



School Attendance - Unexplained Student Absences

A review of the *Victorian Government's School Attendance Guidelines* was completed by the State Government at the end of 2017 in response to a critical incident that occurred when a student climbed back in to their parent's car at school drop off without their knowledge.

This review resulted in amendments to the Attendance Guidelines which now require all schools to:

- Make immediate contact with parents/guardians, as soon as is practical, on the 'same day' of an unexplained absence.
- Make all 'reasonable attempts' to identify the whereabouts and safety of all students who are absent.
- Request that parents/guardians provide a written explanation for all absences.

'Unexplained Absences' are defined as a student's non-attendance at the school in which they are enrolled, where no notification or explanation for the absence has been provided by parents prior to the commencing of the school day.

In accordance with the *Part 2.1.1 of the Victorian Education Act 2006*, parents/guardians are required to ensure that their child attends school, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:

- There is an explained absence such as illness, appointments, bereavement, family holidays etc....
- There is an approved exemption from school attendance or enrolment for the student;
- The child is registered for home schooling and is only partially enrolled for particular activities.

From the commencement of Term Two 2018:

- Parents/guardians are responsible for contacting the school on that day of an expected absence to inform them and to provide an explanation for their absence.
- This must be done prior to the commencement of the school day.
- This may be done by texting the school on 0497 265 795 or via our website under Report an Absence <http://www.smocptcook.catholic.edu.au/page/322>

Where an unexplained absence is identified the school will:

- Make all reasonable attempts to contact the parents/guardians that morning. This will in the first instance be done via a text message.
- Where no response is received by the parents/guardians that morning a subsequent phone call will be made to seek an explanation.
- In the event that contact cannot be made with the parents/guardians the school will attempt to communicate with emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file.
- **Where there is no response and there are concerns for the safety and welfare of the student contact may be made with Victoria Police (000).**

To ensure the safety and welfare of all students attending St Mary of the Cross Catholic Primary School, we remind all parents/guardians of their obligation to make contact with the school to provide an explanation on the morning of an expected absence with a written explanation provided upon their child's return to school.