

Student Attendance Policy

Southern Montessori Education Centre Inc.

Version	Approved By	Date	Maintained By	Next Review
3	Board of Governors	May 2025	Management	May 2028

Purpose

This policy describes Southern Montessori Education Centre's (The Centre) practices for monitoring and managing student attendance. The purpose of this policy is to assist students to receive the maximum benefit from education through regular attendance, and ensure that the Centre is fulfilling its legal obligations regarding student attendance.

Background

Parents and schools work in partnership to provide learning opportunities to build a solid foundation for the future. Regular school attendance is a shared responsibility between parents, students, and the school. Schools are required to ensure that enrolled students are attending school or participating in an approved learning program. Schools are also required to maintain appropriate attendance registers.

Policy Objectives

The Centre's Student Attendance Policy aims to support the following outcomes:

- Improvement in student attendance and participation as shown in the data collected by the school;
- Improvement in learning outcomes as measured by school assessment processes;
- Increased understanding of the importance of regular attendance by the community of educators, learners, and families of the Centre;
- Annual reporting to the Centre's community and educational authorities on attendance;
- Ongoing analysis of attendance data, which informs continuous school improvement; and
- Development, implementation, and monitoring of procedures based on the analysis of data to improve attendance.

Guiding Principles

The following principles will guide the Centre's Student Attendance Policy:

- Continuity of relationships and learning is underpinned by consistent attendance;
- Attendance is a shared responsibility between the staff, parents, students, and members of the wider community;
- Participation in school plays an important role in fostering the development of personal, social and academic skills.

Student Attendance Legislated Obligations

Children of compulsory school age (six years and up to the age of 16 years) residing in South Australia are required to be in full-time attendance at a government or registered non-government school unless an exemption has been granted.

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In meeting its legislated obligations, the Centre is required to maintain attendance rolls and enrolment registers and may be required to produce these upon request by the Education Standards Board, as part of the registration process, and to State and Australian governments to ensure accountability for the receipt of government funding.

The Centre is also required to publish attendance data as part of the School Performance Information and participate in attendance reporting processes including the Australian Government student attendance data collection (STATS) and the State Government requirement to report unauthorised absences of 10 or more days in a term on a termly basis.

Responding to, Reporting and Monitoring Absences

The Centre has an obligation to follow up the extended absence from school of students under the age of compulsion and has developed a number of targeted and specific actions it will take in response to student absences:

- Unexplained absences are followed up in an appropriate manner with the student and/or their parent. The Centre has an obligation to follow up the extended absence from school of students under the compulsion age. In certain circumstances, the Centre may need to seek the assistance of external agencies, such as the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) or the Department for Education’s Social Work Truancy Service in responding to an extended absence;
- A medical certificate may be requested for any absence for medical reasons in excess of three days;
- The Centre will notify the parent in an appropriate manner where a student has a poor record of school or class attendance;
- The attendance issue and any action taken is recorded, as appropriate, in the student file when unsatisfactory class or school attendance is identified;
- The Centre will maintain ongoing communication with parents regarding curriculum activities and events when a student is unable to attend school for an extended period due to injury or illness. The school may provide a modified school program to assist with recovery, where appropriate;
- An exemption application must be submitted when parents wish to remove their child from class during term time for absences longer than five days, for the purposes of leisure, family travel or holiday or non-school related activities. Exemptions are not automatically granted and are dependent on a decision by the Principal; and
- In cases of ongoing student absenteeism, the Centre will implement strategies aimed at restoring a student’s attendance to a satisfactory level in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy, such as an attendance improvement plan which outlines agreed actions and the persons responsible.

Exemptions

If a parent wishes to take their child out of school temporarily, they may be required to apply for an exemption from school attendance. An application for exemption form is available from the office (Form A).

Strategies for Monitoring and Managing Attendance

The Centre will implement the following strategies to monitor and manage student attendance:

- Follow up unexplained absences in an appropriate manner;
- Notify the parent in an appropriate manner where a student has a poor record of school attendance;
- Record the attendance issue and any action taken, as appropriate, in the student file when unsatisfactory attendance is identified;
- Maintain ongoing communication with parents regarding curriculum activities and events when a student is unable to attend school for an extended period due to injury or illness;

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- Parents must apply for permission from the Centre to remove their child from class during term time for the purpose of leisure or non-school related activities. A formal exemption application should be submitted when absences longer than five days are planned for reasons of family travel/ holiday. The Principal has the delegated authority under the *Education and Children’s Services Act 2019 (SA)* to approve an exemption for reasons of family travel/ holiday for a period of up to 12 months;
- The Principal can approve part-time attendance based on disability, behaviour, health, or medical reasons for up to one month. For a period greater than one month, a conditional exemption must be applied for and approved by the AISSA Chief Executive. The student must be placed on an Attendance Plan to improve attendance, outlining agreed actions and the persons responsible, with the intention of restoring the student’s attendance to a satisfactory level.

