

# RIVERSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Attendance Policy



## Introduction

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

## Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is a parent's /carer's legal responsibility to ensure this happens. Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life.
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

## Aims of the Policy

To ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. *Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%.*

- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of the children attending Riversdale Primary School and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood. Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

## Promoting Attendance

Riversdale Primary School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The school will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents; making attendance a high priority.
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education. All new parents are given information on attendance in the home/school agreement. It is also accessible on the school website.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- Celebrate good attendance by issuing letters and certificates for 100% attendance. There is also a raffle prize for vulnerable pupils with improved attendance.

- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using SIMs (School Information Management System) registration system, and absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (Wandsworth Borough Council, Social Services etc.).
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of correct codes for absence, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensure attendance information is available for Governors and parents.
- Share good practice with other schools.
- Make every effort to meet the individual needs of the pupils with SEND

We expect the parent/carer to:

- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first day of the absence.
- Contact the school after the first day of absence to advise if the absence is continuing.
- Keep the school well informed, in cases of lengthy absence. Parents/carers will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a child's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.
- Provide medical evidence indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen. Whenever possible all appointments should be made outside of school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child, aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Provide written explanations of any absence and medical evidence for whole day appointments as well as medical evidence for persistent absence from school due to illness.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

## 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 guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents and carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents and carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

### Unauthorised absence:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays

- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Headteacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
- Death of a pet

### **If a Child is Absent**

When a child is absent unexpectedly, and the school has not been notified by the parent or guardian as to the reason for the absence, they will be telephoned by 10.15am of the first day of absence by the school office. Depending on the reason given the absence will be recorded as either authorised or unauthorised. Records will be kept of these phone calls and the school will look for possible patterns in the absence of any given child. If a pattern is identified the parent or guardian will be asked to come to the school to discuss the matter.

When the child returns to school, a note should be brought from a parent or guardian to explain the absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a child has a medical appointment, though these should be scheduled for times outside school hours wherever possible.

### **Requests for Leave of Absence**

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. In exceptional circumstances a parent/carer may wish to request permission for a child to be absent from school. Requests must be made by filling the school absence form available from the office. The Headteacher will review each request for term time absence and make a decision in each case. Please note that we do not grant permission for children to be absent during term time for holidays, and no leave will be granted to children in Year 6.

### **Long-Term Absence**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

All children whose attendance is 86% or less, even if it is authorised, will be classified as being Persistently Absent, and parents/guardians will be asked to attend an Attendance Panel held at the school to which representatives from the Educational Welfare Office would also attend.

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing from education (CME). School staff will visit the last known address and alert MIE (Missing in Education) to try to locate the child. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Repeated Unauthorised Absences**

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact the LA support services, who will visit the home and seek to ensure that the parents or guardians understand the seriousness of the situation.

The governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

## **Rewards for Good Attendance**

There are special awards for any child who has 100 per cent attendance for a whole year, to be given out at the end of year Awards Ceremony.

## **Attendance Targets**

The school sets attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets. The school also works closely with the Educational Welfare Office to constantly update and review measures being taken to attain or improve on attendance targets.

## **Monitoring and Review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be reported in the annual governors' report.

The Learning Mentor and SAO will be responsible for monitoring attendance, and for following up absences in the appropriate way, with guidance from the Head teacher.

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Learning Mentor. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home. Any outside professionals who are also working with the children and family will also be notified of the absence (Social worker, etc). Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.