Information for parents – The impact of holidays during school time

Developing the habit of going to school every day is vitally important so your child does not miss out on important ideas and skills they need for future learning.

This is why we strongly encourage you not to go on family holidays during school time.

Why is going to school regularly so important?

At school, many concepts (such as literacy and numeracy) are taught in a sequence. Missing school means missing out on learning – which can often make it difficult to catch up later. This is particularly important in the early years when essential foundation skills are being taught.

Going to school every day helps children learn the important life skill of 'showing up' – at school, at work, to sport and other commitments.

Research from the Western Australian Telethon Kids Institute shows that every day at school counts towards a student's learning. Students who attend more, generally do better at school and in life.

The *School Education Act 1999* does not allow principals to give permission for families to take holidays during the school term. As students are required to attend school every day, time off for holidays is recorded as an absence.

What can you do?

We strongly encourage you to organise holidays during school holiday periods to make sure your child doesn't miss out on school.

Please contact office staff if you have been considering taking a holiday during the school term. This will allow us to discuss the learning your child would be missing out on.

For more information you can contact the school to arrange for an interpreter.

Information for schools

Prior to use, principals should make a professional judgement on the information contained within this resource to ensure its relevance and validity within the context of their school.

This may include:

- adapting text within the resource where required;
- whether the content is suitable for the whole school, a target group, or in individual cases;
- whether the information would be best received as a supplementary resource to a meeting or face-to-face conversation with a parent or community member; and
- utilising key messages within this resource over a period of time as part of existing communications with parents and the community, rather than distributing the fact sheet as a once-off complete resource. For example, via SMS, the school app or social media, within the school newsletter, at assemblies or school events.

The requirements

Section 23 of the *School Education Act 1999* requires for every year of the student's **compulsory education period** (Pre-primary onwards) that the student attend the school at which they are enrolled, or participate in an educational program of the school, on the days on which it is open for instruction.

A student may be excused if they are prevented from attending due to temporary physical or mental incapacity, or other reasonable cause (Section 25). As such, in-term holidays are not supported by the Department's *Student Attendance in Public Schools* policy and procedures.

However, guidance via maintain student attendance data and records allows parents to negotiate an absence in advance via written communication with the school principal who may decide to approve the absence on reasonable grounds based on the following examples:
- the rationale provided by the parent
- family context
- student context e.g. year level
- attendance history

There is no requirement within the *School Education Act 1999* or *School Education Regulations 2000* for teachers to provide a work package. The principal may negotiate the provision of missed school work for the student/s but this is not an expectation.

Recording absences due to holidays

Schools can record absences due to holidays using the 'K – unauthorised vacation' or 'V – authorised vacation' lesson attendance codes. The principal has the authority to determine which code is most applicable for each circumstance.

The purpose of these codes is for schools to be able to disaggregate their attendance data to determine common reasons for absence. The system reports on absences due to holidays as a combined figure using both codes.

The approved absence is recorded with a V (vacation) code inclusive of the dates provided.

Where the student has not returned to school on the expected due date without an explanation, the school may mark the absence with an X (unacceptable reason) or a K (unauthorised vacation) both of which are classified as 'unauthorised absences'.

The principal may decide not to approve the requested in-term vacation in writing to the parent with the absence to be recorded with a K (unauthorised vacation).

Where school work is negotiated between the parent and the principal and is submitted to the school, the use of the E (education activity) is not to be used as the student is not attending an approved educational program.

Where the family decide to stay in a town or city in the state for a period of time, an Alternative Attendance Arrangement (S24) may be entered into. A S24 cannot be used in other jurisdictions. Where the S24 is completed, the schools involved will follow the processes as described on organise an alternative attendance arrangement in Ikon.

Communicating with parents

Informing parents of the critical learning, concepts or activities that their child will be missing and the potential impact caused by missing these, may assist in communicating with parents about why attending school every day is important.

Support

Join the Student Attendance Connect Community