



PARENT CONDONED ABSENCES INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Did you know that being absent five days a term from Reception to Year 10 adds up to more than one year of missed schooling?

South Australian preschools and schools have clear responsibilities to ensure that all children and young people are engaged in educational programs and attend on a regular basis. Parents and schools need to work together to help students to understand the importance of being at school whenever possible. Attending school provides children and young people with learning opportunities that will provide a solid foundation for the future.

Many of our children and young people however are away from school or parts of the school day on a regular basis with parent permission. Instead of only missing school for genuine reasons such as illness, there seem to be an ever increasing list of reasons:

- a day off for their birthday
- a day or days off because relatives are visiting
- a day off to be with parents at home
- a day off to look after younger brothers and sisters, or
- a day off to go shopping.

Often these absences are not necessary and promote the thinking that regular attendance at school is not really important or that it is OK for students to take a day off or skip extracurricular activities such as sports days simply because they don't 'feel' like going.

School leaders have noticed that this practice can have a number of adverse effects, not only on the pupils who have been absent, but sometimes on the class or whole school. These can be:

- An effect on individual pupil attainment and achievement in pupils who are absent on a regular basis;
- Disruption in class when pupils need to catch up on work when they return;
- Disruption to teachers' assessment and testing schedules;
- Behavioural problems if pupils get behind in school work;
- The need for remedial work to be set;
- An effect on the general ethos of the school.

Every absence from school is a missed learning opportunity. If students are absent regularly, over time, their knowledge base will be full of holes. Learning is sequential and attending three out of four lessons leaves gaping holes. **To reach their potential at school, students need to attend regularly.**

Days off due to genuine illness are necessary, but parents can support schools to try to minimise other absences by arranging dental and specialist's appointments after school or during the school holidays and booking ahead for family holidays outside of term-time. Other activities such as shopping, helping at home, and visiting relatives may all seem important at the time – but not as important as a person's future. **As parents you have a critical role to play in protecting your own child's future.**

DID YOU KNOW?

- Missing one day a week of school from Reception to Year 10 means missing two years and one term of schooling.
- There is a direct correlation between attendance and achievement.
- Frequent absences make it difficult for teachers who have to continually re-teach information and skills.
- Being half an hour late to school each day from reception to year 10 equals missing one year and one-and-a-half terms of schooling.
- Patterns of attendance/absence are set up in the early years of schooling.
- Being absent five days a term from reception to year 10 adds up to more than one year of missed schooling.
- Students who are frequently absent from school are over-represented in the juvenile justice system.
- Girls are absent more often than boys.
- Poor attendance makes it difficult for students to form positive relationships with their peers.
- Students who are frequently absent from school are more likely to end up homeless.
- Indigenous students are absent twice as much as non-indigenous students.
- Girls who are frequently absent from school are over-represented in the statistics for teenage pregnancies.
- Research shows that students who are often absent from school are likely to earn less than their peers as adults.