

Moreton Downs State School

Attendance Improvement Plan 2016

Every Day Counts

Preamble

Moreton Downs State School has a tradition of attendance concerns. While many and varied approaches have been used there is only ever fluctuating periods of success.

In conversations with parents and community and staff members regarding reasons for under target attendance the following issues and context have been highlighted.

- Socio-Economic mix of the community highlights some families who have financial and economic hardships which lead to their children not attending at certain times due to insufficient money for food, clothing and/or transport.
- Family support networks not being in the immediate community and some families travel on weekends to be with these networks. At times these families are away on Friday's and Monday's as these days.
- Some families choose to utilise weekends for family activities and often extend these on Fridays and Mondays. A great weather day, particularly on a Friday, Monday or pension day will see students absent with their family fishing, camping or involved in other activities.
- Our indigenous students have a lower percentage of attendance and some have complex circumstances which further compound attendance issue.
- There is a pronounced percentage of students who attend late and/or depart early. Reasons for this are extremely varies. Unexplained absences is a particular target area. Disciplinary absences, while above state means, are considered reasonable compared to 'like-schools'. Years of work through a PBL process (being reignited in 2016) is leading to improved overall student behaviour and an enhanced school culture. This enhanced culture is making the school more welcoming and inclusive.

Research

The following summary of research on attendance is drawn from the 2013 DETE paper **Performance Insights – School Attendance**. The paper analysed a range of data around student attendance across Queensland and Australia of students in primary and secondary schools. [What does research share around attendance and student performance?](#)

- 🔒 *Poor school attendance can be an early warning sign for future adverse outcomes*
- 🔒 *Parents/caregivers and schools can positively influence factors related to student attendance*
- 🔒 *Poor attendance represents a loss of educational opportunity and a cost to the community of approximately \$63.00 per student per day*
- 🔒 *Approximately 70% of students attend school at least 90% of the time*
- 🔒 *Approximately 41% of students have attendance rates of 95% or above*
- 🔒 *Approximately 30% of students had attendance rates below 90% which means they miss more than 20 days of school in the year*
- 🔒 *Regions with more rural and remote schools have a higher proportion of students with attendance rates below 85%*
- 🔒 *The two most common reasons for student absences were 'illness' and 'unauthorised'*
- 🔒 *Mondays and Fridays show higher numbers of absences*
- 🔒 *The final week of a term or semester feature lower attendance, largely due to a greater proportion of holiday related and unauthorised non-attendance*
- 🔒 *Average student attendance declines in Years 8, 9 and 10, with a sharper decline for Indigenous students*
- 🔒 *There is a strong relationship between early schooling attendance patterns and higher attendance throughout schooling*
- 🔒 *Achievement can be predicted with some confidence based on prior attendance*
- 🔒 *School size does not have a significant relationship with student attendance*
- 🔒 *Staff morale appears to be the staff factor most strongly correlated with student attendance.*
- 🔒 *Students who move between schools more often tend to have lower attendance rates*
- 🔒 *On average, students from lower SES areas exhibit lower attendance rates*
- 🔒 *Students from lower SES backgrounds tend to exhibit higher levels of unauthorised and unexplained attendance*
- 🔒 *Only a slight relationship exists between student satisfaction/parent satisfaction and student attendance*
- 🔒 *Every day absent impacts on student performance—thus, for school attendance, every day counts*
- 🔒 *Attendance and student performance on NAPLAN are related*
- 🔒 *The relationship between attendance and NAPLAN scores is similar for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students*
- 🔒 *Each day absent in the early years has a greater effect on reading performance in the later years*
- 🔒 *Each day absent in the later years of schooling has a greater effect on numeracy in the later years*
- 🔒 *Students with attendance rates lower than 85% (unauthorised and unexplained absences) are four times more likely to have subsequent SDAs*
- 🔒 *A wide variety of strategies to increase student attendance have been tried, however the evidence base for effective strategies is not strong. School attendance is a marker for a range of complex social issues*

