



## ATTENDANCE AND TARDIES POLICY REVIEW

Children enrolled at Sea Pines Montessori Academy (SPMA) are expected to be present for the Montessori Work Cycle. In recent years, late arrivals have become more frequent causing unnecessary disruptions in our classrooms. Therefore, we have spent the past months working to strengthen and streamline our attendance and on time arrival policy. Our goal is to make the policy as consistent as possible across the varying age groups while meeting state requirements, but also to help establish good schooling habits as early as possible. Furthermore, we strive to nurture an environment that sets each student up for success.

We do understand that mornings may be hectic for our families and that we live in an area that invites “island time.” Realizing this, we have built in grace periods for arrival time. Upper School students in grades 1-8 should arrive between 8:00 and 8:15 am. Our intention is not to complicate the routines of our families, but rather to help strengthen our classroom environments and ensure that children are given the best opportunities for learning. As a school, we believe on-time arrival and consistent attendance is in your child’s best interest and supports the incredibly hard work of our teachers. Therefore, please note that going forward we will be enforcing this policy strictly, and late arrivals after the grace period should be the exception, never the norm.

### **Why is on-time arrival important?**

Our classrooms, regardless of age group, follow established daily schedules because children thrive on routine and order. When children arrive after the start of class, their routine as well as those of the other students is disrupted. Children have an inherent social need to greet their teachers and friends and settle into their environment. Our students do this through a morning greeting time and then go on to choose work. Children arriving late miss this important transition time, yet their social needs persist. We find that children arriving late want to speak to their teacher, greet their friends, and are often frustrated to find that the work they planned to do has already been chosen by another child. As a result, late children distract and frustrate their already working classmates, interrupt the teacher and the children with whom she/he is already engaged, and have a harder time choosing work for themselves or planning their morning. Furthermore, they miss valuable work time and often do not have time to complete an entire lesson and engage in deeper levels of concentration. This missing time leaves them well behind their peers by the end of the week.

### **What should I do if I arrive late to school with my child?**

You may call, email, or stop by to leave a message if you expect you will be late ahead of time. When you arrive past 8:30 am, the student must check in at the office before going to class. Late arrivals are generally approved for doctor’s appointments, unusual traffic events, and other extenuating circumstances. Families who establish a habit of late arrival may not be given approval.

### **Why are the requirements different between school age and non-school age children?**

In South Carolina, school attendance is compulsory starting with Kindergarten. There is a required number of instructional hours per year for Kindergarten and Elementary (a.k.a. school age) programs and the Code of South Carolina limits the number of absences and tardies children may have because excess absenteeism and tardiness is detrimental to a child’s academic progress. To meet these requirements, school age children must be present for the whole school day and must arrive at the start of the established school day. In some cases, absences may be excused (please see page 2-3 of the Parent Handbook for more details), but still may factor in to the tallies warranting a review of a student’s attendance.

Non-school age children (infants, toddlers and preschoolers) are not subject to these requirements. However, South Carolina’s Department of Social Services requires that we record attendance each day for these age groups. Since SPMA is a school environment with an academic model, we promote school best practices whenever possible. Non-school age children are afforded a longer grace period for arrival as a courtesy to help families with young children, who may require more time in the morning, as they work towards establishing independence. Lower School arrival is from 8:15-8:30 am. We know that several families have students with siblings in Upper and Lower Schools. An arrival around 8:10 am would suffice for both.



**My child is younger than school age, why does he or she have to arrive by a certain time?**

Even though non-school age children are not subject to compulsory attendance laws, on-time arrival is a significant factor in the success of your child's Montessori experience. If a child is not present for significant portions of the work cycle, then it is unrealistic to expect that your child will enjoy the full benefits that are characteristic of a Montessori education and the child's readiness for school age programs may be negatively impacted. Montessori education believes in developing the whole child in preparation for them to grow into citizens of the world and on time arrival is an important habit to establish early as it demonstrates respect for the classroom community to which your child belongs.

**What happens if my school age child exceeds the number of allowable absences or tardies?**

You will be notified when the number of absences or tardies become concerning. Now, after 5 unexcused absences, SPMA will contact the student's parents to alert them of the situation. After 10 absences, the family will be given written notice and required to attend a conference to review the attendance policy and develop an attendance improvement plan. After 15 absences, either excused or unexcused, the school will review the causes of absenteeism. If it is determined that failure to adhere to the attendance improvement plan is the result of the parents' inability to control the child's attendance or failure to comply with the state's compulsory attendance laws, a report will be made to the Department of Education's Student Services Division, which will determine further action. Please note that excess absenteeism and tardiness may result in your child being unable to pass to the next grade level. While this may not effect classroom placement at SPMA due to our mixed age groupings, it would impact the child's placement at the time of matriculation to other schools.

**My child was only five minutes late. Will this tardy count towards an absence?**

Yes. As mentioned above, for school age children, 5 tardies equal 1 unexcused absence and the resulting absence would be factored into your child's tally of absences. Unfortunately, the Code of South Carolina does not differentiate tardiness based on the duration. One minute late is treated the same as one hour late.

I have read SPMA's Attendance and Tardy policy and agree to abide by the rules set forth.

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Parent Signature

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Date