

MELBOURNE INFANT SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed and approved at: Full Governors Meeting (February 2023)

Teaching & Learning Committee from 2024 onwards

Reviewed on: February 2023 by FGM

Due for renewal: Autumn 2023-24

Introduction and Aim of the Policy

At Melbourne Infant School we place great importance on high attendance for pupils. We believe that an effective attendance policy will contribute to the general welfare of the children and help them to meet the challenging targets for achievement set by the school.

Although the head teacher has overall responsibility for attendance issues, all members of the school community will work together to promote excellent attendance. Attendance is everyone's responsibility.

Aim of the Attendance Policy

Melbourne Infant School will promote positive behaviour and attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials. We will work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance and will involve representatives of other agencies that work with the school such as the School Nurse, Early Help support or representatives of the local Multi-Agency Team where required in order to ensure all children can benefit from consistently good punctuality and attendance. We will use the Early Help Assessment process to support this. We will be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality and will react swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age attend school regularly.

Research has shown that pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.

The overall attendance figure for 2021 - 2022 was 94%. In line with Derbyshire LA's target we aim to achieve an attendance figure of 97% for 2022 - 2023.

Attendance and the School Day

School starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.20pm. Parents are requested to inform the school office about any absence on the first morning by 8.55am. The message is recorded and transmitted to the relevant teacher/s.

It is expected that if a child is absent from school the parents/ carers will inform the school office by 8.55am. The following actions will be taken when a child is absent and the school have not been informed about the absence:

Day 1 of absence - the office staff will telephone the parent/ carer to enquire about the reason for absence.

Day 2 of absence (If there has been no response on day 1) - the office staff will telephone the parent/ carer again and also all emergency contacts.

Day 3 of absence (if there is still no response after day 2) - a member of the school leadership team will visit the home address. If no contact is made, the appropriate authorities will be called as this would be considered as a serious safeguarding risk.

Where a child is considered vulnerable and/or where there is a serious safeguarding concern, emergency contacts and/or appropriate authorities may be called from the first day of absence. Attendance registers are marked according to national and local guidelines each morning and afternoon at the start of the session by teaching staff via RM Integris.

Monitoring attendance

The School Business Assistant/Business Manager and the head teacher monitor absence throughout the term, looking for regular patterns of lateness, absence, unauthorised absence and long-term absence. Particular attention is paid to vulnerable groups of children to ensure attendance is not falling below that of other children.

If the Headteacher is concerned about a child's attendance parents may be contacted.

Where attendance falls below 90% parents/carers will be informed via a letter and ask to work with the school to improve the child's attendance. If attendance does not improve, the LA parental responsibility letter will be sent to inform the parent/carer that legal action may be taken. The school will then continue to follow the LA guidance (see flowchart – Appendix A).

We remind parents/carers of the importance of good attendance through:

- Our website and school newsletters;
- Attendance figures and reports given to parents/carers in annual reports;
- Through induction sessions for all new parents/carers;
- Through the investigation of any particular attendance cases that give the school cause for concern and through prompt investigation of any issues that may be affecting a child's well-being and attendance.

Responsibilities

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers have a statutory duty to ensure regular attendance and punctuality and should:

- Ensure school has up to date contact details.
- Encourage good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including enough sleep.
- Inform school by 8.55am on the first day of absence and give the reason for absence.
- Seek advice from medical professionals if you are not sure how long to keep your child off school with an illness – there are certain illnesses under Health Protection guidance for which children are required to remain off school (please speak to the School Office if you require clarification on a particular illness)
- Try to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day.
- Talk to your child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with school work or friendship problems.
- Do not book holidays in term time. If intending to request a Leave of Absence in term time, fill in a Leave of Absence request form (Appendix B) before making arrangements and at least two weeks in advance of the requested dates.
- Keep school informed of any health, social or emotional issues that may affect well-being and attendance.

The Head Teacher

- Has overall responsibility for attendance issues
- Ensures that electronic system is updated
- Monitors attendance
- Keeps teachers, parents and governors informed about attendance issues
- Report anonymised attendance trends and information about groups of children's attendance to governors e.g. disadvantaged, SEND, persistence absents.

Class Teacher

- Responsible for completing the register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions to meet legal requirements and comply with fire regulations. Children should be entered as present, absent or late. Absences should be marked as authorised or unauthorised. (see definitions below) If it is unclear whether an absence should be authorised, the head teacher should make the decision.
- Monitor attendance on a day-to-day basis and inform head teacher of any concerns.

School Business Officer/ Business Assistant

- Enters data into MIS system (RM Integrus)
- Monitors absence, liaising with the head teacher
- Follows up unexplained absences on first day and respective days if necessary
- Records late arrivals after register has closed (after 9.05 am). Any child arriving between 8.55am and 9.05am will be marked as late with an L code. Children who arrive after 9.05am will be marked with a U code. This is classed as an unauthorised absence.

