Attendance Policy

September 2026

VIRTUAL
SCHOOL VICTORIA

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Virtual School Victoria on 8480 0000 or feedback@vsv.vic.edu.au.

Rationale

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values which set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Daily school attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. Whilst the model of schooling at Virtual School Victoria (VSV) has been established to ensure that students who are unable to attend a school in person during school hours are able to access their education remotely, VSV requires students in Foundation to Year 10 to attend online lessons via video conferencing. This allows their teachers to monitor student learning progress, wellbeing and engagement. Regular attendance at online lessons in Year 11 and Year 12 is encouraged wherever possible but not compulsory.

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending online lessons when scheduled.

Virtual School Victoria:

- Is committed to providing a viable alternative to enable students to attend school virtually where they are unable to attend a school in person.
- Is committed to promoting the benefits of regular attendance at online lessons.
- Believes successful students are well organised and join online lessons on time.
- Believes non-attendance can place a student in unsafe situations and impact on their future employability and opportunities.
- Communicates, implements and monitors whole school strategies to improve regular attendance at synchronous online lessons.
- Is aware that chronic non-attendance at online lessons might be a sign of stress factors in a student's life outside and/or in the immediate learning environment - our staged response to attendance and engagement allows us to respond quickly and work in partnership with students and their families.
- Believes attendance at synchronous online lessons at school is the responsibility of everyone in the school community.

Overview

This policy provides the framework to a collaborative approach to the participation of VSV students in their synchronous online learning and school life.

It is to be read in conjunction with:

- VSV's Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy
- DET Attendance Policy and Guidelines
- DET Exemption from School Attendance and Enrolment Policy and Guidelines

This policy does not replace or change the obligations of VSV, parents/carers and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

Purpose

- Maximise the attendance of all students at scheduled synchronous online lessons.

- Support families in achieving regular attendance at synchronous online lessons for their children.
- Acknowledge that engagement and interaction with learning activities and coursework in VSV Online contributes to attendance and participation in learning in a virtual school.
- Provide organisational structures which support the early identification of causes of student non-attendance and disengagement.
- Identify and support all students at risk of non-attendance and disengagement.
- Support staff in monitoring and following up all absences from expected attendance at synchronous online lessons.
- Ensure the accuracy of data collection for school improvement, review and policy compliance.
- To record student attendance to meet various duty of care and other obligations.

Vulnerable cohorts

VSV recognises that school processes and approaches may sometimes need to be carefully tailored for students and their families who may be vulnerable, have special needs or who have other circumstances that need to be taken into consideration. Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents/carers to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Definitions

Parent: Includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

Synchronous online lessons: Scheduled virtual online lessons that teachers and students attend at the same time during which they can interact in 'real time'.

Asynchronous online learning: Students accessing learning materials at their own pace and according to their own schedule (e.g. completing coursework or watching a pre-recorded lesson).

Approved Absence arrangements: A documented arrangement, established in advance, that modifies a student's expected attendance at particular synchronous lessons.

Excused absence: An absence for which the school has accepted the explanation as reasonable.

Unexcused absence: An absence for which the explanation has not been accepted as reasonable.

Unexplained absence: An absence for which no explanation has been received.

Engagement: Participation in both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities.

Recording Attendance

VSV will record student attendance at every scheduled synchronous online class. This is necessary to:

- Meet legislative requirements.
- Discharge VSV's duty of care for all students.

Attendance will be recorded by the subject teacher using VSV Online for students in Middle Years (Year 7 – Year 10) and in teacher records within the shared drive in Primary (Foundation – Year 6) and VCE (Year 11 and Year 12).

Approved Absence Arrangements for Synchronous Online Lessons

VSV understands that there are some student cohorts for whom attendance at synchronous online lessons is impractical and not possible due to legitimate reasons relating to the students' enrolment category. For example:

- Students in the Category 2. Travel may not be able to attend synchronous online lessons due to time zone differences or other challenges of learning while travelling e.g. internet access in remote locations.
- Students in Category 3. High Ability Sports/Performance may be unable to attend scheduled synchronous online lessons due to training or performance commitments. Year 9 and 10 students are also required to undertake a minimum of four hours of synchronous learning (approximately five online lessons) per week in 2027.
- Students who are a shared enrolment or a Students in Other Schools enrolment with another school where there is a clash with their home school's timetable.

Each individual student's circumstances are considered at the discretion of the members of the leadership team are applied to determine whether a student is exempt from the requirement to attend particular scheduled online lessons. This is communicated and agreed with the student and their parent/carer at the beginning of year and monitored according to the student's circumstances.

Exemptions from attendance at particular synchronous online lessons will be recorded in VSV's student database.

