

Rationale

This policy is for all Catholic schools operating in the Diocese of Ballarat.

‘The Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterized by technical and scientific skill. But at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation.’ *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*

Schools in the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat are funded by governments to be open for four full terms, maximising learning opportunities for students. Research indicates strongly that school attendance matters for achievement and every day counts.

Schooling is compulsory in Victoria for children and young people aged from 6-17 years, unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted.

School participation is important as it maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks.

Policy Statement

All Schools will maximise learning opportunities for students, by ensuring:

- Schools are open for approximately 40 weeks (up to 200 days) per year, as designated by the Victorian Minister of Education and the Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Ballarat.
- Staff are allocated appropriate vacation time, in accordance with applicable industrial awards, including gazetted public holidays.
- Staff are engaged in appropriate professional learning and planning.
- Student attendance rates recorded in a attendance register and are monitored

Principles

All students in all schools are entitled to an excellent education, allowing each student to reach his or her full potential so that he or she can succeed, achieve his or her aspirations, and contribute fully to his or her community, now and in the future.

The quality of a student’s education should not be limited by where the student lives, the income of his or her family, the school he or she attends, or his or her personal circumstances.

The quality of education should not be limited by a school’s location, particularly those schools in regional Australia (Australian Education Act 2013).

Definitions

1. Student Attendance: Learning is dependent on students being at school. So schools in the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat, will ensure students attend and engage in school activities, in accordance with gazetted (Department of Education -State Government) requirements for particular year levels.

2. Attendance Register: An attendance register in either print or electronic form for the attendance of all students at the school for each calendar year.

3. Term Dates: Schools must adhere to the gazetted term dates provided by the Victorian Department of Education.

4. Student Free Days: Student free days are days where students do not attend school, but are designated for staff professional development, school professional development activities, planning or report-writing, Each year schools receive student-free days within the gazetted attendance period for professional development, school planning and administration, curriculum development, and student assessment and reporting. Each year the first day of term one and the last day of term four, will be a student-free day in all schools.

5. School Closure Days: Schools are also closed for designated periods, for school vacation, emergency situations and for gazetted public holidays. A school closure day is a day upon which, in general, students and staff are not required to attend school, although some members may be required to engage in closure activities. Closure days would normally have an element of emergency or exceptional circumstances associated with them *e.g. Emergency Management Plan on a Code Red day, weather conditions preventing transport, gas leak, fire, flood, major accidents or fatalities*. The general principle to apply is to try to keep the school open, if possible. Partial closure days may also be a necessity in case of an emergency.

6. Public holidays in the Ballarat Diocese: A holiday is a day upon which neither staff nor students are expected to attend school or engage in school related activities. A holiday is a state-wide gazetted public holiday which falls during term time, or a day taken in conjunction with a locally gazetted custom or practice.

7. Term Four Dismissals: Students from Foundation and up to and including Year 9, will attend school until the end of the gazetted school year. Other students may be excused from attending school at the end of the year.

8. Communication - School Community: Parents need to be advised well in advance for closure days. Principals must inform parents and the broader school community of:

- The term dates for the following year
- The scheduling arrangements for student-free days preferably in the year prior however at least one term prior to the event.

References

Catholic Church, Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, St Paul Publications, Homebush, NSW, 2002, 14, p. 17, p. 23.

Public Holidays Act 1993

Education and Training Reform Act 2006

Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cwlth.) (ESOS Act).

Australian Education Act 2013

Related Policies and Procedures

Protocols for Engaging Personnel from Outside the Diocese 2017.

DOBCEL Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Student Attendance: Every Day Counts, Department of Education and Training Victoria

Attendance GUIDELINES and PROCEDURES

1. Student Attendance

- Students are expected to attend the school in which they are enrolled, during normal school hours every day of each term, unless:
- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in a school for particular activities
- Schools are required to maintain and monitor a student attendance register for each calendar year.
- Schools may vary student attendance of the gazetted school dates for the purpose of professional learning days and other reasons that require a school closure day provided authorisation from the Catholic Education Office has been granted.

2. Attendance Register

The Principal must ensure that a student attendance register is maintained and records the attendance of all students enrolled for each calendar year in accordance with DOBCEL Attendance Monitoring Procedures.

The register must record student attendance at least twice a day and record any given reason for student absence.

