



From The Principals' Desk

Dear Families,

Attendance at school – Why it is important every day!

Did you know that a child missing one day a fortnight, will miss four weeks in a year, and more than a year of school by Year 10? It is important that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age!

As you know, schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6-17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted. The Department of Education closely monitors attendance and requires schools to keep current and accurate data on this. Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they don't fall behind both socially and academically. There are many reasons why regular school attendance is valuable:

- ✓ *School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks.*
- ✓ *School helps children to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.*
- ✓ *School helps them to make the most of life opportunities.*

*We know that sometimes there are very valid reasons for why your child may not be at school. In these instances, **the DET expects every parent/guardian must promptly provide an explanation to the school on each occasion.** We remind you that this can be done via COMPASS or by calling the school office and that it should be done **on the same day your child is absent.***

*At Willy, we know that illness and extended family holidays are the main reasons why our children are absent. However, we also know that when **compared to similar schools (with a similar demographic), we have a slightly higher absence rate.** The percentage of students with 20 or more absence days is at 18% compared to similar schools (16%) in 2017. We also know that occasionally families experience circumstances which makes it difficult to get your child to school every day. We can assist with this. We want every child to attend school happily every day and maximise their educational and social achievement, so please contact the office and speak with Mat or Andrea if you need support. Together, we will address these difficulties or barriers.*

***As of Term three, whenever a student is absent and we have not received an explanation for why, we will be required to notify you of this unexplained absence** as soon as practicable on the same day. We will do this either by email, phone call or SMS. We therefore ask that you ensure we have your current and correct contact details, because if we are unable to reach you the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on your child's file held by the school.*

***So how many days of absence is OK?** The DET says that if a child reaches five days of unexplained absence over a 12 month period, the school and parent should work together to implement additional support or intervention to ensure attendance at school every day and remains at school during school hours. DET also recommends that if the student's attendance does not improve, then the school may decide to make a referral to the school attendance officer. This would tell us that we should be aiming for no more than five days absence within any given year! This is our target. It is always good to have targets to work towards.*

Protecting the safety and well-being of children through the reporting of absenteeism is the responsibility of both parents and schools. Focussing on clear communication and strengthening a collaborative and positive relationship between us all, is key to the success of every Willy Kid. If you would like further information about this, please see the attachment or contact us at school.

*This Friday is **National Walk safely to School Day** and we would like to have every child walk or ride to school on that day. As you know every Friday at Willy PS is Walk to School Day, in fact most of our kids walk to*

school every day and this is something we will always encourage.

Williamstown is one of the few suburbs where this option is still possible and we would love to see every family make the most of it. It is a great way to start the day putting us in a positive frame of mind.



While we are very keen to encourage families and kids to walk/ride/scoot/skate to school, we also acknowledge that this requires a certain degree of care so that every child arrives safely. If your child is walking or riding to school, it is best if we follow a few simple guidelines:

- Make sure your child is old enough and mature enough to get themselves to and from school – parents are best placed to judge this.
- Make sure you practise the route with your kids before they try themselves. And make sure they have had other opportunities to be out and about without adult supervision. Can they travel to and from a friend's house around the block? Do they stick to timelimes? Are they completely confident of finding their way to and from home?
- It is always best for your child to walk or ride with a friend or in a small group.
- Make sure your child follows the same safe and known route every day.
- Make sure your child has a good sense of being safe in traffic and knows where to cross roads and railway tracks safely.
- Make sure your child recognises a safe place to go if they become frightened – a shop or public place is best.

Even if your family is one of a few who live some distance away, we would encourage you to park a few blocks from the school and complete your journey on foot. So, get your kids to grab their coat, scarf and hat and walk, skate, scoot or ride to school...helmets are a must too if riding or scooting... Let us make a habit of this!

**Have a great week,
Regards,
Andrea and Mat**

Dates To Remember

Term 2

Week 5- 14.05.18

Mon: Prep 2019 Tour 2.30pm

Tues: Friends of Willy Meeting 7pm

Tues-Thurs: NAPLAN –Years 3 and 5

Fri: Walk Safely To School Day

Week 6- 21.05.18

Tues-Thurs: NAPLAN –Years 3 and 5

Tues- J.S.C. Cupcake stall

Week 7- 28.05.18

Tues: NSW Science Comp

Tues: School Council and 2018 Annual General Meeting 6:30pm

Weds: Divisional Cross Country

Week 9- 11.06.18

Mon: Queens B' day Public Holiday

Week 10- 18.06.18

Fri: AFL Girls Comp, Reports go live on Compass

Week 11 25.06.18

Tues: Student Learning Conferences 1:30pm – Bookings online

Fri: End of Term 2, early dismissal @2:30pm



SAME-DAY NOTIFICATION OF UNEXPLAINED STUDENT ABSENCES

FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS/CARERS

If your child is sick or absent, you are required to notify their school as soon as possible **on the day of absence** using one of the following methods:

1. **Online:** log the absence directly using your school's IT platform.
2. **Telephone:** the school office and let the staff know your child's name, class, date of absences and reason.
3. **Email:** the school and provide the staff with your child's name, class, date of absences and reason.

Notifying the school of your child's absence either prior to, or on the day that they will be away, helps ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and will fulfil your legal responsibility.

Why do I need to notify the school if my child is absent?

Schools need to know when and why a child is absent and you need to know if your child isn't at school.

From the end of Term 2 2018, all Victorian government schools are required to contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same day of an unexplained student absence. If your child is absent on a particular day and you have not contacted the school to explain why, the absence will be marked as unexplained.

This system also promotes daily school attendance. Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education, they learn new things every day – missing school puts them behind.

What is your responsibility?

You are legally required to ensure your child attends school every day or you must provide an explanation for their absence. You should let the school know in advance of any upcoming absences or let them know in the morning if your child won't be at school. In order for schools to implement the same day notification requirement, it's essential that you provide the school with your most up-to-date contact details.

Generally one notification will be sent per family. Should there be circumstances that require both parents and carers to be notified, please contact the school to make the necessary arrangements.

What is the school's responsibility?

The school must notify you of an unexplained absence in relation to your child as soon as practicable on the same day.



Schools will let you know either by your school's online communications app, SMS, phone call or email. If you can't be reached because the school does not have your correct contact details (i.e. changed phone number, SMS/email failure notification received etc.), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on your child's file held by the school. Where possible, this contact will be made on the same day of the unexplained absence.

Where can I learn more about the process for managing student absences?

Ask your school for a copy of the *Attendance Policy* which outlines the school's processes and procedures for monitoring, recording and following-up of student absences.