



# Attendance

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures Kosciuszko St Primary has in place to
  - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
  - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at Kosciuszko St Primary School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training's [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of Kosciuszko St Primary School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

## DEFINITION

*Parent* – includes a guardian 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.

## POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend school during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in Kosciuszko St Primary, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in Kosciuszko St Primary School for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

Kosciuszko St Primary School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.



Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and are prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

Kosciuszko St Primary School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff at Kosciuszko St Primary School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

### **Supporting and promoting attendance**

Kosciuszko St Primary School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by: providing an engaging curriculum, breakfast club twice per week, Wellbeing Officer support for students and families.

### **Recording attendance**

Kosciuszko St Primary School must record student attendance twice per day. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge Kosciuszko St Primary School's duty of care for all students

Attendance will be recorded by class teachers using Compass twice per day, at the start of the day and after lunch.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the teacher in charge of the activity will record them as being present.

Students who are late are required to sign in using the Late Register in the Office (9.00 am or later) by their parent. Any student leaving school early must be signed out in the Register at the office and class teacher notified. The class teacher must be notified if a student is sent home for any reason.

### **Recording absences**

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify Kosciuszko St Primary School of absences by:

- recording the absence on Compass and providing a reason, by phone call to the Office or by speaking with the teacher.

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Kosciuszko St Primary School will notify parents by [SMS/push notification message]. Kosciuszko St Primary School will attempt to contact parents as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school may attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, to follow up the unexplained absence.

Kosciuszko St Primary School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If Kosciuszko St Primary School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**approved absence**'.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unapproved absence**'.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

### **Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement**

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, Kosciuszko St Primary School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant agencies.

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

### **Referral to School Attendance Officer**

If Kosciuszko St Primary School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the School Attendance Guidelines refer the non-attendance to a School Attendance Officer in the SEV Regional Office for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
  - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
  - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
  - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
  - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

## MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	21 <sup>st</sup> August 2023
Approved by	Principal and School Council
Next scheduled review date	2026

This policy was last ratified by School Council on....

21<sup>st</sup> August 2023

## **Procedures and strategies**

- Class teacher marks attendance roll twice daily at 9.00am and 12.30pm on Compass
- If an absence remains unexplained for three consecutive days, the class teacher may make contact by telephone to the parent

## **Absence protocol**

1. Marking of attendance roll by classroom teacher twice daily at 9.00am and 12.30pm
  2. Student Absence of three consecutive days, consistently late arrival or a query from the teacher about patterns of absences is taken to the Principal/Assistant Principal or the teacher follows the process and then completes the Absence Action Sheet.
  3. Principal/Assistant Principal accesses the absence data.
  4. Absence action sequence.
- Principal/assistant principal completes the Absence Action Sheet, which has provision for a phone call, a letter home or a home visit.

## **Phone call protocol**

1. Contacting home by telephone regarding the absences is done with courtesy and respect being mindful that for some parents this could be a sensitive issue.

## **Letter home protocol**

1. A letter is sent home detailing the absences in question and asking for explanations for each absence.

## **Marking the roll protocol**

1. Roll marked daily on Compass
2. If a student arrives after instruction has begun they must sign in at the Office and they are marked as late (9.10am).
3. Half day attendance is Morning 9.00-12.30 and 12.30 – 3.30. If a student leaves after lunch they are marked as leaving the school early
4. Appropriate codes will be entered for each absence.

## **Procedures to Manage Student Absences**

**<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/attendance.aspx>**

## **Excusing and not excusing absences**

Principals can consider the excuse given for an absence and use their discretion to decide if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their legal obligations ('excused absence') or does not have a reasonable excuse ('unexcused absence').

The process for making a decision about student absences involves a principal:

- considering a request from a parent to approve an absence
- exercising their discretion as to whether or not to excuse the absence
- notifying the parent if the absences have not excused.