Authorised Absences

The following absences will typically be classed as authorised absences:

- Illnesses
- Medical or dental appointments *
- Domestic circumstances that could include death of a close relative, house fire or other traumatic event
- Leave of Absence in term time – only exceptional circumstances **

* Medical appointments: if (by necessity) made in school time. If you wish to take your child out of school during school hours, arrangements must be made in advance. Please send a copy of the appointment letter and information including time for collection and who will be collecting them. If your child is arriving at school late or returning from an appointment, please take them to the school office to ensure they are registered correctly. For afternoon appointments, we would request that children are collected either before or after lunch, not during.

** Leave of Absence: more information on the leave of absence process can be found below. We request that leave of absence forms are submitted for children who attend Melbourne Infant School regardless of whether they are above or below the compulsory school age.

Unauthorised Absences

The following absences will typically be classed as unauthorised absences:

- Truancy – where the child is away from school without permission from an authorised person. A parent is not an authorised person and the school may refuse to authorise absences. (For example, shopping expeditions, birthday treats, unauthorised Leave of Absences)
- The register closes at 9.05am. Any child arriving after this time will receive an unauthorised absence (U code).

Holidays and Leave of Absence requests

The Department for Education expects schools and local authorities to promote good attendance and reduce absences, including persistent absence. This is because we know that missing out on lessons leaves children/young people vulnerable to falling behind. Children/young people with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools.

The Government made amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force on **1st September 2013**. These state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence for holidays during the term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; in these cases it is the Headteacher who determines the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

As a consequence of these changes approval will not be given to requests for leave of absence for reasons that are not considered to be special or exceptional such as:

- Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
- Holidays booked by other relatives (ie grandparents)
- Days overlapping with beginning or end of term

Parents needing leave of absence for **exceptional circumstances*** should complete a Leave of Absence form at least two weeks before the anticipated start date. The reason for the request should be given in detail. Applications should be made before the leave is arranged as absences will not be granted retrospectively.

During Year 2 SATs and Year 1 Phonic Screening assessments no leave shall be authorised unless there are compassionate circumstances.

This is Government policy and parents who take their children on holiday without permission will incur unauthorised absences for their child. These remain on the child's record and will be monitored for further action by the Education Welfare Service. Parents could be issued with a fixed penalty notice and/or court action.

*Examples of **exceptional circumstances** as agreed by Melbourne Infant and Junior School's governors.

- Accredited Exam – ballet/music (extra curricular)

- Gifted & Talented opportunity (part in the pantomime, Wimbledon ball person etc)
- Bereavement
- Serious family crisis
- Holiday due to factory shut down (Proof shown to the school to verify from employer)
- Wedding – close family relative (parent, grandparent, sibling, 1st aunty/uncle)
- Religious Day
- Other exceptional circumstances to be considered on an individual basis

Penalty notices

Penalty notices can be issued by the local authority Education Welfare Service to each parent liable for the unauthorised attendance and for each child of compulsory school age.

Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school and may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

Parents who remove their child from the school for the purpose of a family holiday without seeking prior approval will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service and will be issued with a penalty notice.

The penalty is £60 (per child and per parent) if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 (per child and per parent) if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. For example, two parents with three children would be fined a total of £720, reduced to £360 if paid within 21 days).

The payment must be paid direct to the local authority. The parents may be prosecuted by the local authority if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice.

Leaving Melbourne Infant School (in-year exits)

When a child leaves Melbourne Infants before they transfer to Junior School (know as an in-year exit), parents/carers must give as much notice as possible to school and complete an Exit Form (available from the school office). Where the child transfers to another school, contact will be made with the new educational provider on their first day; and the child will be taken off roll. If the child does not start at the new school, Melbourne Infants will inform the local authorities as necessary and continue to make contact with the family/ local authority until the child is enrolled. If a child is going to be home educated or is leaving the country, the local authorities will be informed as appropriate.

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school

Where a child has a medical condition at school, Melbourne Infant School follows with the guidance provided by Derbyshire County Council and the Department for Education based on their "Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school" policy. This also includes guidance on what happens when a child cannot attend school due to medical needs.

This can be found here:

<https://www.localoffer.derbyshire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/supporting-children-with-medical-needs/supporting-pupils-with-medical-conditions.aspx>

Notes and associated policies

Safeguarding: Any attendance issues which may be related to safeguarding and child protection issues will be followed up in accordance with the Child Protection Policy

Related Policies

Child Protection

S.E.N.

