

MELBOURNE INFANT SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY Effective from September 2024

Reviewed and approved at: Teaching & Learning Committee (Summer 2024)

Reviewed in: July 2024

Due for renewal: Autumn 2025-26

Introduction and Aim of the Policy

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

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

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- promote positive behaviour and attendance through our use of curriculum and learning materials
- work with parents to resolve problems which may affect a child's attendance
- be proactive in encouraging attendance for all pupils through ensuring parents and pupils receive information on the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- React swiftly to intervene to improve attendance of individual children should this become a concern.

The overall average attendance figure for 2023 - 2024 was 96.45%. In line with Derbyshire LA's target, our school aims to achieve an attendance figure of 97%.

Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

Registration

School starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.20pm.

The school doors open at 8.45am and children are expected to be in school by 8.55am. This gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. All attendance records are documented using RM Integris. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

Lateness

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning.

Any pupil who comes into school after 8.55am will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9.05am will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Absences

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.

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by telephone.

The following procedure will be followed:

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.

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 / email / text message and information including time for collection and who will be collecting them to the school office. 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 request that children are collected either before or after lunch, not during.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

Monitoring Attendance

Teachers, support staff 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 there are concerns about a child's attendance their parent/carer may be contacted.

Reminders of good attendance

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.

Addressing Absence Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

School 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.

If a parent/carer requires support with their child's attendance they should contact their class teacher or the Headteacher.

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Parents/Carers

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

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring that school has up to date contact details.
- Encouraging good routines at home which promote a healthy lifestyle including sleep.
- Informing school by 8.55am on the first day of absence and give the reason for absence.
- Seeking advice from medical professionals if unsure as to 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)
- Trying to make medical, dental or other appointments outside the school day.
- Talking to children about school and letting the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with school work or friendship problems.
- Keeping school informed of any health, social or emotional issues that may affect well-being and attendance.
- If intending to request a Leave of Absence in term time, completing a Leave of Absence request form (Appendix A) before making arrangements and at least two weeks in advance of the requested dates.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher has responsibility for:

- Overall responsibility for attendance issues for the school
- Monitoring of attendance
- Keeping teachers, parents and governors informed about attendance issues
- Reporting anonymised attendance trends and information about groups of children's attendance to governors e.g. disadvantaged, SEND, persistence absents.

Class Teacher

The Class Teacher has responsibility for:

- Completing the register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions to meet legal requirements and comply with fire regulations.
- Monitoring attendance on a day-to-day basis and inform head teacher of any concerns.

Administration staff

- Administration staff have responsibility for:
- Entering data into MIS system (RM Integris)
- Monitoring lateness and absence, liaising with the head teacher
- Following up unexplained absences on first day and respective days if necessary
- Recording late arrivals after register has closed (after 9.05 am).

Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on a Leave of Absence form available from the school office and handed in at minimum of 2 school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. 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. Leave of absence forms must be submitted for children who attend Melbourne Infant School regardless of whether they are above or below the compulsory school age. You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.

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

*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
- Wedding – close family relative (parent, grandparent, sibling, 1st aunty/uncle)
- Religious Day
- Other exceptional circumstances to be considered on an individual basis

When considering a request for a leave of absence on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher will take into account a number of factors; including but not limited to the child's overall attendance % for the appropriate period, proximity to key school events such as statutory assessments, and the nature of the exceptional circumstance. Parents/carers may be asked to submit supplementation information in relation to their request where deemed appropriate by the Headteacher.

During statutory assessments no leave of absences shall be authorised.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days / 10 sessions or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

National framework for penalty notices

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 5 days / 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.

Leaving Melbourne Infant School (in-year exits)

When a child leaves Melbourne Infants before they transfer to Junior School (known 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

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.