

MISSING SCHOOL FOR CULTURAL REASONS

Information for Koorie families

Based on input from the Koorie community, schools have changed the way they record and recognise when Koorie students are away from school for cultural reasons.

It is important for all students to attend school every day. Even a small number of absences can mean a student misses out on important learning. But sometimes students need to miss school for a range of different reasons. For Koorie students, there can be cultural reasons for an absence, such as for *Sorry Business*, or for other cultural activities that are important for students' cultural education and connection.

Schools are committed to working with students and their families to minimise the disruption to learning when an absence is necessary.

You can help by letting your school know as soon as possible when you know your child will be away from school and keeping in contact with teachers during longer absences.

Sorry Business

There is a specific category for schools to record absences for *Sorry Business*.

Schools understand that when a death occurs in a Koorie person's family or community, it is expected that the community get together to support each other regardless of distance or for how long the support is needed.

Previously, Koorie students absent due to *Sorry Business* were marked as absent under the general 'Bereavement' category, which did not account for the unique responsibilities and extended absences sometimes associated with *Sorry Business*.

Families are encouraged to let the school know when there is *Sorry Business* so teachers can work with you, your child and the Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) to identify appropriate supports.

Absences recorded under the *Sorry Business* code are still counted as an absence on the student's attendance record.

Cultural activities

Culture plays an important role in a Koorie student's education and overall well-being. In recognition of the important role culture plays in a Koorie student's life, the School Attendance Policy allows some Koorie cultural activities to be recognised under the 'educational' absence category.

Some examples of an educational Koorie cultural activity may include visiting significant cultural sites, attending a cultural event, return to Country and cultural ceremonies.

To be recorded as educational, absences for cultural activities must be:

- planned and agreed with the school in advance; and
- included in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), with links to the curriculum and specific learning outcomes.

To help decide if your child should miss school for a cultural activity, families should consider the number of school days already missed and the impact of lost classroom time for the particular student. Parents could ask themselves – can my child participate in the same or similar activity outside of school hours? How does this cultural activity support my child's education?

These absences are not counted against the student's attendance record at school.

For more information about attendance and missing school go to:

www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/attendance-missing-school.aspx