Behaviour, Anti-bullying, Equal Opportunities & Inclusion

Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school

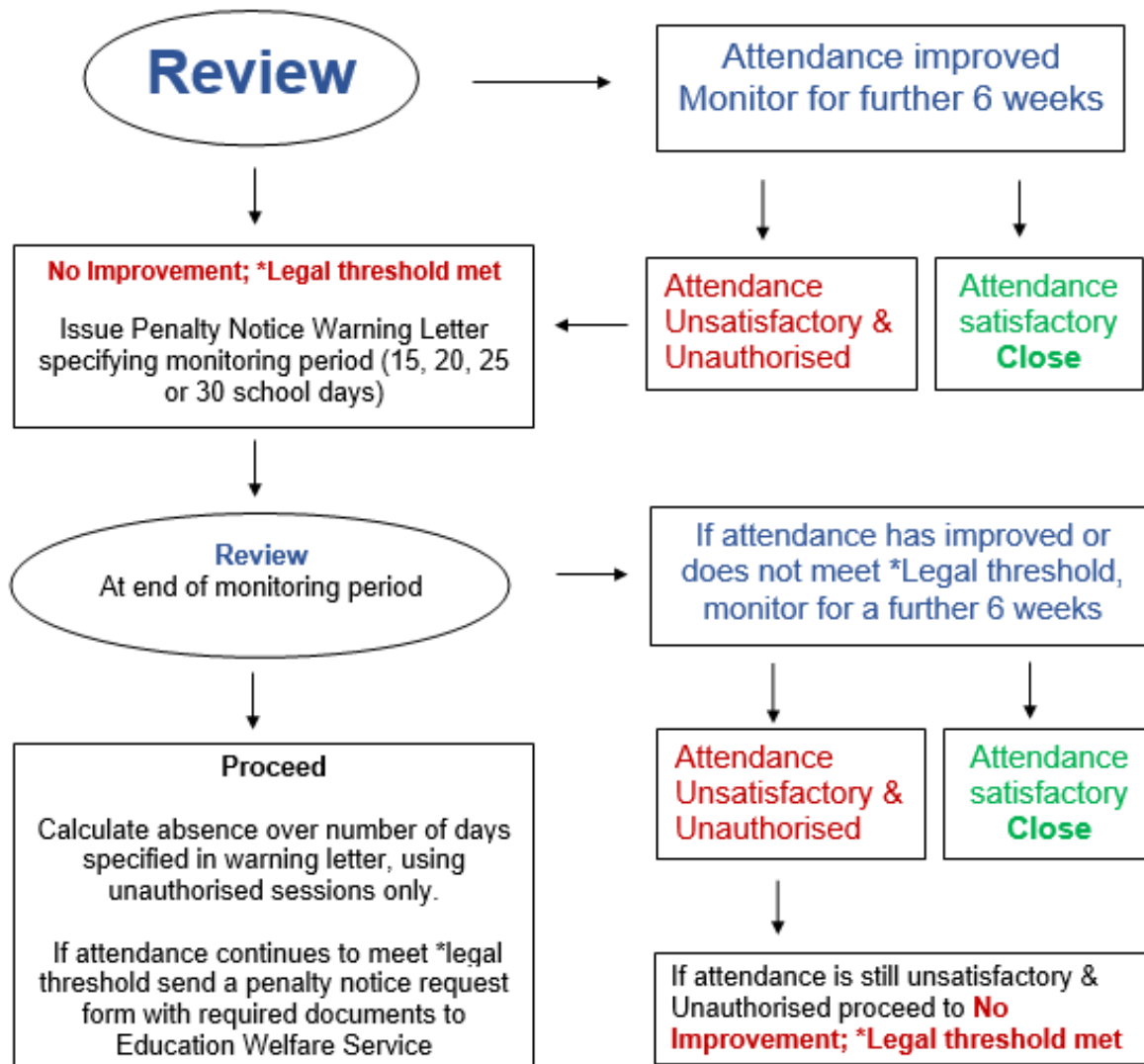
APPENDIX A

PENALTY NOTICE WORKFLOW

To be used in conjunction with the guidance notes for requesting the issue of a penalty notice.

Emerging Attendance Concern

- Identify a key worker where possible
- Undertake and record preventative work including Early Help Assessment, home visits, support meetings, reasonable adjustments for evidentiary purposes.
- Ensure parent is informed of their parental responsibility via Parental Responsibility Letter



APPENDIX B

MELBOURNE INFANT SCHOOL

Headteacher: Mrs C Gibbs B.Ed, (Hons)



LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

PLEASE NOTE - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 state that Headteacher's should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Name of Child(ren)	Year Group

Childs Address

Name of Applicant(s) and Address (if different)

I / We wish to apply for our child(ren) to be absent from school for EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES on the following dates.

From:

To:

Total number of days our child(ren) will be absent from school:

Please supply in as much detail as possible the reason for your request and why you feel it is exceptional circumstances. Please include the names of the adult(s) who will be with your child(ren) during their absence from school.. Continue over the page if necessary.

Signed (both parents if applicable):

Date:

Please do not make leave arrangements before your request has been considered and the outcome confirmed to you by school.

