**Student Free and School Closure Days**

Please find attached the notification template for school student free and school closure days (Word document). We ask that all DOBCEL schools please complete the template for 2023 and return to Sarah Johnson by 18th November.

Relevant sections of ***The School Year***policy are provided here for your reference and convenience. This information is intended to support your understanding of the definitions and procedures relating to the allocation of Student Free Days.

When planning your school calendar, please keep in mind formation opportunities in Catholic identity for your staff.

**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.

**Student Free Days Guidelines and Procedures:**

* 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.)

**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.

**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.

**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.

# FORM ONE

# Request for Student Free Days and Notification of School Closure Days

# (DOBCEL Schools)

## Request to the Executive Director of Catholic Education Ballarat

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School requests the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **First day of school year** | **Friday 27th January** |
| **Commencement Date for Staff** |  |
| **Commencement Date for Students** |  |
| **Last day of school year** | **Wednesday 20th December** |
| **Final Date for Students** |  |
| **Final Date for Staff** |  |

**Student Free Days**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date** | **Purpose** |
| **1** |  |  |
| **2** |  |  |
| **3** |  |  |
| **4** |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |
| **Other** |  |  |

**Local School Closure Days:** *(if applicable)*

*NB – Your local Council will determine one local public holiday during the year. Please check with your Council Office if unsure of the gazetted day.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Purpose** |
|  |  |

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

Signed (Principal) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Please email this request to* [*sjohnson@dobcel.catholic.edu.au*](mailto:sjohnson@dobcel.catholic.edu.au) *Please remember to add all student free days to the Student Activity Locator.*

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(Office Use Only)   
Authorised by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_