- The Principal will communicate to parents/guardians that an explanation for any child's absence from school must be provided at all times.
- The attendance register must record any unexplained absences to ensure student safety, care and wellbeing and continuity of learning is being monitored.
- Student attendance will be recorded for all VCE students (regardless of age) in accordance with Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Requirements.
- Attendance registers must be available for examination at any time by the Catholic Education Office or other authorised persons.

3. Attendance Rates

- The Principal will ensure that student attendance rates are monitored.
- Attendance improvement strategies will be implemented for any student who has been absent more than five days in a school term, or in situations where school refusal is a factor in attendance. A support group may be established if the principal believes that the individual student and / or family require this support.
- The school will refer to Student Attendance: Every Day Counts (DET) to develop strategies to support students and families where attendance rates are a concern.
- The Principal will contact the Catholic Education Office in accordance with CECV procedures if the school strategies are not assisting in improving attendance of an individual student.
- Attendance rates for each year of schooling and a description of how non-attendance is managed by the school will be reported in the Annual Report to the Community.

4. Variations to Gazetted Dates

- Schools will customise formal exemptions or variations to gazetted dates for the school year, based on substantial and consistent reasons and rationales, in congruence with the School's Improvement initiatives.
- These variations include school closure days, student free days, vacations and public holidays and must be approved by the Governing Authority, following recommendations by the School Advisory Council (or equivalent) and School Leadership Team

5. Student Free Days

- Each year the first and last day of the school year will be pupil free days
- In addition to the two days as listed, schools have the opportunity to plan for an additional four days that are designated pupil free days.
- The Principal will make a request to the Governing Authority, regarding the scheduling of the four student-free days each year to meet local school needs, based on the school's annual school improvement plan, which must include a day with a Religious Education theme *eg Spirituality, Faith Development, Theology, Catholic Identity*.
- The Principal will communicate to the School Council or equivalent and the School Community on the scheduling of student free days. This should be done at the beginning of the school year (if possible) or at least one term prior to the event.
- In exceptional circumstances up to two additional days beyond the normal six student free days, can be negotiated by the School Council, and approved by the Governing Authority, where there is a demonstrated need.
- Student-free days should be set in the previous year so that parents can make suitable arrangements. Where possible, schools are encouraged to co-ordinate activities with other local schools to promote co-operative professional development and planning and maximise the use of available resources.
- Principals must ensure that all professional learning is implemented by appropriately qualified and suitable facilitators. All professional learning must be in harmony with Catholic teaching and values, and fully comply with the *Protocols for Engaging Personnel from Outside the Diocese 2017*.
- Principals must register student-free days with the Catholic Education Office, preferably by the end of the preceding year, and also record events on the Student Activity Locator, to facilitate State emergency management protocols.
- Secondary Schools with Boarders, may plan additional breaks from attendance for boarding students, to facilitate additional opportunities for these students to return home. These dates for boarding students should not exceed five additional days in the school year. These dates must be communicated to families and the Catholic Education Office.
- Approval will not be given for student-free half-days.
- Schools should not plan student free days close after holiday periods unless the student free day is "attached" to the holiday period (*e.g. the first or last day of term 2 or term 3.*)

6. Term Dates

Schools should adhere to the gazetted term dates provided by the Victorian Department of Education except in the case of the last day of the school year falling on a Monday or Tuesday. In this case, the schools may elect to close from the conclusion of business on the preceding Friday. In this case clause 3.1 of this policy will apply to that Friday as it will be considered, in this case, to be “the last gazetted day of the school year”.

7. School Closure Days and Public Holidays

- The Principal will brief the School Council or equivalent to make a recommendation to the Governing Authority, regarding the scheduling of the school closure days each year designated periods, for school vacation, gazetted public holidays, and for a day taken in conjunction with a locally gazetted custom or practice.
- Gazetted Public Holidays in Victoria are:
 - New Year’s Day;
 - Australia Day;
 - Labour Day;
 - Good Friday;
 - Easter Monday;
 - ANZAC Day;
 - Grand Final Public Holiday;
 - Queen’s Birthday;
 - Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

These holidays must be taken on the gazetted day(s).

