



# Assessing Absences and Non-School Days for Student Attendance

## Who should read this guide and why?

Read this help guide to identify whether:

- A day is a non-school day, or
- A student's specific type of absence should be included or excluded from your submission.

## Non-School Days for Student Attendance

A non-school day is a day where the school (and its locations) are ***not open*** for education purposes. These days are ***not absences*** for the purpose of Student Attendance.

Non-school days include:

- Pupil-free days
- Public holidays
- School holidays
- Religious holidays observed by the school
- Grade specific non-school days  
(for example, pupil-free days and moderation days)
- Unexpected temporary school closure  
(for example, power failure, water failure, closure due to danger from or due to a natural event such as bushfire, cyclone, flood etc)
- Strike action/industrial action
- All classes cancelled for the day  
(for example, due to a traumatic event impacting students)
- Natural disaster/event where students are unable to travel to school **and** school is closed  
(for example, travel to school is prevented by road closures due to a natural disaster/event such as bushfire or cyclone **and** the school is closed on that day).

## Assessing Student Absences

The table below provides a general description of incidents/absences that may be applicable to schools, how these incidents are to be treated and whether they should be included in the sum of possible school days. Note that actual descriptions in jurisdictions/sectors may differ. However, the general basis of the absence is the same. Also not all descriptions may be applicable to all jurisdictions/sectors.

**Table 1: Absences/incidents included as *attended school days*.**

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / Excluded
<p><b>A. Unexplained/unauthorised absences</b> Absences where the school does not receive any explanation, or where the reason for absence is <b>considered unacceptable</b>. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truancy</li> <li>• Unexplained</li> <li>• Without parent/guardian approval</li> <li>• Unacceptable explanations as determined by the school</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>B. Religious/cultural absences</b> Approved/notified absences due to recognised religious or ceremonial activity</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>C. Parent-approved absences</b> Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family event</li> <li>• Extended holidays</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>D. Medical</b> Approved/notified absences due to medical reasons. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness</li> <li>• External medical appointment with health care professionals including counselling</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>E. Disciplinary (Out-of-school)</b> Disciplinary action that is not on school grounds. Includes suspensions but excludes internal suspensions (see F).</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>F. Disciplinary (In-school)</b> Disciplinary action that is on school grounds. Includes internal suspensions</p>	Present	Included
<p><b>G. Behavioural reasons</b> Behavioural absences, e.g. disengagement. Excludes disciplinary action (see E or F).</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>H. Bereavement</b> Approved/notified absences due to bereavement. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funeral</li> <li>• Personal Bereavement</li> </ul>	Absent	Included

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / Excluded
<p><b>I. School closed</b> School closed for religious, public or other holiday. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected temporary school closure</li> <li>• Strike action/industrial action</li> <li>• School unavailable</li> <li>• School choice</li> <li>• Individual school calendars</li> <li>• All classes cancelled for the day</li> </ul>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>J. Natural disaster/event</b> Natural disaster/event where students are unable to travel to school <u>and</u> school is closed. Includes instances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bushfires</li> <li>• Floods</li> <li>• Earthquakes</li> <li>• Pandemics</li> </ul>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>K. Approved educational absence</b> Attendance at an approved/sanctioned school event where the student is not required to attend school. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excursions</li> <li>• Flexible timetable</li> <li>• Attending another school</li> <li>• Vocational Education Training (VET) activities</li> <li>• Learning programs delivered remotely during a natural disaster/event<sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	Present	Included
<p><b>L. Work experience programs</b> Approved participation in/attendance at work experience related programs. School is responsible for students on these programs.</p> <p>NSSC states that <i>students' time spent on work experience programs, as part of the school curriculum or program, should be treated as time in school.</i></p>	Present	Included
<p><b>M. Employment</b> Short-term employment. School is not responsible for students during this period; however, student remains officially enrolled.</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>N. Explained other absence</b> Absences from school due to acceptable reasons, other than any of those listed in this table.</p>	Absent	Included

<sup>1</sup> Requires reasonable evidence that remote learning has occurred by way of return of schoolwork (paper or online) or participation in an online classroom or the teacher doing a roll call in another virtual form of way.

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / Excluded
<p><b>O. Exemptions</b></p> <p>Approved exemptions such as certificate of exemptions, only for exceptional circumstances. Reasons for exemptions must not conflict with other descriptions in this table.</p> <p>Includes approved short-term employment for NSW and SA such as employment in the entertainment industry where approval and exemption from class has been given by the appropriate school personnel.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Due to the low number of absences in this category, some jurisdictions may choose to include these absences as possible school days. Although this is not recommended, this has minimal impact to the national and jurisdictional attendance rate.</p>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>P. Detention/Juvenile</b></p> <p><b>P.1. Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – notified</b></p> <p>School is <b>notified</b> that student is at the relevant centre. See P.2 for notified absences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WA: Student is enrolled in main school but is part of Immigration Detention Centre.</li> </ul> <p><b>P.2. Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – not notified</b></p> <p>If school is <b>not notified</b>, then the student would be absent for ‘unexplained/unauthorised’ reasons.</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>Absent</p>	<p>Excluded</p> <p>Include</p>
<p><b>Q. Behaviour centre</b></p> <p>Absences of students who are moved to a behaviour centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school. All data are attributed back to main school.</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>R. Tutorial Centres</b></p> <p>Absences at the main school for students who are moved to a tutorial centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school.</p>	Present	Included
<p><b>S. Excluded</b></p> <p>Student is no longer enrolled at the school. This includes expulsion or similar.</p> <p>If the student has been identified as enrolled and attending at another school, then this non-attendance can be excluded from being reported. If after 6 weeks of consecutive days non-attendance a student cannot be located to confirm if they remain enrolled at the school, then this non-attendance is excluded from being reported.</p>	NA	Excluded

## Need more help?

We are here to help. You can contact us by:

- email at [schools@dese.gov.au](mailto:schools@dese.gov.au)
- phone on 1800 677 027 (Option 5)
- submitting a new support request online from our Help and Support centre