Recommended approaches to absence for parents

Example 1
Sarah is in Grade 5. Her grandmother died over the weekend and the funeral is on Wednesday.

What should happen
On Monday morning, Sarah takes a note, (written by her father), to her teacher. The note explains why Sarah will not be at school on Wednesday. After reading the note, the teacher asks Sarah if she is ok and if she would like to talk to the school counsellor. Sarah says she is ok. The teacher believes the note is authentic and informs the principal who approves the absence. The principal asks the teacher to follow up with Sarah and her family in a week or two to see if they need any additional support.

What shouldn’t happen
Sarah arrives at school on Monday looking a bit pale. She is not able to concentrate and is uncommunicative when her teacher asks her what is wrong. On Wednesday she doesn’t turn up to school and is marked as absent without an excuse.

Example 2
Tyson is a year 8 student. Next week he is going on a family holiday to Japan for two months.

What should happen
A couple of months ago, Tyson’s mum approached the school to discuss the holiday. After the principal approved the absence, Tyson’s teachers provided Tyson’s mother with an absence learning plan to ensure that he doesn’t drop behind while on holiday. Tyson’s family adapts the trip to include time for Tyson to do some school work. When Tyson returns he feels confident about fitting back into his school, knowing he is up to date with his classmates.

What shouldn’t happen
A couple of days before they go away, Tyson’s mum tells his room teacher about the holiday. The teacher immediately informs the principal who requests a meeting to discuss if this is feasible for Tyson. There is no time to prepare an absence learning plan, and therefore the family may be financially penalised as numerous absences for which a reasonable excuse is not provided may lead to a fine.
Example 3
Michelle is in her first term as a prep. Her aunty has just arrived from Italy and is visiting for two weeks. Michelle’s dad has said she can come to the airport to pick her up, even though it’s a school day.

**What should happen**
Michelle’s dad knows taking Michelle out of school is not a good idea, especially when it has taken Michelle a long time to settle in. Instead he picks up her Aunty from the airport by himself. Then they both pick up Michelle at the end of the school day together.

**What shouldn’t happen**
Michelle’s dad decides to take Michelle out of school for the day. Michelle enjoys seeing her aunty, but feels anxious about attending school tomorrow.

The principal requests a meeting with her dad to explain why this is not a reasonable excuse.

---

Example 4
Harrison is a year 11 student. He hasn’t been to the dentist for a long time and his mum makes an appointment for a checkup on Tuesday morning. Harrison asks not to go back to school after the appointment because his friends have been teasing him. His Mum says that’s fine. She knows he’s been having a hard time at school.

**What should happen**
Harrison’s mum makes the appointment time to after school. She tries to talk to him about why he doesn’t like school. She makes an appointment with the principal to talk about her concerns. Together they come up with a plan to make school attendance easier for Harrison.

**What shouldn’t happen**
Harrison’s mum lets him take the rest of the day off. Harrison enjoys getting away from the teasing from his classmates and starts looking for more excuses to take days off and gets behind in his work.

---

Example 5
Ngello has been struggling with learning English since his family arrived in Australia. His teacher reminds the class that their book report is due the next day. Ngello asks his parents if he can stay home just for the day so he can finish the book and write the report.

**What should happen**
Ngello’s parents ask him to do the best job he can, but refuse to let him stay home. They send a note to school with Ngello, letting the teacher know Ngello is struggling and asking for a meeting about his studies. The teacher organises a meeting with Ngello and his parents to work out alternative tasks and extra assistance.

**What shouldn’t happen**
Ngello’s parents allow him to stay home, and even provide him with a note trying to excuse him. Ngello finishes his book report. Unfortunately for him, the teacher is showing a movie version of the book on that day. The whole next week of lessons involve comparing and contrasting the movie and book, and Ngello feels even more isolated and is unable to complete the work.