Attendance Improvement Planning

The Centre may implement the following strategies in relation to the attendance improvement planning process:

- Develop an Attendance Improvement Plan which identifies the specific barriers prohibiting the student from attending school and strategies to address those issues;
- Develop a Graduated Increase Attendance Plan which details the student’s timetable and documents the agreed attendance arrangements; and
- Develop a Return to School Rubric which focuses on areas of concern that are impacting on the student’s attendance and can be tailored to their needs.

Making a mandatory notification for non-attendance

The Centre is committed to ensuring that the advice and steps outlined in the South Australian Department for Child Protection Mandatory Reporting Guide will be followed when there are suspicions that a child or young person has been harmed, or is at risk of harm and:

- The student is persistently absent from or not enrolled in school, with no satisfactory explanation;
- Interventions have been attempted with student and family; and
- The non-attendance has continued despite the intervention attempts.

Requesting Student Support Services – Social Work Truancy Support

In some instances, The Centre may access the Department for Education’s Student Support Services which offers a truancy social work service.

Requesting an SA Police (SAPOL) wellbeing check

The Centre may request SA Police (SAPOL) involvement for a wellbeing check or address check only when all other possible courses of action have been taken.

Responsibilities

All members of the Centre community, including the Principal, school staff, students, and parents, each have their own obligations relating to student attendance. This section of the policy will outline the responsibility of these members of the school community and the management of associated issues.

Principal

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The Principal is responsible for ensuring that processes are in place to:

- Promote the importance of attendance;
- Maintain attendance records as per the school’s legislated obligations;
- Document any intervention;
- Develop and implement attendance improvement plans;
- Monitor and analyse attendance data and report to the community through the Centre’s appropriate reporting mechanisms;
- Follow up on non-attendance, including parent notifications;
- Ensure intervention between the student and the Centre after a period of 10 days unexplained accumulated absence or sooner if the student has a poor attendance record;
- Make referral to, and seek support from, agencies and support services when a student’s pattern of attendance becomes irregular;
- Ensure that the analysis of data is used effectively to inform action at the Centre;
- Ensure that notifications about suspicions of neglect and/or abuse are made;
- Meet all Australian Government and State Government legislative compliance and the Centre’s duty of care obligations.

Centre Staff

Staff of the Centre have a responsibility to support the agreed Student Attendance Policy of the Centre and will:

- Provide a safe, responsive and caring learning environment that supports student agency and voice;
- Provide a learning program that seeks to engage all students and offers opportunity for success, thus encouraging regular attendance;
- Record attendance and absences according to the school’s requirements;
- Contribute to the analysis of attendance trends and the development and implementation of school attendance improvement plans;
- Implement school procedures, including parent notification, to follow up non-attendance;
- Work with parents and associated agencies to support learners’ regular attendance in the education program; and
- Make Mandatory Notifications as appropriate.

Students

Students enrolled at The Centre have a responsibility for their attendance. The level of responsibility will be determined by the individual circumstances of the child.

The Centre has expectations that the student will:

- Attend school as negotiated regularly on every day the program is offered;
- Be punctual in arriving at school and for all associated lessons and activities; and
- Engage appropriately in the education program as negotiated.

Parents

Parents must enrol their child in an education program from six years of age (the age of compulsion). When enrolling their child, parents accept the responsibility to:

- Enable their child to attend punctually and regularly on every day the education program is offered and to comply with the education program being offered;
- Notify the Primary School Office by phone message, email or via the app by 9.00 am if their child will be absent or late. The Office also needs to be notified if a child needs to be collected early for medical or other appointments.
- Provide an explanation to the school whenever their child is absent.
- Agree to the terms of an exemption as required; and
- Work with the school on intervention strategies to improve attendance.

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Legislation

Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)

Education and Children's Services Act 2019 (SA)

Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011 (SA)

Education (Compulsory Education Age) Amendment Act 2007 (SA)

Standards for Registration and Review of Registration of Schools in South Australia, 2019

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Date Approved	Approved By	Brief Description
1	2017	Board of Governors	Creation of original document
2	May 2021	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board
3	May 2025	Board of Governors	Review ratified at Board

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Appendix 1 Student Exemption Guide

1. Exemption Categories and Associated Forms

1.1 Temporary Exemptions – Principal Approved (Form A – Appendix 3)

The Principal has the authority to approve exemptions from 5 days up to 12 months for the reason of Family Travel/Holiday and for a period from 1 day up to one month for reason of Ongoing Medical Condition and Other/Conditional.

If for more than one month and, up to 12 months, and for reasons other than travel/family/holiday, the application (Form C) requires approval by the CEO, Association of Independent Schools.

1.2 Conditional or Part-time Attendance (Form C – Appendix 4)

While part-time attendance is outside the regulations, there are exceptional and negotiated circumstances where it may be approved. Examples include disability, behaviour or health/medical.

The intent of any Conditional Exemption is to have the student transitioning back to full time attendance over the period of the exemption.

