

ATTENDANCE POLICY

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	April 2023
Consultation	Policy Committee
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	April 2027



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the JMSS Office: (03) 9905 1002 or john.monash.ss@education.vic.gov.au

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to

- ensure all children of compulsory school age are enrolled in a registered school and attend school every day the school is open for instruction
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of the importance of attending school
- explain to school staff and parents the key practices and procedures John Monash Science School has in place to
 - support, monitor and maintain student attendance
 - record, monitor and follow up student absences.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all students at John Monash Science School.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training’s [School Attendance Guidelines](#). It does not replace or change the obligations of John Monash Science School, parents and School Attendance Officers under legislation or the School Attendance Guidelines.

DEFINITION

Parent – includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child, including parental responsibility under the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

POLICY

Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 to 17 years (unless an exemption from attendance or enrolment has been granted).

Daily attendance is important for all children and young people to succeed in education and to ensure they do not fall behind both socially and developmentally. School participation maximises life opportunities for children and young people by providing them with education and support networks. School helps people to develop important skills, knowledge and values that set them up for further learning and participation in their community.

Students are expected to attend John Monash Science School during normal school hours every day of each term unless:

- there is an approved exemption from school attendance for the student
- the student has a dual enrolment with another school and has only a partial enrolment in John Monash Science School, or
- the student is registered for home schooling and has only a partial enrolment in John Monash Science School for particular activities.

Both schools and parents have an important role to play in supporting students to attend school every day.

John Monash Science School believes all students should attend school all day, every day when the school is open for instruction and is committed to working with its school community to encourage and support full school attendance.

Our school will identify individual students or cohorts who are vulnerable and whose attendance is at risk and/or declining and will work with these students and their parents to improve their attendance through a range of interventions and supports.

Students are committed to attending school every day, arriving on time and prepared to learn. Our students are encouraged to approach a teacher and seek assistance if there are any issues that are affecting their attendance.

John Monash Science School parents are committed to ensuring their child/children attend school on time every day when instruction is offered, to communicating openly with the school and providing valid explanations for any absence.

Parents will communicate with the relevant staff (e.g. Mentors, House Leaders, subjects teachers) at John Monash Science School about any issues affecting their child's attendance and work in partnership with the school to address any concerns.

Parents will provide a reasonable explanation for their child's absence from school and endeavour to schedule family holidays, appointments and other activities outside of school hours.

The school's acceptable attendance percentage is 90% school approved. Leaving a leeway of 10% for parent choice approved/unapproved. This leeway caters for days such as medicals that were not supported by a certificate, family holidays and cultural celebrations.

Supporting and promoting attendance

John Monash Science School's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* supports student attendance.

Our school also promotes student attendance by: fostering a positive learning environment, enacting student voice, running many student-led activities (events, clubs and interest groups) and providing additional supports such as TLI, Maths Help, counselling, etc.

Recording attendance

John Monash Science School must record attendance in every class. This is necessary to:

- meet legislative requirements
- discharge John Monash Science School's duty of care for all students
- meet Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority requirements for VCE students

Attendance will be recorded by the classroom teacher/mentor at the start of each lesson/period using Compass.

If students are in attendance at a school approved activity, the staff member in charge of the activity will mark the roll.

On days with an alternative program (e.g. Immersion Days, ect.), attendance might only be taken twice a day to comply with DET requirements. This will be dependent on the activities being undertaken on the day. If students are changing groups and locations, then rolls will need to be taken for each session.

Recording absences

For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school.

Parents should notify John Monash Science School of absences by:

- entering a note into Compass
- OR
- emailing absences@jmss.vic.edu.au
- OR
- calling the attendance number; (03) 9902 9712

If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, John Monash Science School will notify parents by SMS. This communication will occur at 11am on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

If contact cannot be made with the parent (due to incorrect contact details), the school will attempt to make contact with any emergency contact/s nominated on the student's file held by the school, where possible, on the day of the unexplained absence.

John Monash Science School will keep a record of the reason given for each absence. The Principal will determine if the explanation provided is a **reasonable excuse** for the purposes of the parent meeting their responsibilities under the *Education Training Reform Act 2006* and the School Attendance Guidelines.

If the school determines that no reasonable excuse has been provided, the absence will be marked as '**unexplained absence**'.

If John Monash Science School considers that the parent has provided a **reasonable excuse** for their child's absence the absence will be marked as '**parent choice approved**'. This indicates that the parent was aware and supportive of the absence, however, it does not indicate that the absence is school approved.

The Principal has the discretion to accept a reason given by a parent for a student's absence. The Principal will generally excuse:

- medical and dental appointments, where out of hours appointments are not possible or appropriate
- bereavement or attendance at the funeral of a relative or friend of the student, including a student required to attend Sorry Business
- school refusal, if a plan is in place with the parent to address causes and support the student's return to school
- cultural observance if the parent/carer notifies the school in advance
- family holidays where the parent notifies the school in advance and are less than 1 week of classes missed

If no explanation is provided by the parent within 10 school days of an absence, it will be recorded as an 'unexplained absence' and recorded on the student's file.

Parents will be notified if an absence has not been excused.

Monitoring Attendance

Class teachers will monitor the attendance of their students. If a student's attendance falls below 90% approved, or if a student's lack of attendance is impacting their learning, the teacher will discuss their concerns with the student. A Compass Chronicle will be recorded and the student's Mentor and House Leaders will be notified.

Mentors will check student attendance on a fortnightly basis. If a student's attendance falls below 90% approved, or if a student's lack of attendance is impacting their learning, the Mentor will discuss their concerns with the student. A Compass Chronicle will be recorded and the student's House Leaders will be notified.

House Leaders will monitor any students with attendance concerns and contact parents/guardians if a student's attendance does not improve or if the relevant documentation has not been provided. House Leaders will also ensure appropriate measures are put in place to support the student's attendance.

Students who fall below the school's required attendance of 90% (in the VCE column in Compass) may be asked to make up extra time outside of their scheduled class time.

Punctuality and Monitoring Lateness

Students are also expected to arrive at school on time. JMSS encourages an 8.20 arrival for those using public transport or those utilising roads that are subject to traffic congestion. All students are expected to be in class by 8.40am. If there are not, they are considered late.

If a student arrives late to school (from 8.40 onwards), they must sign in with the Compass card at the Compass Kiosk near reception. If they do not have their Compass card, they must sign in manually at the attendance officer's window.

Students should not be late to classes during the day. If a student is late to a class in the middle of the day they will need to provide a valid reason, otherwise they will be marked on the roll as late and may need to stay after class to discuss this further with their teacher or make up the missed time.

Lateness will be monitored by Mentors and House Leaders. Students with no valid reason for their lateness will be issued a Work Management session.

Early Departure

All students are required at school by 8.40 everyday (irrespective of whether they have a study period or a scheduled lesson). Yr 10 and 11 students are expected to remain at school until the conclusion of the day at 3.20 (3.30 on Wednesdays). If there is a change in dismissal times due to an alternate program or special arrangements (such as cohort study periods), parents/guardians will be notified. Yr 12 students will be dismissed early (at the beginning of lunchtime) if they have a private study period during Period 5.

Any student that must leave earlier than the above times must have permission from their parent to do so. This can be done in any of the following ways;

- entering a note into Compass

OR

- emailing absences@jmss.vic.edu.au

OR

- calling the attendance number; (03) 9902 9712

Any students leaving early must then sign out with their Compass card at the Compass Kiosk near reception. If they do not have their Compass card, they must sign out manually at the attendance officer's window.

Extended Absences

An extended absence is anything that is planned (e.g. a family holiday, a medical procedure, etc.) and sees a student miss more than 3 consecutive days of school. JMSS encourages any family holiday to be planned to avoid interruptions to a student's schooling. Family holidays should be booked during term breaks wherever possible. Where this is unavoidable, holidays should be booked to cause minimal disruption to a student's learning. Disruption to a student's learning due to a family holiday may result in the student being required to make up extra time outside of their scheduled class time.

The school should be given a minimum of two weeks notice prior to an extended absence. The student is then required to complete an 'extended absence' form. In some cases, such as a family emergency, the two weeks notice is not possible. Therefore, the student's Mentor will support the student by communicating their absence to all relevant staff members and requesting them to pass on any required work via email to the student.

Managing non-attendance and supporting student engagement

Where absences are of concern due to their nature or frequency, or where a student has been absent for more than five days, John Monash Science School will work collaboratively with parents, the student, and other professionals, where appropriate, to develop strategies to improve attendance, including any of the following:

- establishing an Attendance Student Support Group
- implementing a Return to School Plan
- implementing an Individual Education Plan
- implementing a Student Absence Learning Plan for students who will be absent for an extended period
- arranging for assistance from relevant student wellbeing staff

We understand from time to time that some students will need additional supports and assistance, and in collaboration with the student and their family, will endeavour to provide this support when it is required,

Referral to Regional Attendance Officer

If John Monash Science School decides that it has exhausted strategies for addressing a student's unsatisfactory attendance, we may, in accordance with the Regional Attendance Guidelines, refer the non-attendance to a Regional Attendance Officer in the North Eastern Victoria Region for further action.

If, from multiple attempts to contact with a parent, it becomes apparent that a student will not be returning to the school, the Principal may make a referral to a Regional Attendance Officer if:

- the student has been absent from school on at least five full days in the previous 12 months where:
 - the parent has not provided a reasonable excuse for these absences; and
 - measures to improve the student's attendance have been undertaken and have been unsuccessful
- the student's whereabouts are unknown and:
 - the student has been absent for 10 consecutive school days; or
 - no alternative education destination can be found for the student.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Department's Policy and Advisory Library (PAL): [Attendance](#)