- Common community custom or practice days include:
 - Cup Day (Melbourne or Local)
 - A locally gazetted and celebrated tradition e.g. Show Day
- School Councils may recommend one day only from these two categories, which must be approved by the Governing Authority.
- A school closure day may also need to be implemented in other exceptional circumstances, usually with an element of emergency associated with them *e.g. Emergency Management Plan on a Code Red day, weather conditions preventing transport, gas leak, fire, flood, major accidents or fatalities*. The Governing Authority would need to approve such a closure day. In the event that the Governing Authority is unable to be contacted, the Principal, after consulting the Educational Consultant and/or Director of Education, is able to approve a School Closure in the event of an emergency.
- It is important for schools to respond pastorally and to develop protocols for situations of bereavement and tragedy that may occur. Such processes should be included in the school’s Emergency Management Policy and Procedures. The spirit of the protocol should be to keep the school open, if possible; however, there may be occasions where the death of a community member may require the pastoral response of closing the school. The Governing Authority should approve such a closure and the School Council Chair and the Director of Catholic Education should be notified.

- Principals must register all School Closure days with the Catholic Education Office, preferably by the end of the preceding year, and also record them on the Student Activity Locator, to facilitate State emergency management protocols.

8. Term Four Dismissals

- The Principal will brief the School Council or equivalent to make a recommendation to the Governing Authority, regarding the scheduling of last day of school, for different Year levels in the school.
- Although all students from Foundation and up to and including Year 9, will attend until the end of the gazetted school year. Other students may be excused from attending school at the end of the year:

Students	May finish school
<i>in Years 7- 10</i>	<i>From the first Friday in December, not more than two weeks before the end of the year.</i>
<i>in Year 11</i>	<i>After completing final exams, but not before the close of the school day on the last Friday in November.</i>
<i>in Year 12</i>	<i>Following their final exam.</i>

Important: Principals may require attendance of these students at any time up to the last gazetted day of the school year.

- Principals must register the final day of school for the various Year levels with the Catholic Education Office, preferably by the end of the preceding year, and also record them on the Student Activity Locator, to facilitate State emergency management protocols.

9. Communication - School Community

- Parents need to be advised well in advance of closure days because of duty of care of school and care arrangements for children.
- Principals must inform parents and the broader school community of the scheduling arrangements for student-free days, school closure days, boarders' holidays, school vacation, public holidays, and start and end dates. Where there is an exception, schools should usually provide a minimum of 1 term's written prior notice of student free day(s) to parents.
- Schools should use a variety of communication strategies to inform their school community of student-free day arrangements. These strategies may include notices in school newsletters, social media, on-line communication apps, school web site, signage outside the school and letters to parents.
- The Catholic Education Office must be notified of all variations of days for students.
- Schools serviced by Department of Transport or Department school bus services must advise their service providers of their student-free day arrangements

Appendices

Appendix 1. School Term Dates 2019-2014

Appendix 2 . Public Holidays and Term Dates 2019 - 2024

Forms

Request Form 1 School request to Director – Student Free Days – Primary or Secondary School

Request Form 2 Notification to the Director – Student Free Days – Primary School

Request Form 3 Notification to the Director – Student Free Days – Secondary School

Appendix One

School Term Dates

Victorian School and kindergarten term dates - 2019 to 2024

2019

Term 1: 29 January (school teachers start) to 5 April *
 Term 2: 23 April to 28 June
 Term 3: 15 July to 20 September
 Term 4: 7 October to 20 December

2020

Term 1: 28 January (school teachers start) to 27 March *
 Term 2: 14 April to 26 June
 Term 3: 13 July to 18 September
 Term 4: 5 October to 18 December

2021

Term 1: 27 January (school teachers start) to 1 April *
 Term 2: 19 April to 25 June
 Term 3: 12 July to 17 September
 Term 4: 4 October to 17 December

2022

Term 1: 28 January (school teachers start) to 8 April *
 Term 2: 26 April to 24 June
 Term 3: 11 July to 16 September
 Term 4: 3 October to 20 December

2023

Term 1: 27 January (school teachers start) to 6 April *
 Term 2: 24 April to 23 June
 Term 3: 10 July to 15 September
 Term 4: 2 October to 20 December

2024

Term 1: 29 January (school teachers start) to 28 March *
 Term 2: 15 April to 28 June
 Term 3: 15 July to 20 September
 Term 4: 7 October to 20 December

