

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 and/or Teacher 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 then 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. At St Francis Xavier the Electronic Roll is to be completed by 9:10 a.m. each morning and by 1:50pm each afternoon by the supervising teacher
- 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** (Via SMS at 9:40am)
- 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 in N-Forma
- 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:
Using the student absence form on the home page of the school website to inform the school of their child's absence: <https://www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au/>
Emailing the class teacher: Email addresses can be located under staff on the school website
Phone the school on: 9435 8474
2. Parents, guardians and/or carers are required to notify the school by 9:30am 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 classroom teacher or school office manager and the teachers are notified of the absence and reason for this.
4. Attendance at the school is checked twice daily by the classroom teacher. The attendance roll is marked in the morning at 9:10am and then again at 1:50pm.
5. The attendance reports are accessed by school office manager to follow up students who are absent without explanation.
6. If a student is absent without explanation, the school will contact the parent/guardian for an explanation as soon as possible on the day of absence by the school office manager by SMS.
7. Information about the number of days of absence are recorded on student files using N-Forma. These absent days are automatically calculated on the student's mid and end of year reports using the same package.
8. Where the rate of absenteeism is of concern, the school will follow up with the parents/guardians by arranging a meeting with the classroom teacher, student wellbeing leader and school principal.
9. Parents are required to provide up-to-date contact details and notify the school of any changes to contact details or address.
10. Where a student is absent for 3 days without explanation, the supervising teacher will contact the parent/guardian via phone.

St Francis Xavier Primary School Procedure for late arrival at school

- Students arriving to school after 9 a.m. must report to the School Office with their parent/guardian and sign in using PassTab. Two Ipads are located in the office foyer
- This will be updated on the Roll by the class teacher and recorded accordingly; that is, late arrival, morning absence if after 9:30 a.m. or full day absence (whichever applies).
- If a student arrives to the class without having signed in using PassTab, the teacher will send the child to the office to do this.

St Francis Xavier Primary School Procedure for leaving school before the normal departure time

- Parents/Guardians collecting students at any time during the day must report to the School Office to sign out their child using PassTab.
- Parents/Guardians need to email classroom teachers informing them of the early pick up and the reason. This information is added to the roll.
- If this is between 12 midday and 1:50pm. this is recorded as an "afternoon absence". If it is before 12 midday this is recorded as a "full day absence".

Procedures for communicating about attendance expectations to parents/guardians

Parents will be notified upon enrolment, via the School Handbook, the school newsletter and the school App (Updat-Ed) of the expectation around regular school attendance and how to notify the school in case of an absence. The annual rates of school attendance (per year level & school) is reported on the Annual Report to the school community and in the school newsletter once a year.

St Francis Xavier Primary School Attendance record keeping

- Parents are responsible for contacting the school when their child is unable to attend the school on any given day.
- The Electronic Roll program used by St Francis Xavier Primary school is called N- FORMA.
- The Electronic Roll is to be completed by 9:10 a.m. each morning and by 1:50pm each afternoon by the supervising teacher.
- Classroom teachers record students who are absent, reasons for absence, or record the absence as “unexplained” if no reason has been provided (update the records once a reason is established);
- The school admin officer will send an SMS notification to parent/guardian each day when a student absence has remained unexplained at 9:40am on that day.
- Classroom teachers will ring parents/guardians should a child be away for 3 consecutive days to support the child’s education and wellbeing.

St Francis Xavier Primary School Attendance improvement strategies

FOLLOWING UP ABSENCES:

Most absences will be excused and require no further follow up.

In the event of an unexplained absence where contact has been made and the student’s safety established, but no written explanation has been provided within 10 school days, the absence will be recorded as unexplained and noted in the student’s file(N-Forma Wellbeing). The parents will also be notified that if their child reaches five days of unapproved or unexplained absence in the preceding 12 months then the school and Principal will work with the parent or legal guardian to implement the appropriate support or intervention to assist the child attend school every day and remain at school during school hours.

Where this support and intervention does not improve their child’s attendance, the Principal will refer the matter to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools.

No Reasonable Excuse:

In the event that St Francis Xavier Primary School has determined that a parent has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school will notify the parent in writing or via email to inform them that the absences have been recorded as such. The school will take care to ensure that, wherever possible, this letter or email is addressed to the parent who has been deemed responsible for the child's absence on the relevant day(s). Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Eastern Regional office will also be contacted for further advice.

Attendance Improvement Strategies:

St Francis Xavier Primary School 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/guardians 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.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for 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.

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

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 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 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.

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 school's 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 school 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 school 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.

Funeral

Attendance at a funeral or to attend to Sorry Business or Sorry meetings may be considered as a reasonable excuse for absence. Parents 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 are 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 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.

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, 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.