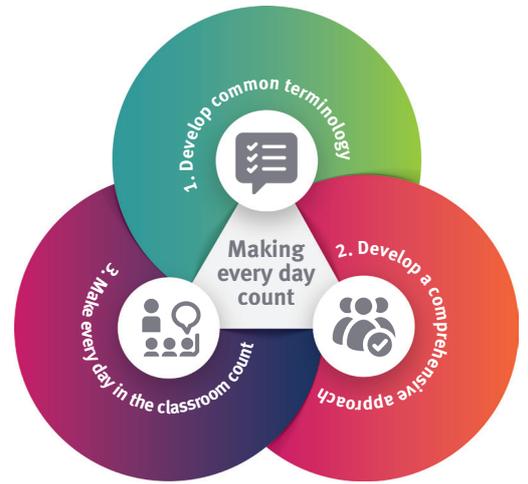


Making every day count

Fact sheet: Common terminology and definitions

Schools have a responsibility to help parents understand the language of attendance, including terms used by school staff with students to communicate attendance expectations. This will assist parents to discuss any attendance issues with their child at home and to effectively communicate with the school using a common language.

The common terms used to describe student absences are defined below:




Reasonable excuse—absences where the excuse provided is deemed reasonable by principals. These include illness, funerals, Sorry Business, and medical/dental appointments. For a full list of reasonable excuses, refer to the [Roll marking in state schools procedure](#).



Unauthorised absence—when the explanation for a student absence that is offered by a parent (or student if they are living independently) is deemed by the principal as not being a reasonable excuse.



School refusal—when poor attendance is related to some anxiety or worry that the child or young person has about going to school. Parents and carers are usually aware that their child is not going, and have been making efforts to alleviate the anxiety and to encourage them to attend school.



Unexplained absence—when no explanation for a student absence has been offered to the school by the parent, or the student if they are living independently.



Truancy—the situation of children being absent from school without permission from the school or parents.

Points to consider

- Does the school talk to students and parents about reasonable and unreasonable excuses for being absent?
- Are absences talked about in terms that students and parents can easily understand? For example, 'missing one day each week means that you miss out on about two weeks of lessons each term'.
- Is there information about the attendance policy in the school's handbook and in information for new parents?
- Are staff, parents and students involved in the development of the school's attendance policy?
- Does the school have an attendance target and is progress towards that target reported on websites and newsletters?
- Does the school encourage open dialogue with staff, students, parents and the community to identify potential improvements and new ideas?

