

Information for parents – When is it OK to miss school?

It is important for children to attend school all day, every day.

When is it OK to not go to school?

An OK reason is one that prevents your child from getting to school. This could include:

- your child is unable to attend because they are sick
- attending cultural or religious observances such as sorry time and funerals
- an unavoidable medical appointment
- an unavoidable natural event such as flood waters or a cyclone

The Principal decides if the reason given for your child's absence is acceptable.

It's NOT OK to miss school if your child:

- is celebrating a birthday
- is going on a family holiday
- is visiting family and friends
- has slept in or had a big weekend
- is looking after other children
- has sport or other recreational activities that have not been approved by the school
- has appointment such as haircuts and minor check ups

If possible, routine medical and other health appointments should be made either before or after school, or during the school holidays.

Do you need to let the school know if your child will be away from school?

Yes, you need to let the school know the reason why your child is going to be, or has been, absent from school as soon as possible. Where possible, please discuss any upcoming absences in advance so we can let you know of important learning or activities your child will miss out on.

This requires a responsible person, usually a parent, to provide a reason for the absence within three school days.

Having information about why your child is missing school helps us plan for their return to school and work out whether we can provide any further help to you.

Why is going to school 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 regularly, generally do better at school and in life.

REMOVE THIS SECTION IF DISTRIBUTING THIS INFORMATION TO PARENTS

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
- 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), cultural or religious observance (Section 30) or suspension (Section 90).

Recording absences

The Principal has the authority to determine which lesson attendance 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 and inform strategies for improvement.

For further information on recording absences visit the [Maintain student attendance data and records](#).

Communicating with parents

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

Support

Join the [Student Attendance Connect Community](#) to connect with other Western Australian public school staff about communicating with parents and strategies.