The Department of Education note that this is not a process to legitimise non-attendance/truancy and is only approved for genuine reasons which preclude full time attendance, and only then with supporting evidence.

At least one of the following should be attached to the application:

- A documented plan
- Planned review process, including a timeline documenting how the time at school will increase
- IEP or parent letters or communication from other agencies involved

2. Exemption Categories and Associated Forms

2.1 Application and Supporting Evidence

The 'Exemption from School Application Form A or Form C must be completed and signed by all parties. Supporting evidence is required to be attached to exemption applications for the following reasons:

- Medical

2.2 Application and Approval Process

The school is required to ensure that the appropriate Application Form is fully completed and supporting evidence is obtained from the student's parents. The Application Form and evidence are to be emailed to the Chief Executive of the AISSA. If approved, a confirmation letter will be mailed to the School and the parents of the exempt student. The letter will confirm the start and end date and the conditions of the exemption.

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Appendix 2 Student Attendance Plan

Attendance Plan

Name:	Date of Birth:
<p>This plan is informed by the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Education and Children’s Services Act 2019 requires that a child must attend the school at which they are enrolled on every day the school is open and at all school activities the school requires the child to attend. 2. Parents have a responsibility under the Act to ensure their children attend school regularly. If a child or young person does not attend without a ‘prescribed reason’ for their non-attendance, or an approved exemption, their parents may be guilty of an offence. 3. Children and young people enrolled in a school also have responsibility for their attendance. The level of responsibility will be determined by the individual circumstances of the child. 4. The school will work collaboratively with the family and the child/young person to create a clear plan for satisfactory attendance at school. 	

Barrier	Family / Student Responsibilities	School Responsibilities	Intended Outcome(s)
			Choose an item.
			Choose an item.
			Choose an item.
			Choose an item.

Attendance Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

Agreement:

Principal

Parent 1

Parent 2

Student

Review Date:	Click or tap to enter a date.	Plan is to be extended:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Recommendations:				

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**APPLICATION FOR TEMPORARY EXEMPTION FROM SCHOOL ENROLMENT / ATTENDANCE
AND EDUCATION ENROLMENT / PARTICIPATION**

PRINCIPAL APPROVAL

FOR ALL STUDENTS 17 YEARS AND UNDER

The student must attend school regularly until exemption is approved. Information provided is protected by the Government of South Australia Information Privacy Principles and each Independent school is governed by the Australian Privacy Principles. For information regarding the exemption processes, refer to www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-and-learning/schools/school-life/exemption-from-attending-school

Section 1: Student Information

Name of student (in full) ED ID

School / provider Site No

Student's date of birth Age Gender Year Level

Section 2: Parent / Guardian Information

Name of parent / guardian (in full)

Parent / guardian address

Parent / guardian phone number

Parent / guardian signature Date

Section 3: Exemption Information

Period of exemption (inclusive): Start Date End Date

Reason for exemption (please tick):

Family Travel / Holiday (up to 12 months)

Ongoing Medical (up to 1 month)

Other / Conditional / Home Education (up to 1 month)

Comments

Section 4: School Use Only

Principal name Signature Date

Please retain completed form at school (in students file) for audit purposes

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**APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FROM SCHOOL ENROLMENT / ATTENDANCE
AND EDUCATION ENROLMENT / PARTICIPATION**

DISABILITY / BEHAVIOUR / HEALTH / MEDICAL – PART TIME SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

FOR ALL STUDENTS 17 YEARS AND UNDER

The student must attend school regularly until exemption is approved. Information provided is protected by the Government of South Australia Information Privacy Principles and each Independent school is governed by the Australian Privacy Principles. For information regarding the exemption processes, refer to www.sa.gov.au/topics/education-and-learning/schools/school-life/exemption-from-attending-school

Section 1: Student Information

Name of student (in full) ED ID

School / provider Site No

Student's date of birth Age Gender Year Level

Young person in care (Guardianship of the Minister) ATSI SWD

Section 2: Parent / Guardian Information

Name of parent / guardian (in full)

Parent / guardian address

Parent / guardian phone number

Section 3: Exemption Information

Period of exemption (inclusive): Start Date End Date

The following supporting documentation must be attached

Learning plan (e.g. IEP, NEP, OCOP, ILP) Transition timetable to full-time attendance

Home learning program Letter from medical practitioner (if medical exemption requested)

Other supporting information to consider attaching includes background information, behaviour support plan, sensory overview, autism support plan

Has the Principal previously approved a 4-week exemption for this student? Yes No

If Yes, please specify dates of previous exemption: Start Date End Date

All relevant signatures must be obtained before forwarding to AISSA / DECD Central Delegate

	Name	Signature	Date
Principal	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Parent / guardian	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>
Social worker <i>(if student is under Guardianship of the Minister)</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

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Section 4: Supplementary School Program

Please specify the hours / days the student will be attending school:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Start Time					
Finish Time					

Additional comments:

AISSA / DECD Central Delegate Use Only

APPROVED
 NOT APPROVED
 Signature
 Date