



## EVERY DAY COUNTS

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## RECOMMENDED APPROACHES TO SCHOOL ABSENCE - FOR PARENTS

Sometimes there are very good reasons why a student can't come to school. Other times students are reluctant to come to school or frequently ask to come home early.

Below are some common reasons students miss school and the recommended way for you to manage this.

### NGELLO IS BEHIND IN SCHOOL WORK

Ngello has been struggling with learning English since his family arrived in Australia. His teacher reminds the class that their book report is due the next day. Ngello asks his parents if he can stay home just for the day so he can finish the book and write the report.

#### What we recommend

Ngello's parents ask him to do the best job he can, but refuse to let him stay home. They email his teacher, letting the teacher know Ngello is struggling and asking for a meeting about his progress. The teacher organises a meeting with Ngello and his parents to work out an alternative task for this unit, some extra assistance with his English and extra time to complete all attendance tasks.

#### We don't recommend

Ngello's parents allow him to stay home, and/or provide him with a note trying to excuse him. Ngello finishes his book report but misses out on watching the beginning of movie version of the book. The whole next week of lessons involve comparing and contrasting the movie and book, and Ngello feels even more isolated and is unable to complete the work.

### HARRISON NEEDS TO GO TO THE DENTIST

Harrison is a Year 11 student. He hasn't been to the dentist for a long time and his mum makes an appointment for a check-up on Tuesday morning. Harrison asks not to go back to school after the appointment because his friends have been teasing him. His mother says that's fine. She knows he's been having a hard time at school.

#### What we recommend

Harrison's mum makes the appointment time after school. She tries to talk to him about why he doesn't like school. She makes an appointment with Year Level Coordinator or Wellbeing Coordinator to talk about her concerns. Together they come up with a plan to make school attendance easier for Harrison.

#### We don't recommend

Harrison's mum lets him take the rest of the day off. Harrison is relieved to get away from the teasing from his classmates and starts looking for more excuses to take days off. He gets behind in his work and the assessment tasks start to pile up. Very quickly, he is at risk of failing several Unit 2 subjects. Catching up on all of the SACs he has missed puts more pressure on him and Harrison starts to feel anxious and overwhelmed.



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### ZOE OFTEN FEELS SICK

Zoe, a Year 8 student, often feels sick in the morning. Sometimes she feels nauseous, sometimes she has a headache. Her parents try and encourage her to go to school but she is very reluctant and there are many mornings where she finds it hard to get up. She often goes to sick bay during the day and tries to get sent home.

#### What we recommend

Zoe's parents are increasingly worried about her health and her connection to school. They take her to the GP to rule out any physical illness and contact the Year Level Coordinator to see if anything is happening at school. Together, Zoe, her parents and the Year Level Coordinator develop a plan to support her to be at school. This includes an Attendance Improvement Plan, conversations about Zoe's friendships and sleeping patterns and a referral to the school counsellor or Wellbeing Coordinator. With the extra support she gradually increases her attendance and starts to feel better about being at school.

#### We don't recommend

Although Zoe's parents encourage her to go to school, they figure that she's just going through a stage and that if they give her some time, she'll be ok. They let her stay home and, whenever the sickbay attendant calls, one of them comes to pick her up. After a couple of months of poor attendance, Zoe feels even more disconnected from school and her peers and is further behind in her work. Even getting her up to school for a meeting with the Wellbeing Coordinator is really difficult and her parents feel lost about what to do next.

### A DEATH IN SARAH'S FAMILY

Sarah is in Grade 5. Her grandmother died over the weekend and the funeral is on Wednesday.

#### What we recommend

On Monday, Sarah's father rings or emails the school to explain what has happened and that Sarah will be away for a few days and possibly the entire week. The school offers its condolences and the opportunity for Sarah to see the school counsellor when she returns to school. Teachers keep a close eye on her over the coming weeks and report any concerns to her parents.

#### We don't recommend

Sarah misses school for most of the week with no word from her parents. When she returns, her teacher doesn't know that Sarah might need a little bit of extra support.

### TYSON'S FAMILY HOLIDAY

Tyson is a Year 9 student. Next week he is going on a family holiday to Japan for two months.

#### What we recommend

A couple of months ago, Tyson's mum approached the school to discuss the holiday. After the absence is approved, Tyson's teachers provide Tyson's mother with an absence learning plan to ensure that he doesn't drop behind while on holiday. When Tyson returns he feels confident about fitting back into his school, knowing he is up to date with his classmates.



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### We don't recommend

A couple of days before they go away, Tyson's mum tells his home room teacher about the holiday. The teacher immediately informs the Year Level Coordinator who requests a meeting to discuss how this will affect Tyson's learning. However there is no time to prepare an absence learning plan and when Tyson returns to school he has missed several units in all of his classes as well as numerous assessment tasks. He feels overwhelmed and it takes him a while to catch up.

### TOP ATTENDANCE TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Schools want to work in partnership with parents – act early if you have any concerns by contacting your child's school and asking for advice and support
- Remember that every day counts
- There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes and their social connectedness
- Talk positively about school and the importance of attending every day
- Open and prompt communication with your child's school about all absences is a good idea
- Avoid making routine medical and dental appointments during the school day or planning family holidays during the term
- Seek help from your school if you are concerned about your child's attendance and wellbeing. Schools want to work in partnership with parents to support student attendance and wellbeing

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:

[www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx)