



Rockingham Montessori School Incorporated
ABN: 68 115 270 695

POLICY TITLE: Attendance Policy

BOARD APPROVAL DATE: 5 October 2010

SIGNED BY CHAIR:

BOARD REVIEW DATE:

OVERVIEW:

Rockingham Montessori School (RMS) is committed to providing a holistic education to the children attending the school. The school's attendance policy addresses the fact that children need to be at school to develop the skills, knowledge and values they will need to succeed in life. Attendance must be seen as a priority by schools, families and communities.

Student enrolment and attendance in educational programs in Western Australian schools is governed by legislation. The School Education Act 1999 (Act) and the School Education Regulations 2000 (Regulations) are the key pieces of legislation relating to the provision of educational programs in Western Australian schools. In brief, the Act requires that compulsory-aged students attend school, or participate in an educational program, on the days on which the school program is open for instruction, unless a written arrangement has been entered into for the student. From 2008, education is compulsory for students until the end of the year in which they turn 17. If any aspect is unclear, refer to the legislation in question. The School Education Act 1999 and School Education Regulations 2000 can be viewed electronically on the Government's State Law Publisher website at www.slp.wa.gov.au.

The Teacher in Charge is responsible for the accurate recording and rigorous monitoring of the attendance of all children and for implementing appropriate strategies to restore attendance if there are attendance issues.

PRINCIPLES:

It is widely recognised that children need to attend school on a regular basis to gain the maximum benefit from schooling in order to optimise their life opportunities. It is also widely recognised that attendance problems are best managed by early identification and intervention.

1. Student achievement

The likelihood of success in learning is strongly linked to regular attendance and appropriate participation in educational programs. Students who have poor patterns of attendance are at risk of not achieving their potential. They may be disadvantaged in the quality of choices they are able to make in later life situations. Attendance at school is a pre-requisite for student achievement. Children who are regularly absent from school are at the greatest risk of:

- dropping out of school early;
- becoming long-term unemployed;
- being caught in the poverty trap;
- becoming welfare dependent;
- being involved in the justice system;
- being socially isolated;
- harm during times of absence;
- being more likely to be involved in socially unacceptable and/or illegal activities.
- have gaps in their knowledge and understanding of basic concepts; and
- feeling insecure of school.

Once students have begun to develop patterns of poor attendance and lateness, there is the potential that the pattern of absences may continue to escalate in later years.

2. Non-attendance

Non-attendance at school can occur for a range of reasons including:

- the child is unwell;
- the class teacher has asked that the child remain home due to a communicable disease;
- the child is absent with a valid reason in the opinion of the Teacher in Charge e.g. family funeral;
- the student is absent without a valid reason in the opinion of the Teacher in Charge (but with parent or carer consent) e.g. staying home for birthdays;
- or the student is absent without parent or carer knowledge.

All non-attendance by children should be viewed as critical when it begins to impact on their learning and health and well-being outcomes. This includes those absences which are explained (such as the parent providing the explanation that the student was unwell) and those which are unexplained.

3. Children at Risk

Early intervention for children at risk of developing irregular patterns of attendance is crucial so that these patterns may be reversed.

Indicators of children at risk include the following:

- frequent lateness;
- leaving school early;
- missing lessons;
- being the victims of bullying and harassment;
- learning difficulties;
- many days absent, either through illness, unexplained reasons or family commitments;
- unresolved issues with school personnel (staff or students);
- social or emotional issues;

- difficulties at times of transition; and
- health issues experience by the child and/or family members.

Intervention strategies need to be put in place regardless of the age of the child.

4. Parent Notification

All reasons for explained absence require contact to be made to the school by the parent. The specific nature of the contact is noted in the “Procedures” section.

PROCEDURES:

Recording Attendance:

1. The Class Teacher is responsible for ensuring that accurate attendance records are kept for every child. This includes recording attendance at both morning and afternoon sessions.
 - A child who attends for 2 or more hours is recorded as a half day’s attendance.
 - Children arriving late, but who still attend for 2 hours or more, are recorded as attending.
 - Children on an excursion or some other school-approved activity are not to be counted as absent.
2. Attendance records must be kept for a period of seven years.
3. Absentee notes must be kept for two years from the date of receipt and then destroyed. This includes details recorded by the school when a parent provides the school with a verbal reason.
4. Unsatisfactory attendance reports on students must be retained in a student’s records for 25 years from date of birth.
5. The Teacher in Charge is responsible for ensuring that class attendance records are maintained, and the appropriate procedure is occurring.

Monitoring Attendance:

1. If a child is absent, a parent should notify the school at the soonest possible time, in one of the following ways:
 - a. via email to the Administration Officer at rockmont@iinet.net.au;
 - b. via telephone to the Administration Officer on 9528 2118;
 - c. or in writing either with a letter, or completion of an absentee form available in the office.
2. The Administration Officer will advise the teacher when notification of absence is received.
3. If a child is absent, the class teacher must mark the attendance record ‘A’ for Absent. If the class teacher receives an explanatory note (either directly from the parent or via the Administration Officer), the teacher must mark the attendance record ‘N’ for Note.

4. The Administration Officer will collect the attendance record from each class on a regular basis and enter the absenteeism and notification of absence into MAZE, the school's administration software.
5. If a parent does not notify the school of their child's absence, the school will send a written request for an explanation to the child's family to establish reasons for non-attendance. MAZE will automatically generate lists of children for whom no explanation has been received.
6. If it is established that the child was absent from school for a legitimate reason, the school need not do anything further unless the frequency and/or number of absences gives the school cause for concern.
7. If a child's attendance rate falls below 90% over a ten week period, the Teacher in Charge must further investigate the reasons why the child is not attending school.
8. If a school is having difficulty restoring a child's attendance, the Teacher in Charge will make informal contact with the school attendance officer (Education Department District Office) who may be able to provide advice or alternative intervention strategies.
9. Consistent with the Education Department records management policies, the school must keep detailed records of all contact, or attempts to make contact, with the child's family and the intervention strategies implemented to restore the child's attendance.

Referrals to School Attendance Officer

1. If a school has identified a child as being a regular non-attender, and the intervention strategies implemented have not been successful, the child is to be referred to the school attendance officer by the Teacher in Charge.
2. The school will work collaboratively with the school attendance officer, the child's family and other community groups and agencies to restore the child's attendance at school.
3. If the child's attendance is still not restored, the Teacher in Charge may refer the child to the School Attendance Panel.
4. The School Attendance Panel will fully consider the issues that contribute to the child's non-attendance and establish strategies to ensure the child is re-engaged in an appropriate educational setting.

Children Whose Whereabouts are Unknown

1. If all attempts to locate a child have failed after fifteen school days and the school has not received advice that the child has enrolled at another school, the Teacher in Charge is to refer the child to the "Children Whose Whereabouts are Unknown List" through the school attendance officer.

RELATED AND SOURCE DOCUMENTS:

1. Department of Education WA Attendance Policy