Moreton Downs State School - Data Analysis

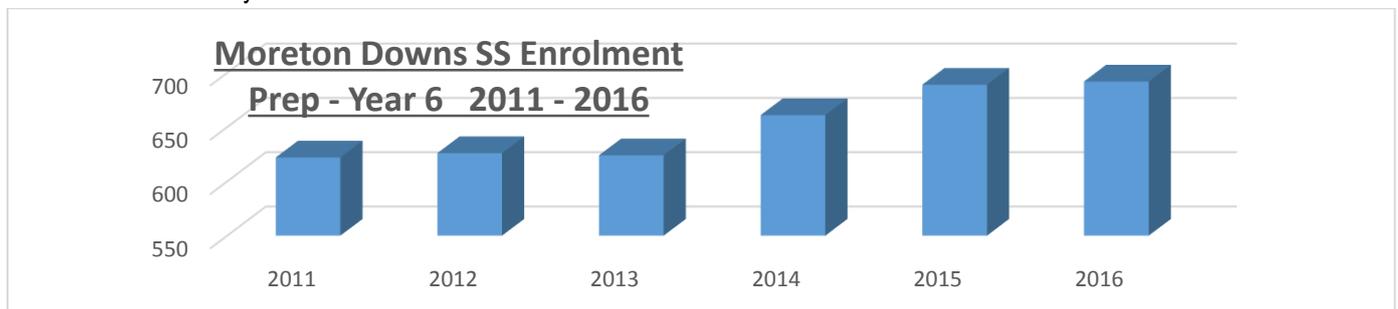
After interrogating Moreton Downs State School's data the following was evident:

- School enrolment growth has been stable over the last 6 years, particularly considering from 2015 Year seven students were moved to secondary schools.
- Enrolment Prep – Year 6 has risen 11.6% over six years.
- 16 Families are responsible for approximately 10% of the total absences
- There is significant yet reducing percentage of all absences as unexplained
- There is, compared to like schools, an average amount of suspensions
- There is a stagnant percentage of students whose attendance is between 0% and 85%
- 12 students are on the One School attendance absence alert list

Enrolment History 2011 – 2016

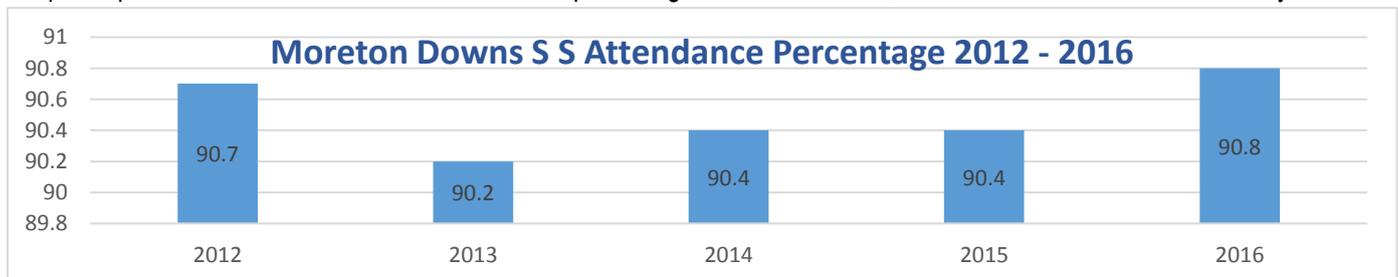
Graphical presentation of MDSS student enrolments from 2011 – 2016, based on day 8 enrolment returns each year.

*Note from 2015 Year 7 students were relocated to secondary schools. Moreton Downs State School provides education for Prep to Year 6 students only from 2015.



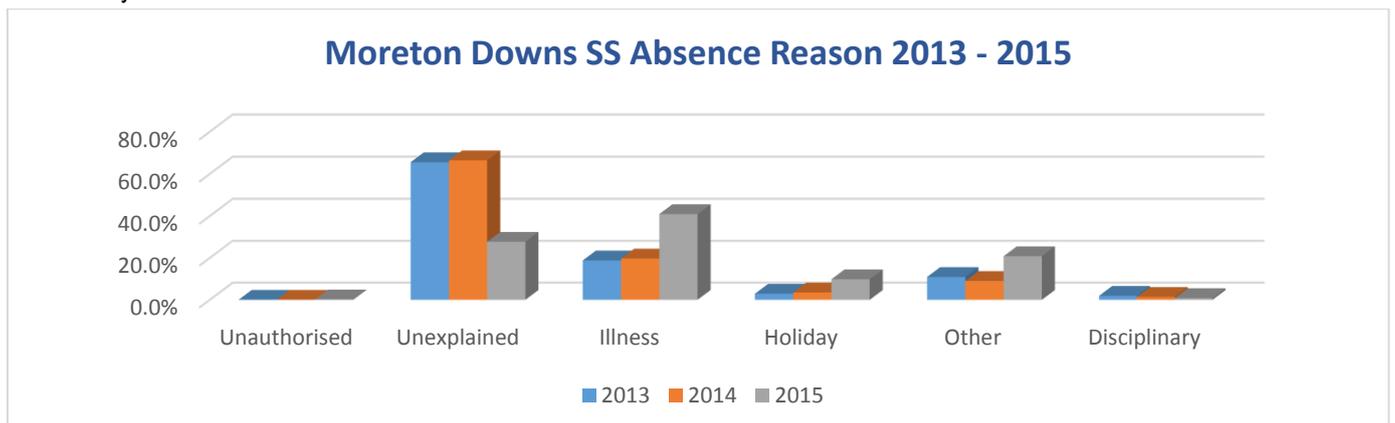
Attendance Percentage 2012 – 2016

Graphical presentation of MDSS student attendance percentage from 2012 – 2016, based on semester one data each year.



Student Absence Details 2011 – 2015

Graphical presentation of MDSS student absence reasons (percentage of all absences) from 2013 – 2015, based on semester one data each year.



Monitoring and Reporting

Class teachers maintain rolls and monitor attendance and absence reasons and make individual phone calls home when attendance and absence becomes a concern. Records of contact are recorded on One School. School officer monitors absences and a designated staff member makes calls home for all unexplained absences. The officer records contacts and provides an absence report to the Principal when unexplained absences exceed three consecutive days, or if a regular pattern is observed (ie. absent every Friday). Principal review of the absence report may lead to further action according to departmental processes and reports to relevant agencies when required. Follow-up actions and records of contact are recorded on One School.

In the case of students on Out of Home Care (OOHC) the office staff contact the carers immediately they are aware. Students in OOHC have an absence alert on One School.

The school will utilise the school report card process to highlight student absences and include a descriptor of the affect the relevant absence places on student achievement.

Communication

There are on-going and supported processes of communicating with home at various levels, including:

- individual letters home, as per attendance requirements, these are managed by the designated office staff member
- phone calls, needs based, are made by class teachers and office staff and recorded on One School
- use of social media to share events and Every Day Counts initiative is managed by the Principal
- web page information on attendance is managed by the school Website Manager
- fortnightly Newsletter information about attendance, including graphs on attendance, is managed by the Principal
- Chaplain and Guidance Officer undertake follow-up meetings with parents where attendance is an issue and supports where possible to alleviate any social issues which are impinging on attendance
- specific information on attendance is shared on assembly regularly by the relevant Deputy Principal

Positive Recognition

Short term and adhoc events and reward programs will operate to attend to a particular focus area in the school. Such will be published and communicated with the whole school and celebrated in events or assemblies.

Long-term and systematic process provide a range of positive recognition actions occur for attendance including:

- Fortnightly cohort assembly which provides an opportunity for positive celebrations and reminders around attendance
- The school will create and maintain relevant signage and stepping stones around the school promoting high level of attendance
- Monthly best attendance by class, recognised by trophy, certificate and in newsletter, This award and associated data is managed by Deputy Principal
- Monthly most improved attendance by class, is recognised by trophy, certificate and in newsletter. This award and associated data is managed by Deputy Principal
- Each term the class with highest attendance for the period receives a free Pizza Lunch. This reward and associated data is managed by the Deputy Principal
- Once per term all students with 93% attendance of higher go in the draw to win a \$25.00 voucher. There is one voucher for each year level. This award and associated data is managed by Deputy Principal

Support

High absence families are referred to the Chaplain, Guidance Officer and cohort Deputy Principal for support and follow-up which might include:

- over-coming financial issues - emergency lunch and clothing support
- personal counselling
- communication with home processes
- referrals to interagency support
- creative and innovative programming for the student using a differentiated approach
- accessing the 'Inclusive Education Team' for support program

Broader School Programs

A range of school programs aim at seeking student and parent engagement and promote a passion and urgency to attend. These include:

- Achievement awards
- Camps
- Celebration days
- Choir
- Curriculum events
- Differentiation in delivery of the curriculum
- Enrichment events/days
- Environment Program
- Excursions
- High school transition links
- Inter-school sport program
- Leadership events
- Prep transition program
- Positive rewards program
- Robotics
- Special events
- Student council
- Theme days (i.e book character dress up)
- Upper 2 Bands program
- Worker of the Week

Absence Monitoring

Moreton Downs State School utilises the One School system and electronic roll marking to ensure accurate detail is recorded in a timely manner for all absence reasons. Below is the One School code system to be utilised for recording absences (Table 1) and reasons for absences (Table 2 & 3. Also included is the absence monitoring flowchart and guidelines for determining whether excuses for student absences are considered reasonable excuses.

Table 1

Type of Absence	Code	Explanatory notes
Entire day	A	Student was absent entire day.
Early (No Penalty)	E	Student left early, but within the final 2 hours of scheduled schooling. This will not count as an afternoon/half day absence. If the student left earlier than 2 hours prior to the end of the scheduled school day, this will count as an afternoon/half day absence (see "P" code).
Late (No Penalty)	L	Student arrived late, but within 2 hours of scheduled schooling. This will not count as a morning/half day absence. If the student arrived after the first 2 hours of the scheduled school day, this will count as a morning/half day absence (see "M" code).
Morning	M	Student was absent for the morning. This will count as a half day absence.
Afternoon	P	Student was absent during the afternoon. This will count as a half day absence.

Table 2

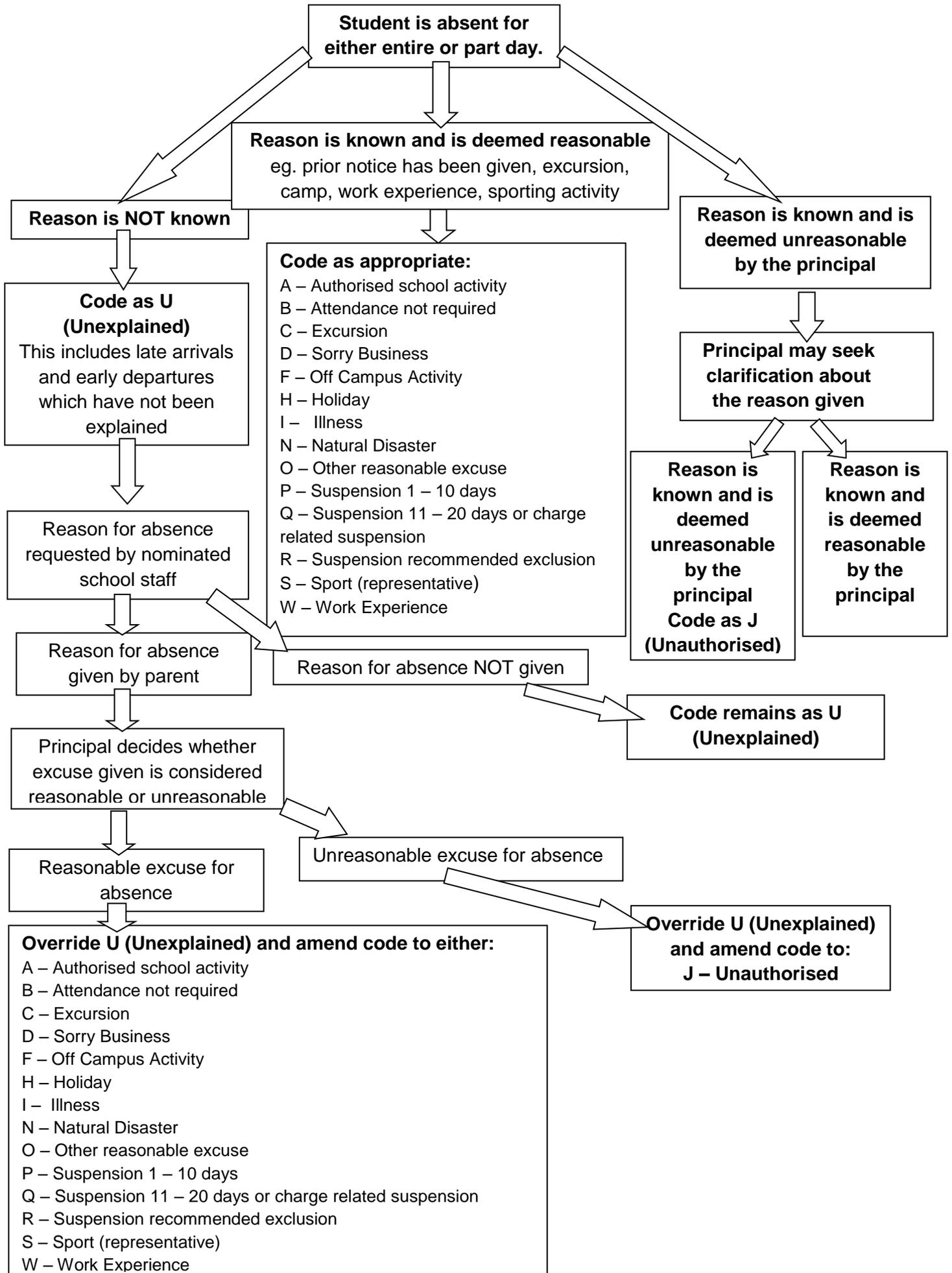
Reason why student is not physically present at school	Code	Explanatory notes	Counted as an absence*
Unexplained	U	No reason has been given for the student absence	Yes
Unauthorised	J	The excuse given for a student absence is deemed as unreasonable. The reason (with any supporting evidence) as to why an explanation is considered to be unreasonable must be documented.	Yes

Table 3

Reason why student is not physically present	Code	Explanatory notes	Counted as an absence*
School activity	A	Student is participating in an authorised school activity for school purposes. May include participation in school choirs, youth parliament, or community service, or attendance at a hospital school. Refer to the Guidelines.	No
Attendance not required	B	Student was not required to attend school on this day as it is not included in his/her educational program, or for a student with charge-related reasons the student has enrolled in a School of Distance Education or engaged in an educational program. This code also applies if the student is in a youth detention centre.	No
Excursion	C	Student is participating in an excursion which occurs outside the school grounds and is conducted, organised and/or approved by the school. Excursions could include part-day, full-day or multi-day class visits to venues outside the school or school camps.	No
Off Campus activity	F	Student is participating in an authorised activity that is away from the school campus. These activities may include flexible arrangements, attendance at a TAFE or other training provider course, participation in a VET activity or participation in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. These activities will be regular and ongoing.	No
Holiday	H	The parent, or the student if they are living independently, has informed the school that the student/family is taking a holiday. Note that holidays during the school term should be discouraged. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive days, an exemption is required. Refer to Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation .	Yes
Illness	I	The parent, or the student if they are living independently, has informed the school that the student is sick. This includes all references to ill health or reasons related to the health of the student. If a medical certificate has been provided this should be noted in OneSchool and kept on file. If a child is unable to attend school for a period longer than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required. Refer to Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation . A child may be absent from school if the child is, or is a member of a class of persons that is, subject to a direction or order given about an infections or contagious disease or condition.	Yes
Natural Disaster	N	Student is unable to attend school due to an extreme weather event or other natural disaster.	No
Sorry Business	D	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participating in sorry business. Refer to Guidelines .	Yes
Other	O	The principal has determined that the excuse provided by the parent or student (where the student is an adult or where it would be inappropriate to ask the parent) is reasonable. Principals must use the Guidelines to determine reasonable excuses and document these reasons. This code may be used for medical and dental appointments, religious observances, funerals, and legal matters.	Yes
Short suspension	P	Student is suspended for 1 to 10 days under s283 of the EGPA.	Yes
Long suspension	Q	Student is suspended for 11 to 20 days under s283 of the EGPA, or for a student with charge-related reasons, the student has not enrolled at a School of Distance Education or engaged in an educational program.	Yes
Suspension – recommended exclusion	R	Student is suspended with the recommendation for exclusion under s293 of EGPA.	Yes
Sport (Representative Sport)	S	Student is representing their school, district, region, state or nation at a sporting event recognised by the school.	No , if representing their school, district state or region. Yes , in all other circumstances.
Sport (Non- representative)	O	Student is participating in sporting activities that are not endorsed by the school and is not representing the school, district, region, state, or nation.	Yes
Work experience	W	Student is participating in an approved work experience program.	No
Exemptions	Z	Student has an exemption from schooling. Refer to Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation .	No

*For absences less than 2 hours (i.e. E or L code from Table 1), the absence will not be counted irrespective of reason given.

Flowchart for recording student absences



Guidelines for determining whether excuses for student absences are considered reasonable excuses

Pursuant to s176(1) of the Education General Provisions Act (EGPA) 2006, each parent of a child who is of compulsory school age must ensure that the child is enrolled and attends school on every school day for the educational program in which the child is enrolled unless the parent has a reasonable excuse. Pursuant to s239(1) of the Education General Provisions Act (EGPA) 2006 a parent of a young person in the compulsory participation phase must ensure the young person is participating full-time in an eligible option, unless the parent has a reasonable excuse.

A student who is participating in one of the following activities must be recorded as not physically present at the school site but will not be recorded as absent for the purpose of report cards or school attendance data:

School activity (Absence Reason Code A) – A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an authorised activity for school purposes. Examples include students performing in school choirs, bands or dance groups, students participating in a youth parliament or council, or students participating in community service. Students attending a hospital school should also be marked with Code A. Upon discharge from hospital, the hospital school should advise the usual school of any variations in the student's attendance. Code A should be replaced with Code I (Illness) for days when the student has not participated in the education program at the hospital school due to illness.

Excursion (Absence Reason Code C) – A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in an excursion which occurs outside the school grounds and is conducted, organised and/or approved by the school. Excursions include part-day, full-day or multi-day class visits to venues outside the school, and school camps.

Natural Disaster (Absence Reason Code N) – A student will not be considered absent if they are unable to attend school due to an extreme weather event or other natural disaster. This code may be used whether or not the student is continuing with school work while absent from school, and may be used for full or part-day absences.

Off Campus Activity (Absence Reason Code F) – A student will not be considered absent if they are participating in an authorised activity that is away from the school campus. These activities may include flexible arrangements, attendance at a TAFE or other training provider course, or participation in a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship. These activities will be regular and ongoing in nature.

Sport – Representative (Absence Reason Code S) – A student will not be considered absent when they are representing the school, district, region, state or country at a sporting event approved by the school. For non-representative sport, see below.

Work experience (Absence Reason Code W) – A student will not be considered absent when they are participating in a work experience program approved and organised by the school. Work experience programs are available for students 14 years or older. Schools must ensure appropriate work experience agreements have been completed before students participate in work experience.

Exemption (Absence Reason Code Z) – The student has been formally exempted for this absence and is recorded in the school's exemption register.

Attendance not required (Absence Reason Code B) – The student was not required to attend school on this day as it is not included in his/her educational program. This may include part-time students or students whose educational program does not require their attendance on particular days. This code should be used for a student suspended with charge-related reasons and who has enrolled at a School of Distance Education or an educational program. This code also applies if the student is in a youth detention centre.