Public holidays when schools in Victoria are not open are:

- 1 January (New Year's Day) or substitute day
- 26 January (Australia Day) or substitute day
- second Monday in March (Labour Day)
- Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday
- 25 April (Anzac Day)
- second Monday in June (observance of the sovereign's birthday)
- first Tuesday in November (Melbourne Cup Day) or such other day as is appointed under section 8 of the Public Holidays Act 1993
Note: Non-metropolitan councils may request that another day be appointed in lieu of Melbourne Cup Day and if approved, have it declared in the Victorian Government Gazette.
- 25 December (Christmas Day) or substitute day
- 26 December (Boxing Day) or substitute day.

Appendix Two:

Public Holidays and Term Dates 2019-2024

2019 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Tuesday 29 January	Planning Day Tues 29 Jan	Labour Day- Mon 11 March	Friday 5 April	10
Vacation	Monday 8 April		Good Friday- Fri 19 April Easter Sunday- Sun 21 April Easter Monday – Mon 22 April	Friday 19 April	2
Term Two	Tuesday 23 April		ANZAC Day – Thur 25 April Queen’s Birthday – Mon 10 June	Friday 28 June	10
Vacation	Monday 1 July			Friday 12 July	2
Term Three	Monday 15 July			Friday 20 September	10
Vacation	Monday 23 September			Friday 4 October	2
Term Four	Monday 7 October	Planning Day Fri 20 Dec		Friday 20 December	11
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day- Wed 25 Dec Boxing Day- Thurs 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Wed 1 Jan Aust. Day- Sun 26 Jan (Mon 27 Jan)	Monday 27 January	5

2020 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Tuesday 28 January	Planning Day Tues 28 Jan	Labour Day - Mon 9 March	Friday 27 March	9
Vacation	Monday 30 March		Good Friday - Fri 10 April Easter Sunday - Sun 12 April Easter Monday – Mon 13 April	Friday 10 April	2
Term Two	Tuesday 14 April		ANZAC Day –Sat 25 April Queen’s Birthday –Mon 8 June	Friday 26 June	11
Vacation	Monday 1 July			Friday 12 July	2
Term Three	Monday 13 July			Friday 18 September	10
Vacation	Monday 21 September			Friday 2 October	2
Term Four	Monday 5 October	Planning Day Fri 18 Dec		Friday 18 December	11
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day - Fri 25 Dec Boxing Day - Sat 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Fri 1 Jan Australia Day -Tues 26 Jan	Tuesday 26 January	5

2021 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Wednesday 28 January	Planning Day Wed 28 Jan	Labor Day- Mon 8 March	Thursday 1 April	10
Vacation	Friday 2 April		Good Friday- Fri 2 April Easter Sunday- Sun 4 April Easter Monday – Mon 5 April	Friday 10 April	2
Term Two	Monday 19 April		ANZAC Day –Sun 25 April Queen’s Birthday –Mon 14 June	Friday 25 June	10
Vacation	Monday 28 June			Friday 9 July	2
Term Three	Monday 12 July			Friday 17 September	10
Vacation	Monday 20 September			Friday 1 October	2
Term Four	Monday 4 October	Planning Day Fri 17 Dec		Friday 17 December	11
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day- Sat 25 Dec Boxing Day- Sun 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Sat 1 Jan Australia Day- Wed 26 Jan	Thursday 27 January	5

2022 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Friday 28 January	Planning Day Fri 28 Jan	Labor Day- Mon 14 March	Friday 8 April	11
Vacation	Monday 11 April		Good Friday- Fri 15 April Easter Sunday- Sun 17 April Easter Monday – Mon 18 April	Friday 22 April	2
Term Two	Tuesday 26 April		ANZAC Day –Mon 25 April Queen’s Birthday –Mon 14 June	Friday 24 June	9
Vacation	Monday 26 June			Friday 8 July	2
Term Three	Monday 11 July			Friday 16 September	10
Vacation	Monday 19 September			Friday 30 September	2
Term Four	Monday 3 October	Planning Day Tues 20 Dec		Tuesday 20 December	12
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day- Sun 25 Dec Boxing Day- Mon 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Sun 1 Jan Australia Day- Thurs 26 Jan	Thursday 26 January	5

