medical certificate, written note or return a completed absence form to the school explaining why an absence has occurred.
- 3.6 The principal has a responsibility to ensure that attendance records are maintained and monitored at school.
- 3.7 All student absences and late arrivals are recorded in both the morning and the afternoon by teachers, are aggregated on our CASES database and communicated to the Department of Education.
- 3.8 The Department of Education and enrolment auditors may seek student attendance records.
- 3.9 If a child is absent on a particular day and the parent/guardian has not contacted the school to explain why, the school will notify the nominated parent/guardian by SMS of the child's unexplained absence as soon as practicable on the same day.
- 3.10 The principal has a further responsibility to ensure that unexplained absences and late arrivals are investigated, and that high levels of absenteeism and punctuality are adequately explained.
- 3.11 A 'Three Strike' policy will be implemented across the school to target late arrivals to school. Teachers will notify parents when their child has accumulated three late arrivals to school within a term. A fourth late arrival will result in principal contact.
- 3.12 The principal will ensure parents of students with high levels of unexplained or unapproved absences and late arrivals are contacted, with the view to developing and implementing strategies to minimise absences.
- 3.13 The Student Absence Protocols Flowchart (Appendix 1) for monitoring student absence will be used to ensure consistency across the school.
- 3.14 Class teachers and office staff will monitor student absences on GradeXpert and will seek explanations for any unexplained absences.
- 3.15 If a student returns to school after an absence which is unexplained, the teacher will send home a note generated from GradeXpert.
- 3.16 Parents are to notify the school **prior** to taking their child on a family holiday. Parents may use the Prior Approved Absence Letter (Appendix 2) or put this in a letter.
- 3.17 For students going on an extended (more than two weeks) family holiday, a Student Absence Learning Plan will be issued, with the expectation that the student completes the work while they are away.
- 3.18 Ongoing unexplained absences and late arrivals or lack of cooperation regarding student attendance will result in a formal attendance conference being organised.
- 3.19 Unresolved and prolonged attendance issues may be reported by the principal to Child First, the Department of Human Services or to DET as deemed appropriate.

- 3.20 The school will promote DET's campaign of "Every Day Counts" in the newsletter, at assemblies and with students.
- 3.21 Newsletter articles will be regularly published tracking average attendance data.
- 3.22 Positive recognition of students and classes with high attendance and low lateness will be recognised and acknowledged at assemblies and in the Newsletter.
- 3.23 Student attendance and absence figures will appear on student half year and end of year reports.
- 3.24 Aggregated student attendance data is reported to the Department of Education and the wider community each year as part of the annual report.
- 3.25 In general, it would be expected that the Principal would excuse absences for:
- Medical and dental appointments, where an out of hours appointment is not possible
 - Bereavement or attendance at a funeral of a relative or friend of the student
 - School refusal, if a plan is in place with the parents to address causes
 - Cultural observances, if the parent notifies the school in advance
 - Family holidays, where the parent notifies the school in advance and the student completes any Student Absence Learning Plan agreed by the school, parent and student.
- 3.26 In general, the Principal would not be expected to excuse absences where
- Approval had not been sought in advance
 - The student was absent due to participating in leisure or social activities without approval
 - The conditions of approval have not been met (e.g. Student Absence Learning Plan for a family holiday not completed).
 - The parent has provided no explanation of the absence

4. Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's ongoing policy and process review cycle.

References and Related Documents:

- *The School Attendance Guidelines are available at:*
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx>
- *Appendix 1- Student Absence Protocols Flowchart*
- *Appendix 2 - Student Absence Prior Notification*
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*
- *Education and Training Reform (School Attendance) Regulations 2013*

This policy was ratified by School Council in September 2017

Appendix 1: STUDENT ABSENCE PROTOCOLS FLOWCHART

	ACTION
Student attends class	Student absence is recorded as present on the roll and in GradeXpert
Student attends alternate educational activity for the day eg. camp, school transition visit, sporting event.	Student absence is recorded as present on the roll using the correct codes on GradeXpert Codes: 600 Educational (Visit to Secondary School), 604 Excursion (Away from school), 606 Camp, 610 School Production (Choir performing away from school), 611 Sports (Including Interschool Sports away from school)
Student arrives late at school with parent	Parent checks student in late on the iPad at the front office before student proceeds to class and takes a printed Late Pass to class teacher – approved late arrival recorded on GradeXpert by teacher - Code: 111
Student arrives late at school without parent	Student checks in late at the front office and receives a red Late Pass card. Student proceeds to class and takes the red Late Pass card to class teacher – unapproved late arrival recorded on GradeXpert by teacher - Code: 113
Student leaves school early	Parent/carer fills in Early Leaver Pass on the iPad at the office before proceeding to classroom. Teacher to collect the Early Leaver Pass form parent and record on GradeXpert. Use code relating to early leave pass.
Student is absent – illness/ accident	Approved Absence if parent provides an explanation Unauthorised Absence if no explanation – Code: 500
Student is absent – medical, dental, orthodontist, optometrist, speech pathology, counselling appointments in school hours	Principal Approval Required – Early Leaver/Late Arrival Pass Accepted. Ongoing absences - Parent to provide Medical Certificate stating that child attended or provided an explanation that an out of hour’s appointment was not available and retained by classroom teacher with absence notes.
Student is absent - welfare activities, custody problem, DHS intervention, foster care, court attendance.	Principal Approval Required Approved Absence if parent provides an explanation Unauthorised Absence if no explanation
Student is absent- funeral, death in family, mourning activities	Principal Approval Required Approved Absence if parent provides an explanation Unauthorised Absence if no explanation
Student is absent - Family Holidays	Principal Approval Required Parents to notify the school in advance so Student Absence Learning Plan (SALP) developed in conjunction with the class teacher. Absence to be entered as Authorised Absence– Code: 804. If SALP is not completed when the child returns, teacher will change code to an unauthorised absence – Code: 806.
Student is absent from school and parent/guardian has not contacted the school to explain why	The school will notify the nominated parent/guardian by SMS of the child’s unexplained absence as soon as practicable on the same day.
Students who have Unauthorised Absences	Class teacher will generate a Student Absence Letter on GradeXpert and send it home with the child. This process will be repeated once if no reply to the first letter.
Students who continue to have unauthorised absences.	Where a parent/guardian has failed to provide an explanation for an absence after two Student Absence Letters have been issued, teacher will change code to an unauthorised absence – Code: 806.
Students who have more than 5 Unauthorised Absences after attempts to work with family	Referral to Child First /DHS Referral to School Attendance Officer if absenteeism continues to escalate.

This flowchart outlines actions required by staff to monitor student absences.

**** NOTE: ALL communication with families should be documented**



PRIOR APPROVED ABSENCE LETTER FROM PARENT/GUARDIAN

Student Name: _____

Class: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____