The following circumstances will be considered absences for which a reasonable excuse has been given:

Illness (Absence Reason Code I) – It is reasonable that a child may be absent from school when they are genuinely too ill to attend. On any single day of absence due to illness, or as soon as possible within 2 days of the student's return to school, a parent should provide the school with an explanation for the absence, in line with the school's agreed processes for notifying of student absence. This may take the form of a written explanation note containing the student's name, date(s) of absence(s) and reason for absence(s), a verbal explanation through either a phone call or visit to the school, or a medical certificate.

If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required. Refer to *Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation*.

Infectious or contagious disease (Absence Reason Code I) – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if the child is, or is a member of a class of persons, that is subject to a direction or order given about an infectious or contagious disease or condition.

Medical or dental treatments or procedures (Absence Reason Code O) – In some circumstances it may be reasonable for a student to be absent to attend a medical or dental appointment during school hours, however, parents should be encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours if possible. These absences should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from a parent.

Holiday (Absence Reason Code H) – Holidays during terms should be actively discouraged. Parents should be encouraged to plan holidays during gazetted school holiday periods and student free days. If the absence is more than 10 consecutive school days, an exemption is required. Refer to *Exemptions from Compulsory Schooling and Compulsory Participation*.

Religious observance (Absence Reason Code O) – In some circumstances it may be reasonable for a student to be absent to participate in a special religious observance. These absences should be documented through the provision of a written or verbal explanation from the parent.

Sport – Non-representative (Absence Reason Code O) – Principals should use their professional judgement to determine if it is reasonable for a student to be absent from school to participate in a sporting event where they are not representing their school, district, region, state or nation, taking into consideration the type of event and the organising sporting body.

Suspension – Suspension is a reasonable excuse for absence and the following applies:

- a student suspended for 10 days or less (**Absence Reason Code P**)
- a student suspended for 11 to 20 days (**Absence Reason Code Q**)
- a student suspended with charge-related reasons and has not enrolled at a School of Distance Education or engaged in an educational program (**Absence Reason Code Q**)
- a student suspended with a recommendation for exclusion (**Absence Reason Code R**).

For all suspensions, the school's principal must take reasonable steps to ensure the student can continue their education.

Law of the Commonwealth (Absence Reason Code O) – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school if a Law of the Commonwealth allows a child to carry on an activity other than attending school.

Funeral (Absence Reason Code O) – Attendance at a funeral may be considered as a reasonable excuse for absence. Parents should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible. There may also be circumstances where a child is kept out of school due to grief for a close family member. In such circumstances, the school should work with families to encourage them to have the child attend school to maintain a sense of normalcy. These situations should be handled with respect and sensitivity and should be underpinned by the interests of the child.

Sorry Business (Absence Reason Code D) - Student is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and was required to be absent to participate in cultural activities related to a recent family bereavement. Parents should be encouraged to ensure their child misses as little school as possible. There may also be circumstances where a child is kept out of school due to grief for a close family member. In such circumstances, the school should work with families to encourage them to have the child attend school to

maintain a sense of normalcy. These situations should be handled with respect and sensitivity and should be underpinned by the interests of the child.

Legal (Absence Reason Code O) – It is a reasonable excuse for a child to be absent from school where the child is required to attend court or fulfil other legal requirements.

The following circumstances will be considered absences for which there is NOT a reasonable excuse given:

Unexplained absence (Absence Reason Code U) – When no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school by the parent, or the student if they are living independently.

Leisure activities (Absence Reason Code J - Unauthorised) – Undertaking a leisure activity such as shopping, visiting friends and relatives, or fishing, is not considered a reasonable excuse for an absence from school.

Any other reason for absence (Absence Reason Code J - Unauthorised) – The principal should use their professional judgement in determining whether other reasons given by the parent, or the student if they are living independently, are reasonable explanations for a student's absence. If the reason given is not a reasonable excuse, the principal should document the decision and record the absence with the Code J.