



Attendance Policy

May 2026

Introduction

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.

Melbourne Junior 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, Educational Psychology or representatives of the Local Authority, 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.

The school is mindful of mental health issues and anxiety which may impact upon attendance causing Emotional Based School Avoidance. We will work supportively and proactively with parents and other agencies to support children and families experiencing EBSA.

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 and punctually.

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.

Melbourne Junior School aims for all children to have an attendance of 95% or above.

Aims and Objectives

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:

- ensure that all children have good attendance.
- children experiencing EBSA are supported to attend school.
- staff and parents are clear about the systems the school will use to support good attendance.

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.

Procedures

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

The School Business Assistant/Business Officer and the Headteacher monitor absence throughout the term, on a rolling 10-week basis, looking for regular patterns of lateness, absence, unauthorised absence and long-term absence. 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.

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 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.
- Herringbone reports are provided for parents twice a year for those with less than 95% attendance.

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 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 unsure how long to keep a 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 their child about school and let the school know if your child is worried about any issues such as difficulties with schoolwork 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 A) 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, identifying early children who are vulnerable to poor attendance.
- Monitors attendance through Arbor and DFE information.
- Develops attendance plans with relevant staff to support poor 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 absentees.

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.
- Work supportively with children and families who may be experiencing difficulties.

School Business Officer/ Business Assistant

- Enters data into MIS system (Arbor)
- Monitors absence, liaising with the head teacher
- Follows up unexplained absences sympathetically on first day and respective days if necessary.
- Records late arrivals after registers have 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.

Registration

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 Arbor. 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 between 8.55am and 9.05am 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).

School process for managing persistent lates

Children who are persistently late will have an Individual Attendance Plan.

Absences

First Day Contact

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 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.

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 available from the school office and the website. This should be handed in at least two school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. Parents must have received written authorisation before a child can be absent from school.

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days 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).

When considering a request for a leave of absence on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher will consider 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.

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

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

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.

Melbourne Junior School model for supporting school attendance and ongoing support:

General

- Attendance will be monitored on a rolling 10-week cycle.
- Early monitoring in September and agreed approaches- refer to attendance from this year to support identification of vulnerability.

Severe Absence- less than 50%

- Individual plan
- SEND support
- Alternative agencies- Children First, TMP.
- Contact with family at least every two weeks.

Persistent Absence

- Every child below 90% attendance will have an individual attendance plan.
- Possibility of assigning a vulnerability rating out of 10 to triage low attenders and justify which ones are going on an IAP Attendance (below 90% = 1 point, below 85%=2 points, below 80%= 3 points).
- Safeguarding (Early Help = 1 point, CiN = 2 points, CP = 3 points).
- SEND (send register = 1 point, funded = 2 points, EHCP = 3 points).
- Looked after = 1 point.
- Context around why attendance is low in our opinion.
- Then we capture pupil and family voice to identify barriers.
- Log all events like phone call and home visits.
- Attendance will be tracked monthly and discussed with relevant staff.
- A named member of staff will be on each child Individual Attendance Plan to support the child and family.

Early Intervention

Where a child's attendance falls below 94%, they may be vulnerable to going into persistent absence, especially if this is early in the school year.

- Letters
- Phone calls
- Meetings with parents and child to identify barriers.

Strategies to support families may include:

- Letters
- Phone calls
- Meetings with parents and child to identify barriers.
- Individual attendance plan
- 1-1 support
- Use of Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) approaches
- Use of social care if already involved.
- Counselling
- SEND support

National framework for penalty notices

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 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 a 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.

Appendix A

MELBOURNE JUNIOR SCHOOL 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.....
..... Year Group.....
..... 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.

DESTINATION:

Continue over the page if necessary

Signed (both parents if applicable) Date:.....
.....
.....

IF THE REQUEST IS FOR A FAMILY HOLIDAY, PLEASE SUBMIT IT BEFORE THE HOLIDAY IS BOOKED.