

Introduction

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 through [Exemption from School Attendance or Enrolment](#), Department of Education (DE).

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

Purpose

To ensure Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS) schools:

- maintain rigorous attendance records and ensure every child is accounted for every school day.
- implement mandated procedures for the recording and reporting of non-attendance.

Scope

This policy and procedures are applicable to all MACS schools.

Principles

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.

Policy

All MACS schools must document their school-based procedures for monitoring and recording attendance.

To meet legislated requirements and discharge a school's duty of care, school staff must record student attendance:

- twice per day in primary schools
- every class in secondary schools
- and, when applicable, in accordance with requirements for registered school boarding premises.

Attendance must be recorded, including the reason given for each absence.

All schools must maintain attendance records, identify, and follow up unexplained absences and develop procedures to support and maintain student attendance.

Roles and responsibilities for school attendance

Parent/guardian/carer

Parents/guardians/carers 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, or the student is [registered for home schooling](#) and has partial enrolment. For absences where there is no exemption in place, the parent/guardian/carer 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 that:

- the school has an attendance policy and procedures that outline the processes in place to implement this policy.
- key staff members are aware of and follow procedures and guidance provided on the [CEVN – Attendance and Engagement](#) page
- attendance records are maintained – 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 (and that records are kept in accordance with applicable recordkeeping standards, including the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards)
- any absences of a student from school, including classes, are identified
- reasons for each student's absence are provided and recorded
- explanations for absences that are provided are a reasonable excuse for the purposes of their responsibilities under the Act
- any unexplained absences of a student are followed up by contacting the parent/guardian/carer of the student as soon as practicable on the same day
- parents/guardians/carers 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/guardian/carer reports their child was not living with them on that day, the school should ensure they notify another parent/guardian/carer who was responsible for ensuring the child attended school on the relevant day/s
- if contact cannot be made with the relevant parent/guardian/carer, 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/carers are informed of their responsibilities around attendance
- initiatives are implemented which aim to promote parental/guardian/carer awareness of the importance of children attending school every day
- 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, which may include Attendance Student Support Group, Personalised Learning Plan, Student Absence Learning Plan and Return to School Plan

- strategies are implemented 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
- the relevant Regional Leadership Consultant (RLC) is contacted for assistance in addressing complex attendance and exemption matters
- The RLC is to be advised prior to a referral to a DE 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
- implementation of referral processes to The Orange Door or Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) - Child Protection, MACS and the DE School Attendance Officer where required.
 - Refer to Child Protection and Child Safe Standards (PROTECT).

Procedures

Principals must develop school-based procedures for monitoring school attendance using the approved template. Refer to Monitoring School Attendance Procedures for template of required procedures [\[link\]](#). Principals must follow the Responding to Absence Process and implement referral pathways through MACS. Refer to Responding to Absence Process [\[link\]](#).

Definitions

Attendance

A student attends school when onsite, in MACS approved remote learning 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 funding (if appropriate) and the student's Personalised Learning Plan.

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 six (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 deciding 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 (six to 17 years of age) school 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 principal.

Refer to the Department of Education (DE) [Exemption from school attendance and enrolment](#) guidance for further information.

MACS school or school

A school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by MACS directly or through MACSS (as the context requires). References to schools or MACS schools also includes boarding premises of schools operated by MACS and specialist schools operated by MACSS.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS)

MACS is a reference to Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd, and /or its subsidiaries, (as the context requires).

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd (MACSS)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Specialist Schools Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of MACS, established to conduct and operate specialist schools.

Parent/guardian/carer

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

Record

A record is information in any format created, received and maintained as evidence of business activities and decisions. A record may be digital (such as an email, Word, Excel, PowerPoint or finalised and/or scanned PDF documents) or hardcopy (paper) format.

School Attendance Officers

In the context of attendance, DE School Attendance Officers are empowered through the Act to issue School Attendance Notices, School Enrolment Notices, and Infringement Notices. Refer to DE [Infringement notices](#) guidance for further information.

Student

Student means a person who is enrolled at or attends a MACS school.

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.

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

If the parent/guardian/carer does not 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/guardian/carer of the child within 10 days, the absence will be recorded as an unexplained absence and a note will be made in the child's file. A parent/guardian/carer can contact the principal at any time after the recorded absence to provide an explanation.

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 given for a student absence is not approved by the principal, then the school will notify the parent/guardian/carer in writing.

Related policies and documents

Supporting documents

Student Absence – Guidelines for MACS Schools

Monitoring School Attendance Procedures – Checklist for Schools – Template for Schools

Responding to Student Absences – Template for MACS Schools

Related MACS policies and documents

Duty of Care Policy

Enrolment Policy

Resources

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](#)

Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. Effective Schools are Engaging Schools:

Student Engagement Policy Guidelines

Attendance – 'Every Day Counts' on the CEVN website:

https://cevn.cec.vic.edu.au/Melb/Student-Support/Attendance_Public

[Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards](#)

Legislation and standards

Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic.)

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic.)

Policy information table

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving authority	Executive Director
Assigned board committee	Child Safety and Risk Management
Approval date	October 2023
Risk rating	High
Date of next review	April 2025
Publication details	CEVN, MACS website, school website
POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Assigned framework	Care, Safety and Welfare of Students
Supporting documents	Refer to the list of supporting documents

Superseded documents	Attendance Policy – Schools – v3.0 – 2022 Attendance Policy – Schools – v2.0 – 2022 MACS Attendance Policy – v1.0 – 2021
New policy	