In exercising their discretion, the principal should take the following considerations into [account](#):

- whether the absence is explicitly covered in section 2.1.3 of the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#)
- whether the student should do some learning activities during the absence (see: [Student Absence Learning Plan](#))
- if this kind of absence is covered in the school's policy (e.g. shopping, birthday, visiting relatives)
- whether or not the length of absence will affect the student's learning
- whether the parent has requested this kind of absence before, and if so how recently and how many times
- whether or not the principal has approved this kind of absence before
- cultural factors or [details](#) of the student and family's circumstances
- the implications for not approving the absence
- whether an exemption would be appropriate, whereby the school should assist the parent [apply](#) for an exemption.

In general, it is expected that principals would excuse absences for:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or not appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to [address](#) causes
- cultural observance, 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, student and parent.

In general, principals would not be expected to excuse absences, where:

- approval had not been sought in advance or in accordance with school policy
- 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 for the absences.

Notes:

- A principal can excuse these absences by establishing school policy for different absence types or by excusing absences on a case-by-case basis. School policy should be consistent with these guidelines.
- Clause 2.1.3(fa) of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 allows principals to formally excuse absences in special circumstances where no other reasonable excuse exists. However, it remains at the principal's discretion to decide whether the excuse provided by a parent is reasonable.

When deciding to excuse an absence, principals can confirm that the excuse provided for an absence fits within the category of 'unavoidable cause' or 'unforeseen event' and should record the rationale for their decisions.

Truancy (defined in the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* as absences due to the child's disobedience and not due to any fault of the parent) is a reasonable excuse for a parent. In deciding to accept this explanation a principal must consider:

- the age of the student
- the previous attendance of the student and
- the parent's capacity to influence and control the student's behaviour.

If, after considering these factors, the principal is not satisfied with the parent’s explanation that it was solely the student’s decision to be truant, then the absence should be regarded as an unexcused absence and the principal should follow the processes set out below.

Truancy is often a warning sign of disengagement and is best addressed early in partnership with the family and school. For more information, see: [Attendance Improvement Strategies](#)

The table below provides examples of common reasons for absences and general advice for principals.

Common reason for absence	Parent approval required	School required to confirm reason is authentic	Reasonable excuse for parent	General advice for principals	Basis in ETR Act for reasonable excuse	Follow up required
Illness or accident	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Medical/dental appointment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if appointment cannot be scheduled outside school hours	2.1.3(fa)	No, unless absences become excessive
Attending or observing a religious event or obligation	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(f)	No
Suspended	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(d)	Yes (suspension guidelines)
Bereavement such as a death of a family member, attendance at a funeral and/or related mourning activities (sorry business)	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve	2.1.3(fa)	Offer and provide support as required
Truancy	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(e)	Meetings, Attendance Improvement Plan
School refusal	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents and school are working on plan to address cause	2.1.3(fa)	Yes – meetings to identify and address the cause

Family holiday	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parents notify in advance. School policy should be developed for long or frequent/ repeated holidays	2.1.3(fa)	Student Absence Learning Plans developed in conjunction with classroom teachers
Required to comply with another law	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(a)(ii)	No, unless absences become excessive. Offer and provide support as required
Cultural observance	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Approve if parent notifies in advance	2.1.3(fa)	No
Leisure (shopping, visiting relatives)	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Do not approve	2.1.3(fa)	No
Unforeseen event	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied event was unforeseen and prevented attendance	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Unavoidable cause	Yes	Yes	Yes	Approve if satisfied event was unforeseen and prevented attendance	2.1.3(a)(i)	No
Other – special event or participation in elite sporting events/training	Yes	Yes	Requires principal to approve	Case-by-case basis	2.1.3(fa)	No
Exemption	No	No	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(g)	Ensure any conditions of exemption are met. Monitor attendance at other provider
Employment in the entertainment industry	Yes	Yes (through approving exemption)	Yes	N/A	2.1.3(g)	Yes, to ensure conditions of exemption are complied with



## **Following up absences**

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

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, the school will involve the parents and the student as appropriate in developing strategies to improve attendance.

Parents should be informed that if a student has repeated absences without a reasonable excuse or explanation, the parent may be issued with a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer.

Notes:

- CASES21 provides letters to be used for notifying parents of absences and seeking explanations.
- Schools should keep records of all attempts to contact parents or students and any information obtained.