2023 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Friday 27 January	Planning Day Fri 27 Jan	Labor Day- Mon 12 March	Thursday 6 April	11
Vacation	Friday 7 April		Good Friday- Fri 7 April Easter Sunday- Sun 9 April Easter Monday – Mon 10 April	Friday 22 April	2
Term Two	Monday 24 April		ANZAC Day –Thurs 25 April Queen’s Birthday –Mon 11 June	Friday 23 June	9
Vacation	Monday 26 June			Friday 7 July	2
Term Three	Monday 10 July			Friday 15 September	10
Vacation	Monday 18 September			Friday 29 September	2
Term Four	Monday 2 October	Planning Day Wed 20 Dec		Wednesday 20 December	12
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day- Mon 25 Dec Boxing Day- Tues 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Mon 1 Jan Australia Day- Fri 26 Jan	Thursday 26 January	5

2024 School Year - Victoria

	Start of term	Student Free days	Public Holidays	Finish of term	Number Weeks
Term One	Monday 29 January	Planning Day Mon 29 Jan	Labor Day- Mon 10 March	Thursday 28 March	9
Vacation	Friday 29 March-		Good Friday- Fri 29 March Easter Sunday- Sun 31 March Easter Monday – Mon 1 April	Friday 12 April	2
Term Two	Monday 15 April		ANZAC Day –Thurs 25 April Queen’s Birthday –Mon 11 June	Friday 28 June	11
Vacation	Monday 30 June			Friday 12 July	2
Term Three	Monday 15 July			Friday 20 September	10
Vacation	Monday 23 September			Friday 4 October	2
Term Four	Monday 7 October	Planning Day Fri 20 Dec		Friday 20 December	11
Vacation	Monday 23 December		Christmas Day- Wed 25 Dec Boxing Day- Thurs 26 Dec New Year’s Day – Wed 1 Jan Australia Day- Sun 26 Jan	Thursday 26 January	5

FORM ONE: Request to the Director (Primary or Secondary Schools)

Request to the Director of Catholic Education – Ballarat Diocese: Student Free Days – Primary or Secondary

_____ School requests the following:

Commencement Date for Staff	
Commencement Date for Students	
Final Date for Students	
Final Date for Staff	

Student Free Days

Date	Purpose

Local School Closure Days (if applicable)

Date	Purpose

These events have been planned with the School Leadership team and discussed with the School Council.

Signed _____ Principal. Date _____

Please email this request to your Education Consultant before the start of the School Year.

Please remember to add all student free days to the Student Activity Locator.

FORM TWO. Notification to the Director (Primary Schools)

Notification to the Director of Catholic Education : Student Free Days - Primary

The Governing Authority of _____ Primary School has approved the recommendations of the School Council and the Principal, regarding the student free days and calendar arrangements for the _____ school year.

Commencement Date for Staff	
Commencement Date for Students	
Final Date for Students	
Final Date for Staff	

Student Free Days

Date	Purpose

Local School Closure Days (if applicable)

Date	Purpose

This notification was recommended at the School Council Meeting and approved by the Governing Authority.

Signed _____ Principal. Date _____

Please email this notification to director@ceob.catholic.edu before the start of the School Year.

Please remember to add all student free days to the Student Activity Locator.

FORM THREE: Notification to the Director (Secondary)

Notification to the Director-Student Free Days - Secondary

The Governing Authority of _____ Secondary College has approved the recommendations of the School Advisory Council, College Board or equivalent and the Principal, regarding the student free days and calendar arrangements for the _____ school year.

Commencement Date for Staff	
Commencement Date for Students	
Start of Year Dates for Testing Days (if applicable)	
Final Date for Students (Year Seven to Year Eight)	
Final Date for Students (Year Nine)	
Final Date for Students (Year Ten)	
Final Date for Students (Year Eleven)	
Final Date for Staff	

Other Student Free Days

Date	Purpose

School Boarder Additional Holiday Dates (if applicable)

Date	Purpose

Local School Closure Days (if applicable)

Date	Purpose

This notification was recommended at the School Advisory Council / College Board / equivalent meeting and approved by the Governing Authority.

Signed _____ Principal. Date _____

*Please email this notification to director@ceob.catholic.edu before the start of the School Year.
Please remember to add all student free days to the Student Activity Locator.*