

## Student Absence Guidelines for schools

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Attendance Policy for MACS Schools and Responding to School Absences Process. As with all absences, they are recorded at the principal's discretion, considering the circumstances of the child and their family and balancing the legislated requirements for recording attendance in accordance with the [Education Training and Reform Act 2006 \(Vic.\)](#) (the Act) and the [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic.\)](#).

### 1. 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:

|     | Reason                                 | A student will not be considered absent:   | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason | General advice<br>for principals                | Follow<br>up<br>required |
|-----|--|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1.1 | <b>School activity</b>                 | 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.                    | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | Attendance to be taken as per normal school day | N/A                      |
| 1.2 | <b>Excursion</b>                       | 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.  | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | As above  | N/A                      |
| 1.3 | <b>Off campus educational activity</b> | 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. | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | As above  | N/A                      |

|     | Reason                           | A student will not be considered absent:  | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason | General advice<br>for principals                                     | Follow<br>up<br>required |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1.4 | <b>Approved remote learning</b>  | If they are attending school remotely via a model of remote learning that has been authorised by the MACS Director Learning and Regional Services.  | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | As above   | N/A                      |
| 1.5 | <b>Natural disaster</b>          | 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 schoolwork while absent from school and may be used for full or part-day absences.   | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | N/A  | N/A                      |
| 1.6 | <b>Sport or arts competition</b> | When they are representing their school, district, region, state or country at a sporting event or arts event, approved by the school.  | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | Attendance to be taken as per normal school day                      | N/A                      |
| 1.7 | <b>Work experience</b>           | 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. | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                  | Specific attendance procedure to be in place for all work experience | N/A                      |

## 2. Approved absence:

In the following circumstances absences will be considered reasonable where an explanation has been given:

|     | Reason  | It is reasonable for a student to be absent from school:   | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason        | General advice<br>for principals  | Follow up<br>required                |
|-----|---|--|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 2.1 | <b>Illness</b>                                    | When they are genuinely too ill to attend.<br><br>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 procedures 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. | Yes                          | No                                   | Yes                         | If a child is absent for a period longer than 10 consecutive school days, the Regional General Manager (or delegate) has the power to grant an exemption. | No                                   |
| 2.2 | <b>Infectious or contagious disease</b>           | 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. 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.  | Yes                          | No                                   | Yes                         | N/A   | No                                   |
| 2.3 | <b>Medical or dental treatments or procedures</b> | To attend a medical or dental appointment that cannot be made outside school hours. This should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from a parent/guardian/carer.   | Yes                          | Yes                                  | Yes                         | Approve if appointment cannot be made outside school hours  | No, unless absences become excessive |
| 2.4 | <b>Sport</b>                                      | To attend external sports events, at the principal's discretion. Principals should use their professional judgement to determine if it is reasonable for a student   | Yes                          | Yes                                  | Requires principal approval | Approve at principal's discretion   | No                                   |

|     | Reason                       | It is reasonable for a student to be absent from school:  | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason        | General advice<br>for principals | Follow up<br>required                 |
|-----|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|     |                              | 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.  |                              |                                      |                             |                                  |                                       |
| 2.5 | <b>Suspension</b>            | <p>If the student has been suspended; the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if a student is suspended for five days or less the principal must take reasonable steps to ensure the student is given schoolwork to complete during the suspension</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> | Yes                          | N/A                                  | Yes                         | See notes                        | Yes, as per suspension guidelines     |
| 2.6 | <b>Apprentice or trainee</b> | If an arrangement has been made through the VCE Vocational Major or Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) or a vocational education and training program (VET).  | Yes                          | Yes                                  | Yes                         | N/A                              | No                                    |
| 2.7 | <b>Bereavement</b>           | Attendance at a funeral or to attend to Sorry Business or Sorry meetings may be considered as a reasonable explanation for absence. Parents/guardians/carers  | Yes                          | Yes                                  | Requires principal approval | Approve                          | Offer and provide support as required |

|     | Reason         | It is reasonable for a student to be absent from school:  | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason        | General advice<br>for principals                           | Follow up<br>required  |
|-----|----------------|---|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
|     |                | <p>should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible.</p> <p>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.</p>  |                              |                                      |                             |  |  |
| 2.8 | <b>Legal</b>   | Where the child is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements.   | Yes                          | No                                   | Yes                         | N/A  | No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required. |
| 2.9 | <b>Holiday</b> | <p>When attending a family holiday, at the principal's discretion. Principals should use their professional judgement in determining whether a holiday is a reasonable explanation 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.</p> <p>Parents/guardians/carers should be encouraged to plan holidays for students during gazetted school holiday periods and pupil free days.</p> | Yes                          | Yes                                  | Requires principal approval | Approve if notice is given in advance as per school policy | Student Absence Plan developed as per school policy                          |

|      | Reason                                  | It is reasonable for a student to be absent from school:  | Parent/<br>carer<br>approval                   | School to<br>confirm<br>authenticity | Acceptable<br>reason        | General advice<br>for principals  | Follow up<br>required                                |
|------|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| 2.10 | <b>Religious or Cultural Observance</b> | When the child is required to take part in a recognised religious or cultural observance.   | Yes  | No                                   | Requires principal approval | Approve at principal's discretion if notice is given in advance                     | No   |
| 2.11 | <b>Family Violence</b>                  | If a student or family member has disclosed, that they are experiencing family violence, or a staff member has been made aware by authorities or external support agencies that are assisting the family.                     | Yes - also see notes re: external notification | Yes                                  | Yes                         | Approve, see notes re: notification   | Yes, if possible, to ensure safety and offer support |
| 2.12 | <b>Caregiving</b>                       | If a student is a recognised young carer.<br><br>*A carer is an agreed role the student has taken on as a necessity in their household, not to be used for one off babysitting or similar duties.                             | Yes  | Yes                                  | Requires principal approval | Approve at principal's discretion if discussed prior and education support in place | Yes, to ensure educational wellbeing support         |
| 2.13 | <b>Other</b>                            | This code is only to be used at the principals' discretion where the reason does not meet above criteria, however, principal has approved the absence. There must be a record of why the principal has permitted the absence. | Yes  | N/A                                  | Requires principal approval | Approve at principals' discretion   | As advised by principal                              |

### 3. Unapproved absence:

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

|     | Reason                              | It is NOT reasonable for a student to be absent from school:  | General advice for principals   | Follow up required                           |
|-----|-------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 3.1 | <b>Unexplained absence</b>          | When no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school, within 10 days, by the parent/guardian/carer, or the student if they are living independently.  | Principals must ensure school-based procedures follow the MACS Responding to Absences Process, prioritising the safety of the student   | Yes, refer to Responding to Absences Process |
| 3.2 | <b>Leisure activities</b>           | When undertaking a leisure activity such as shopping, celebrating birthdays or visiting friends and relatives.  | These activities should not be approved during school hours, see 2.9 for advice on holidays   | Monitor for patterns                         |
| 3.3 | <b>Any other reason for absence</b> | 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 explanation the principal should document the decision and record the student as absent. | If the reason does not align with the approved reasons above, principals should use discretion and inform the students parent/ guardian/ carer that their reason for absence is NOT APPROVED and will be recorded as such | Monitor for patterns                         |

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| <b>Approving authority</b> | Director, Learning and Regional Services |             |            |
| <b>Approval date</b>       | 5 July 2023                              | Next review | March 2025 |