

Attendance Policy

Prepared using:

- School attendance : guidance for schools, August 2022
- DFE School Attendance, May 2022
- Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs, May 2013
- <https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>
- Keeping children safe in education, September 2022

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. The Iona School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's attendance, the College of Teachers at our school work to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens. The Trustees have set an excellent target of 96% attendance for our school each year.

Why is Attendance and Punctuality Important in a Steiner Waldorf School?

Steiner teachers practice a rhythmic approach to learning, building new material in layers over several days. In this way, you could think of our 'lessons' as really being 'blocks of learning' which extend over a number of days. During this period, recall and reflection are used to deepen and consolidate new ideas. Such an approach relies heavily on a regular and consistent daily presence in class. A lesson missed is a 'layer' lost and our best efforts are thwarted if your child is not present every day to benefit from the education we offer.

It is worth noting that even 90% attendance over a child's time in primary school equates to missing more than an entire year of statutory education. In Maths for example, missed lessons typically result in children accumulating 'gaps' in their understanding of key underpinning concepts. This has an on-going cumulative impact which can increasingly hinder confidence and future progress in the subject.

Establishing habits of good attendance and punctuality are key to helping our children and young people thrive and succeed, both at school and beyond. These good habits will serve them well throughout life.

Aims and Objectives

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

Through this policy and our procedures we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic medical health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

- Parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to statutory school aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age (5 years old and above).
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents and staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Monitor attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties through consistent procedures.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting and maintaining good attendance through good communication.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Support pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Improved attendance / punctuality is celebrated and identified by either a verbal comment, note, e-mail or letter home depending on improvement.

Definitions

Authorised Absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate 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 school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences reported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence & Lateness

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- If a child arrives between 8.50am and 9.10am this is recorded as (L) late.
- If a child arrives later than 9.10am, the register is closed. This is recorded as (U) "unauthorised absence" for that session (morning).

Procedures

Addressing Attendance Concerns

It is important for children to establish excellent attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Teachers 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.

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

- Registers will be taken in a timely fashion and all pupils will have their attendance analysed and the results will be shared with the class teachers each week and the Trustee's each term.

- Our Receptionist creates an attendance review and sends to teachers weekly.
- The class teachers will monitor the weekly review. If they note that attendance has dropped below 85% over the course of a ½ term they will call the parents to arrange a formal meeting for this and offer help and strategies to raise attendance.
- When it has dropped below 90% (highlighted in yellow) teachers must speak with parents.
- Pupils that are not showing improvement or having continued attendance of less than 85% over the course of a term this is called persistent absence, parents will be asked to have a meeting with the class teacher to discuss this. We will see if we can offer any help to ensure the child reaches their full attendance and set an attendance goal.
- If pupils' attendance does not improve, decreases and you fail to meet the attendance goal, a member of the Management or Safeguarding team will meet with parents, they may also discuss the case with external agencies, such as : MASH and the educational welfare officer so we can help and support you and your child further.
- Every term a late letter is sent to parents via Reception if lates are recorded as more than 5.

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.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class via attendance review document concentrating on highlighted children 90% and below
- Providing background information to support referrals, if necessary
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues below 85% attendance
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Education Manager – Emma Stacey

The Education Manager is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance and strategic approach
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised, involve outside agencies, if necessary
- Ensuring the Trustees have an attendance impact review for each ½ term and discuss at Education Manager meetings

Administration Staff

Administrative staff are responsible for:

- Collating registration and attendance information onto the school electronic system daily
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence onto registers making teachers aware of information
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made each day by 10.00am
- Recording details of children who arrive late
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the class teacher and Education Manager weekly via the attendance review document
- At the end of each week an e-mail is sent home asking for a reason for any unauthorised absences not known
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

- Give out leave of absence request letters and collect in, handing to Management team for authorisation
- Informing Management via the attendance review document of ongoing concerns with notes on individual children
- Contacting parents every three days if extended sickness absence

Parents

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Contacting the school reception on the morning of the first day of absence, providing the detail for the absence. This should be done between 8.30 and 10.00am. Detail will be required of reason.
- Book medical or dental appointments after school or early in school day.
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, these are not automatically authorised. A request form must be filled in ahead of time (at least 2 working days).
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with. Non-attendance is unacceptable.
- During an extended absence, parents are asked to keep the school informed every 3 days.