## **No reasonable excuse provided**

For all absences where the principal has determined that a parent has not provided a reasonable excuse, the school must notify the parent in writing that the absences have been recorded as such. Principals should 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).

If the principal decides that no reasonable excuse has been provided for an absence, the absence must be recorded as such and the parent must be informed that this means:

- they may not have met their obligations under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- an accumulation of these absences could lead to a School Attendance Notice from a School Attendance Officer
- failure to comply with the School Attendance Notice may result in the issue of an Infringement Notice.

## **Unexplained absences**

If a parent does not contact the school to provide an explanation on the day of the student absence, the school must attempt to contact the parent (for example by telephone) of the student within three days of the absence. If an explanation is received, the accurate cause of the absence must be recorded.

Schools must advise parents promptly of unexplained absences, including for post-compulsory aged students. Schools should take care to notify the parent who is responsible for ensuring the child's attendance on that particular day. 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, the school should attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school.

If, following contact by letter or email, no explanation has been provided within 10 school days, the absence should be recorded as an unexplained absence and also be noted in the student's file.

### **If whereabouts of a student is unknown**

If, from multiple attempts to contact a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the principal may make a referral to a School Attendance Officer if:

- no alternative education destination can be found for the student, and
- the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days.

In the referral form, schools should provide information of all attempts to contact parents, students and emergency contact people and any information obtained. They must also ensure they keep written records of these attempts.

The School Attendance Officer will then:

- enact procedures to locate the student, and
- send a School Attendance Notice if the student cannot be located at another registered school or training provider.

Until notification from the School Attendance Officer is received, a school should continue to record the absences for that student as unexplained and advise the School Attendance Officer if they receive any information about the whereabouts of the student.

When a resolution is reached (e.g. student located, a response to a School Attendance Notice gives additional information, or no response is received to a School Attendance Notice), the School Attendance Officer will notify the school to do one or more of the following:

- complete a transfer or exit process for the student, and provide an exit destination record
- amend the attendance record for the time the student has not been attending, so the absences do not count towards the school's absences, from a date specified by the School Attendance Officer
- maintain the student's enrolment at the school and amend the attendance records for the time the student was not attending to reflect the actual reason for the absence
- implement a Return to School Plan for the student.

Note:

The principal or nominee must:

- keep records of all contact, or attempts to make contact, with the student's family, for a minimum period of one year
- maintain documentation of all attempted and implemented intervention strategies aimed at restoring a student's attendance
- ensure attendance records (electronic and hardcopy) are managed in accordance with standards set by the Public Record Office Victoria and guidelines issued by the Department (government schools), or relevant Commonwealth privacy legislation (non-government schools). See: [Public Record Office Victoria](#)

### **Legal Requirements**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/attendancerequirements.aspx>

[Student Participation](#) > [Legal Requirements](#) 

- [Reporting and Recording attendance](#)
- [Monitoring attendance](#)
- [Exemptions from attendance](#)

## Reporting and Recording attendance

### Parent responsibilities

Parents are required to ensure their child attends school and to provide an explanation for their child's [absence](#) from school, and the principal must record in writing the reason (if any) given by the parent. The principal must be able to determine from the [records](#) if the excuse given was reasonable in terms of the parent meeting their legal obligations.

Parents should inform the school of the reason for their child's absence so that the school can:

- determine if the child's absence needs to be excused by the principal, in line with school policy and these guidelines
- determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the child's education and wellbeing is supported
- record if the parent has a reasonable excuse for not meeting their obligation to ensure their child attends school each day.

Where possible, parents should inform the school in advance of upcoming absences. Absences are to be recorded in Compass.

### School responsibilities

The school must record student attendance twice per day in primary schools and in every class in secondary schools and record, in writing, the reason given for each absence. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge schools' duty of care for all students
- assist calculation of the school's funding
- [enable](#) the school governing body (school council in government schools) to report on student attendance annually
- meet Victorian Curriculum and [Assessment](#) Authority (VCAA) requirements (for VCE students).

All registered schools must ensure their system for recording student attendance meets the requirements above. Government schools must use only CASES21, eCASES21 or third party software which is compatible with CASES21 to record student attendance. Kosciuszko St Primary School uses Compass.

