# same-day notification of unexplained student absences

## fact sheet for schools

Protecting the safety and wellbeing of children through reporting and monitoring of absenteeism is the responsibility of both parents/carers and schools.

Parents and carers have an obligation to notify the school of their child’s absence as soon as possible **on the day of absence** using the school’s preferred method, including use of an online IT or app, by telephone or by email.

[Factsheet for school for same-day notification of unexplained student absences](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/studentmanagement/FactSheetforSchools.docx)

### New School Attendance Guidelines

From the end of Term 2 2018, all Victorian government schools must contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same-day of an unexplained student absence.

The same-day notification requirement supports the safety and wellbeing of all students. Schools need to know when and why a child is absent and parents/carers need to know if their child is not at school. Prompt communication also promotes daily school attendance. Going to school every day is the single most important part of a child’s education. Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification have better health outcomes, better employment outcomes, and higher incomes across their lives.

Many schools are already implementing a same-day notification system. The Department of Education and Training (the Department) is supporting schools to meet this new requirement using available online solutions where practicable and ensuring parents and carers are aware of their responsibility to notify schools of a child’s absence through promotional material including the Parent/carer Factsheet.

For further information on attendance, including the new School Attendance Guidelines, see the [School Policy Advisory Guide](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/attendance.aspx).

**Schools and parents working together to support student attendance**

Building positive and collaborative relationships through clear communications with parents and carers is critical to the successful implementation of the same-day notification requirement.

The responsibility needs to be underpinned by shared understandings and expectations about the procedures for monitoring, recording and follow-up of student attendance as outlined in the school’s *Attendance Policy*. Distributing the school’s *Attendance Policy* to parents and carers will help ensure they are aware of their obligation to notify the school of their child’s absence and minimise the follow-up required by schools.

For support to update your school’s Attendance Policy, see: [Policy template portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx)

**What is the school’s responsibility?**

* **Notify parents/carers:** The school must notify parents and carers as soon as practicable on the same day of an unexplained absence. This should occur in the morning allowing time for the parent or carer to respond. Schools can choose how they advise parent and carers based on their local context e.g. by email, push notification via downloaded app, SMS or phone call.
* **Follow-up (where required):** At times the parent or carer may not be able to be reached because the school does not have their correct contact details (i.e. changed phone number, SMS/email failure notification received etc.). In this instance, the school should attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the child’s file held by the school, where possible, on the same day of the unexplained absence.
* **Record student absences data:** Under the [School Attendance Guidelines](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/management/schoolattendanceguidelines2018.docx) schools are required to record or transpose absence data in CASES21, eCASES or a third party software which is compatible with CASES21. Schools using third party software are required to import attendance data into CASES21 on a monthly basis.

**Online solutions to same-day notifications**

The Department is committed to supporting schools to meet their attendance requirements through an automated IT platform where practicable. Schools can decide which IT platform to use and current options include:

* eCases (a departmentally provided adjunct to CASES21) to generate SMS alerts
* third party software to alert parents of their child’s absence via SMS or push notification

**Parent/carer’s responsibility**

Parents/carers are required to ensure their child attends school every day and have an obligation to contact the school to notify the school of their child’s absence. Parents/carers should inform the school in advance of known upcoming absences, or on the day of absence as soon as practicable. In addition, in order to implement this requirement, it is essential that parent/carers provide schools with their most up-to-date contact details.