Recording Absences Explained (Approved or Unapproved) or Unexplained

For absences from synchronous online lessons where there is no Approved Absence in place, a parent/carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents/carers should notify VSV of absences by:

- Notifying the student's Learning Advisor for any absences of a full day or longer
- Notifying the subject teacher (for students in Foundation to Year 10) of absences for a single lesson

If a student is absent from a scheduled synchronous online lesson, the absence will be included in the weekly Attendance Report provided to the parent/carer (Middle Years). Where an absence is unexplained or raises an immediate concern for the student's safety or wellbeing, VSV will attempt to contact the parent/carer as soon as practicable.

If contact cannot be made with the parent/carer to obtain an explanation for the absence, the school will attempt to contact any emergency contact(s) nominated on the student's enrolment form within one week of the unexplained absence.

VSV will keep a record of the reason given for each absence on the student database. The Principal or their delegate will determine if the explanation provided is a reasonable excuse for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the Education Training Reform Act 2006 and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If VSV considers that the parent has provided a reasonable excuse for their child's absence the absence will be marked as 'excused absence'. If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as 'unexcused absence'.

The Principal or their delegate has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal or their delegate will generally excuse:

- Medical and dental appointments, where it is not possible or appropriate to accommodate attendance in a scheduled synchronous online class
- Bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- School avoidance/school can't, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to attending synchronous online lessons
- Cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- Extended family holidays where the parent/carer has received prior approval from the Principal or their delegate
- Sports/performing arts commitments
- On advice from a practitioner

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's database record. Parents/carers will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

Managing Non-Attendance

Where absences from scheduled synchronous online lessons are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five full school days, VSV will work collaboratively with parents/carers, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including:

- Implementing VSV's Staged Response for Engagement
- Developing an Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period of time due to medical or circumstantial reasons
- Arranging for assistance from relevant members of the Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Teams, including Team Leaders and Coordinators

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance and, in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required.

Attendance Referrals

VSV may decide, in accordance with the Department of Education's School Attendance Guidelines, to refer non-attendance to the relevant regional office for further action. This will occur in instances where:

- The student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months and the parent/carer has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences and measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken but have been unsuccessful
- The student's whereabouts are unknown, and the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days

If we are unable to make contact with the parents/carers and emergency contact(s) after multiple attempts, the Principal or their delegate may also make a referral to DFFH or request a Police Welfare Check to ensure the safety of the student.

Responsibilities

Virtual School Victoria

- Monitor each student's attendance and punctuality at synchronous online lessons (subject teacher)
- Contact parents/carers if an absence is unexplained by sending an email to request absence explanation and record in the student database (Learning Advisor and subject teacher(s))
    - If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, the absence will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence'

- Determine the appropriate follow up to ensure the student's education and/or wellbeing are supported following a school absence (Learning Advisor)
- Identify students who are at risk of disengaging from school (Learning Advisor)
- Escalate attendance concerns as per the Staged Response for Engagement (Learning Advisor and Engagement Team/Leader)
- Coordinate an Absence Learning Plan if absence is a due to an acute medical or family circumstance (Learning Advisor with the support of the Engagement, Wellbeing and/or Inclusion Team/Leader)
- Make DFFH/ChildFIRST notifications where appropriate (Learning Advisor with the support of the Wellbeing Team)

Student:

- Attend all scheduled synchronous online lessons
- Arrive at all scheduled synchronous online lessons on time and prepared to actively learn
- Talk to a teacher about issues that might impact their ability to attend synchronous online lessons.
- Talk to a teacher about issues that might impact their ability to access and complete expected asynchronous coursework

Parent/Carer:

- Ensure the student attends synchronous online lessons as scheduled and engages in both synchronous and asynchronous learning
- Provide a valid explanation for a student's absence/lateness/non-engagement
- Notify VSV of absences by contacting the Learning Advisor for absences of a day or longer or the subject teacher for a single class
- Communicate openly with the Learning Advisor about a student's ongoing medical condition that may result in ongoing absence or medical appointments during school hours and/ or assessment times
- Work in partnership with the school to address attendance concerns

School Leadership:

- Ensure student attendance is recorded for scheduled synchronous online lessons
- Ensure a record is kept of the reason given for each absence
- Consider the explanation given for an absence and whether it is reasonable in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at whole school level
- Ensure that processes are in place to document non-attendance strategies at an individual level on the student database e.g. phone calls, in-person meetings, Engagement Meetings, referrals to the Department of Education, and DFFH/ChildFIRST notifications
- Ensure processes are in place to document further enforcement proceedings around non-attendance, including referrals to the Department of Education

Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

Further information and resources

- VSV's Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy
- DET Attendance Policy and Guidelines
- DET Exemption from School Attendance and Enrolment Policy and Guidelines

Policy review and approval

Created date	**September 2026**
Endorsed by	**Mal McIver** Acting Executive Principal Signature: .....
Endorsed on	**Date**:
Next review date	**September 2029**

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