Accurate and comprehensive student attendance [records](#), including the reasons for any absences, also allow schools to monitor the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and measure achievement against attendance targets. It also provides evidence for any further enforcement proceedings including issue of an Infringement Notice (and any appeal) and court proceedings if it appears a parent may not have met their legal obligations to ensure their child attends school.

All schools must report the annual rates of student attendance for the year to the school community at least once a year. Schools are also required to report information about student enrolment and attendance for funding requirements.

The Department collects information on student attendance through extraction of data from CASES21 and publishes attendance rates in its annual report.

For the purposes of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the enforcement system, the Department will collect information about the use of School Attendance Notices and School Enrolment Notices.

## Principal responsibilities

The principal will determine if the excuse provided for an absence is reasonable for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#). A principal should use their discretion in making this decision.

The principal or their nominee must record:

- student attendance twice per day in primary schools and in every class in secondary schools for every student enrolled at the school
- the excuse given for an absence and whether this is reasonable in accordance with the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*
- an absence as unexplained if no excuse has been given and change the attendance record once an excuse is provided or established
- a student is present for a half day when the student has attended at least two hours of instruction.

To meet duty of care responsibilities, the school attendance records should indicate whether the student was physically present in a classroom, or not present but attending a school-approved activity. In the latter situation, the teacher or staff member in charge of the activity should record attendance and ensure parents are notified of any absences in the same manner as for regular absences from school.

All students enrolled in the school are required to have their attendance recorded, even if they only attend the school premises part time. Attendance for the times the student is not expected to attend should be recorded so it does not count towards the absences for the school (government schools should use code 602 Exempt in CASES21).

The attendance of students at curriculum programs outside school premises needs to be recorded by the provider and reported back and recorded by the school. Schools manage absences in conjunction with the provider of re-engagement programs or approved education provider.

## Monitoring attendance

In addition to accurately and consistently recording student attendance and absence, principals should ensure school attendance data is regularly monitored and analysed to identify student absence patterns on a school, class and individual basis.

The Student Mapping Tool is available to all government schools and can be used for early identification of students at risk of poor attendance and possible disengagement from school. Once identified as being at risk of poor attendance, students should be provided with timely targeted support to improve attendance or address underlying issues. Referral to Student Support Services, a Student Wellbeing Coordinator or a Primary Welfare Officer is recommended.

For more information, see: [Student Mapping Tool](#)

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## Exemptions from attendance

Where a student:

- has reached 6 years but has not started school and will be enrolled in a second year of kindergarten; or
- has not reached 17 years but will leave school; or
- is absent from school due to employment in the entertainment industry and certain conditions are met, an exemption from attendance can be sought.

The process for applying for these exemptions is outlined in the School Policy and Advisory Guide (SPAG). Non-government schools are also advised to follow these procedures. For more information, see: [Attendance - Exemption Application Process](#)

An exemption is not required for these absences, but if there is no exemption the student's absences will count towards the school's absences for reporting purposes. For example, a student with an exemption from attendance for one day per week, who attends the four days per week they are expected to attend, would have 100 per cent attendance, whereas if no exemption was in place the student would have 80 per cent attendance.

Schools should advise parents when an exemption from attendance is required and support parents to apply for the exemption. Schools and parents may also agree to seek an exemption so that a student's absences do not count towards the school's total absences for reporting purposes.

### **Sending a School Attendance Notice**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/attendancenotice.aspx>

As detailed in the [Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#) to [send](#) a School Attendance Notice to a parent a School Attendance Officer must be satisfied that:

- the student has been absent from school on **at least five full days** in the previous 12 months and the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences
- measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and been unsuccessful, or are inappropriate in the circumstances
- a parent responsible for the absences can be identified (School Attendance Notices must be addressed to a single person).

### **Infringement Notices**

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/infringementnotice.aspx>

[Student Participation](#) > Infringement [Notices](#)

- [Decision to issue an Infringement Notice](#)
- [Considerations for School Attendance Officers](#)
- [Special circumstances](#)
- [Exceptional circumstances](#)
- [Examples of when NOT to issue an Infringement Notice](#)
- [When to send an official warning](#)
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