Registration

- All the school doors open at 8.30am and school starts at 8.50am. This gives sufficient time for all pupils to come into their classroom on time.
- Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session (attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present) these registers are then returned to Reception.
- Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

- After 8.50am please bring your child to Reception. You will need to complete and sign the late folder and your child will be marked as late in the attendance record, this will be seen as unauthorised absence.
- Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and settling in time. If your child is of statutory school age and late for more than 5 mornings in any term you will receive a lateness letter.
- Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. If this persists we may have to involve the Local Authority.

Absences

- Parents/carers should contact the school every day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.
- All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Management have the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.
- Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send an e-mail requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this e-mail is not replied to by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (attendance code O).
- If a child has a health concern that means they legitimately miss periods of school, we will need to see proof of this from your GP/hospital. We will contact the LA to inform them if we deem this necessary.

First Day Contact

- Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal communication from the parent by 9.00am on the day of the absence, then we initiate a first day contact process.
- Reception staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 10.00am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. If the staff cannot contact the parent, we may assume the child is missing and initiate a 'missing child protocol' or at the very least contact children and families direct or MASH to report a safeguarding concern.

Illness

- When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.
- The school may, after a period of illness lasting 10 days (either in a block or amalgamated) contact the community public health nursing service (school nursing services) to discuss this with them.

Parental Request for Leave of Absence from School (including holiday or emergency)

As an independent school, we cannot allow holiday absence in term time. Leave of absence may only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

If you want to request a leave of absence, parents must apply to the school in writing at least 4 weeks before the event or in an emergency as soon as possible. You will be asked to complete a form that must be signed by both parents with parental responsibility. The form must have the reasons that you wish to take your child out of school and what benefit it will have on the child. We will then assess this within the Management team and inform you of our decision, in writing if declined or verbally if accepted within 2 weeks of your application.

Authorised Absences / Leave of Absence

The following are considered acceptable reasons for authorised absence:

- Illness of a child
- Close family bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Urgent medical emergencies

N.B. Parents should give prior notice of any emergency medical appointments that cannot be made outside of school hours. If the child is in school he/she must be collected from Reception. The child must be collected by a parent or other authorised adult. Children should only be absent for their appointment time and travel to and from.

Unauthorised Absence

If you choose to take your child away from school without prior approval, the school, will in the first instance contact you in writing to establish the reason for absence. If it is then determined this is unauthorised, it will be explained that any further absences will be classed as unauthorised absence, which, after ten days in any ten week period will be passed onto the Local

Authority. If they are not satisfied that absence is justified, they may take legal proceedings against you, in the form of a penalty notice.

The following are not considered acceptable reasons for absence and will be recorded as unauthorised absence:

- Family holidays
- Minding the house
- Looking after brothers and sisters
- Music appointments or recreational / sporting appointment
- Hairdressing appointments
- Treatment of lice
- Birthday celebrations
- Attending parental appointments
- Sleeping in (in such cases the child should attend school, however late)
- Visiting relatives

This is not an exhaustive list.

Children Missing from Education

A child missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. These 'missing' children can be vulnerable; it is essential that all services work together to identify, locate and re-engage these children back as quickly as possible. It is important to establish the reasons for the child being missing at the earliest possible stage.

If staff have a concern about a child missing from education they will;

- contact the parents/carers to ascertain facts and see if they were aware of the situation
- collate all the dates from the register
- speak to the DSL, with these dates and concerns, in writing

The DSL must then;

- contact the Education Welfare Service and the appropriate children safeguarding board
- inform them of the full details and work with them until the child is found

If a child fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, the local authority should be informed.

Attendance expectations during the pandemic

It is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance has therefore been mandatory from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure their child's attendance regularly at school (where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age)
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

If school is closed then attendance will be monitored following the Blended Learning Strategy. School engagement continues to be a daily priority.

Issue Date


This policy takes effect from December 2022.

Review Date

This policy will be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

Endorsement

Full endorsement to this policy is given by:

Name:	Mr Martin Taylor
Position:	Trustee
Signed:	
Date:	1 st December 2022

Related Policies

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Parents' Handbook
- Safeguarding Policy