

RIVERSDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date: 14th March 2024

Review Date: 13th March 2025



1.	Introduction & Aims	2
2.	Key members of staff	3
3.	Expectations and daily routines	4
4.	How we promote and incentivise good attendance	5
5.	Tailored support	8
6.	Formalised support	9
7.	Useful websites	11

1. Introduction & Aims

1.1 Our approach to improving attendance

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 the 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.

1.2 Our attendance objectives

Our school attendance policy:

- Is easy to understand by pupils, parents and staff
- Is clear and consistently applied, transparent and fair
- Considers the individual needs of pupils and their families
- Is easy to find so that the whole school community is aware of our attendance expectations
- Includes the contact details of key staff to make it easy for parents to get in touch
- Is reviewed by staff regularly and involves pupils and parents because attendance is everyone's business
- Is followed in accordance with the procedures in the flowchart below

2. Key members of staff

Attendance is monitored by the headteacher and they can be contacted either by Weduc or by email head@riversdale.wandsworth.sch.uk

Class teachers will also report patterns of missed schooling such as “... Has missed 3 swimming lessons”.

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 90% or less, even if it 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 may 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.

3. Expectations and Daily Routines

3.1 What we mean by 'good' attendance

The school's attendance target is 96%. Good attendance is considered any percentage above this.

3.2 Why regular attendance is important

Pupils who attend regularly (every day) are more likely to achieve better academic outcomes, are safer from risks in the community, such as exploitation and crime, as well as successfully transitioning from primary to secondary school, secondary school to further education, and the world of work.

3.3 Our daily processes

- Outline your daily processes, including:
- Start and close times of the day; Gates open for Gems classes and nursery at 8:30am. Afternoon nursery arrives at 12:30pm.
- All other classes enter between 8:35 am and 8:45 am. We call this a smooth start.
- Gems and full time nursery plus afternoon nursery leave at 3pm
- The rest of the school are collected at 3:15pm
- Register open is 8:35-8:50
- Children who arrive later than this time enter school via the main gate and report to the school office.
- Senior members of staff greet children on arrival each day and greet parents at collection at each gate.
- Unexpected absence is reported by parents via Weduc or by calling the school office on 02088746904.

4. How we promote and incentivise regular attendance

Promoting Attendance

Riversdale Primary School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include letters, 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 introduction meetings at the start of each school year and when parents start during the year. The policy is also accessible on the school website.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality.
- Celebrate with children if they have improved their attendance.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using Arbor 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.

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 (either written or via Weduc) 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 90% or less, even if it 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 may 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.

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

We use clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. We make sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.

Robust school systems provide useful data at cohort, group and individual pupil level to give us an accurate view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns amongst more vulnerable groups, such as:

- children who have a social worker, including looked-after children
- young carers
- children who are eligible for free school meals
- children who speak English as a second language
- children who have special educational needs and disabilities

5. Tailored Support

5.1 Our approach

We monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that interventions are delivered quickly to address absence (eg. register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).

We celebrate progress and achievements in improving attendance with certificates, good news slips, vouchers, etc (delete/personalise as appropriate).

We use attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.

We create action plans in partnership with families and other agencies that may be supporting families, for example, children's social care and early help services. We also commission or deliver interventions in-house to improve attendance.

We monitor the impact of any interventions, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy.

Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, we identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention.

We follow the local authority's Code of Conduct and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when voluntary interventions have not resulted in improved attendance in-line with our expectations – see Section 6.5.

5.2 In-school support

Our learning mentor carries out daily check ins for pupils who emotionally struggle to come to school. All senior members of staff foster relationships with children whose attendance fluctuates so as to deliver daily (even hourly) praise for school attendance.

5.3 Other services that can help

We refer to partnership bodies who may support a family with school attendance. These include school nursing, social workers, Waas, educational welfare service, early help.

Further support is available via Family Information Service website: [Wandsworth Family Information Service](#)

6. Formalised support

6.1 School attendance panels / inclusion panels and parenting contracts

Parents are invited to school attendance panels (SAPs) and/or any other meetings to discuss attendance concerns as part of an early intervention approach to improving attendance.

6.2 Education supervision orders

Where a voluntary early help plan, or voluntary parenting contract has not been successful, an Education Supervision Order (ESO) may alternatively provide formal legal intervention without criminal prosecution.

ESOs are made through the Family or High Court, rather than Magistrates Court. They give the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing the pupil and parent(s) to ensure the pupil receives an efficient, full-time, suitable education. For the duration of the ESO, the parent's duties to secure the child's education and regular attendance are superseded by a duty to comply with any directions given by the local authority under the ESO.

The order initially lasts for one year, but extensions can be secured within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time.

The supervisor of an ESO will usually be a professional already working closely with the family – or member of school staff.

6.3 The role of social care

Refer to: [Promoting the education of children with a social worker \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

6.4 Unauthorised leave

Refer to: School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

6.5 Penalty notices and the local authority Code of Conduct

At the point of parents not engaging to support a child with their school attendance Penalty Notices for absence and other sanctions will be sought. This is also true for an unauthorised holiday in term time if attendance is already a concern.

Legal action will always be a last resort and the school and other professionals working with families should explore all avenues to engage parents and maximise the opportunities for support available to meet a family's needs first.

Information about the Council's Code of Conduct on Penalty Notices can be found here:

[Penalty Notice Leaflet](#)

[Wandsworth Code Of Conduct](#)

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.

7. Useful Websites

- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- School attendance and absence: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- [School attendance and absence - childlawadvice.org.uk](https://childlawadvice.org.uk)
- [Absence from school | Contact](#)
- [Illness and your child's education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Behaviour and attendance | Parentkind](#)