

## **Race Leys Infant School**



### **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

**Originator: Judith Ward**

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**Ratified by Governors:**

**Signed:**

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**“Learning together we can reach for the stars”**

# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

At Race Leys Infant School 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.

## Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In accordance with the regulations relating to pupils' attendance at school, Race Leys Infant School keeps an attendance register on which at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. An entry must be made on the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll.

This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

## Categories of Absence

There are two categories of absence:-

- (i) Authorised (approved)
- (ii) Unauthorised (not approved)

Only the Headteacher can approve absence.

## 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.
- Persistent lateness can constitute unauthorised absence.

### **Lateness**

- School begins at 8.55 am. Registers are taken straight away. Any child not present at registration will be marked absent and parents will be required to sign their child in the late book.
- If a child is late to school and they miss the registration period then an unauthorised absence will be given.
- If a child is late for more than 20% of a half term period, then parents will be asked to discuss the issue with the Head teacher.

### **Parental Involvement**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school by 10am on the first day of their child's absence. If by 10am on the first day of a child's absence the school has not been notified, the Attendance Officer will contact the child's parent/carer.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. On checking the registers, the administration assistant will endeavour to contact a parent or guardian on that day to determine the reason for the absence.

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. If the parent has telephoned the school to report the absence a note is not required.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

### **Repeated unauthorised absences**

The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. The office manager monitors absences regularly and any concerns are raised with the Head teacher. The Office Manager will contact parents and discuss reasons for absence and strategies to raise attendance in the first instance. Letters will be sent informing parents if their child's attendance drops below 95%. If no improvement is made following the letter and a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences resulting in levels of attendance falling below 90%, the parents or guardians will be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem with the Office Manager and Headteacher. If the situation does not improve, and attendance continues to fall, the school will then engage 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 parents will be invited to a meeting with the Head teacher and Attendance Compliance and enforcement service to discuss further actions.

**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.**

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME 2016-2017 – INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

In September 2013, the Government introduced some significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school. The regulations will continue to apply during this academic year (2016/2017).

The most important of these is in relation to term-time leave of absence.

The amendments set out in Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, govern all requests for leave within term-time. When considering such requests for a leave of absence, the school are obliged to act within the law.

The amended regulations removed references to 'holiday' and 'extended leave', as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. It is now clear that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the leave is granted, head teachers are able to determine the number of school days a child can be absent for.

The Government has not defined 'exceptional circumstances' as referred to in the 2013 regulations. It is for the Head Teacher to decide what he/she views as 'exceptional' and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted.

The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent.

*Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.*

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).

**It is important to note**, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

**Warwickshire Primary School pupils recorded 60,704 half day sessions of absence due to holiday in the academic year 2013/14. This is a decrease of 42,915 on previous years. This is a positive outcome as it means that 21,457 days of education were achieved.**

We greatly appreciate parental support to reduce the total amount of days lost due to holidays. We are committed to working in partnership with you to enable your child to reach their academic targets and to support their social development. For this to happen we need to keep individual attendance as high as possible - we all need to play our part.

**Your child's progress academically as well as socially is our shared priority**

### **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 support home learning, so that they can keep up with their school work. However medical evidence supplied by the parent maybe required to authorise this absence and/or a referral to the school nurse for support.

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 tuition outside school.

### **Rewards for good attendance**

The class with the best attendance for the week are rewarded with a certificate. Individuals in that class receive a celebration certificate to take home.

Each term and at the end of the school year children with good attendance will receive a certificate.

The School provides a small reward for families with the most improved attendance and a prize drawer for those with consistently high attendance each term.

### **Parental Responsibility and/or Day-to-Day Care**

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children receive education. Estranged parents with whom the child has had regular contact may be prosecuted as well as the day-to-day carer. Each situation must be dealt with on an individual basis, always remembering the welfare and safety of the child is the paramount concern.

The term 'parent' also includes those who are not a natural parent but have parental responsibility for the child as defined by the Children Act 1989 or who have care of the child as defined by the Education Act 1996.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The Headteacher is responsible for monitoring pupils' attendance. The attendance registers are processed every day. Official Registers will be printed monthly. The administrative assistant will present the headteacher with weekly percentage attendance values for each class and for the school as a whole. At the end of each calendar month a list of all children who have an unauthorised absence recorded will be produced. Letters will be sent to parents requesting explanations for unexplained absences.

On a half termly basis a report listing all children with less than 95% attendance will be generated. In addition the Local Authority's 5 Stage Model of Intervention will be used:-

Stage 1-2: Responsibility lies with the school.

Stage 3: Shared responsibility between the school and the Attendance, Compliance & Enforcement Service (ACE).

Stage 4-5: Responsibility lies with Local Authority working in partnership with the school.

## Stage 1:

Trigger: the trigger for Stage 1 is when a child's attendance drops below 95% over a half-term period.

Class teacher identifies an attendance problem and takes initial action with the awareness of parents. This involves: the early identification and follow-up of a child's non-attendance; gathering basic information about the child; taking early action to stop the non-attendance developing; and monitoring and reviewing the child's progress.

### Intervention:

- \* Gather information within school
  - Check records - including any from other schools which the child attended previously.
  - How is the child coping with the curriculum? Gather reports from staff.
  - Speak to Special Educational Needs Coordinator to establish if child is on Special Educational Needs register.
  
- \* Seek from parents
  - Views on the child's health and development and, if appropriate, obtain parent's authority to discuss absences on medical grounds with appropriate medical personnel.
  - Perceptions of the child's performance, progress and behaviour at school and at home.
    - Factors contributing to any difficulty.
  - Action the school might take.
  
- \* Advise parents
  - Explain the link between poor attendance and reduced attainment.
  - Remind parents of their responsibilities in ensuring their child's attendance and potential sanctions for failure to do so.
  - Provide information about the range of support services that parents can access.
  
- \* Seek from the child
  - Personal perception of any difficulties, e.g. curriculum, bullying.
  - Views on how s/he might address the problem.
  
- \* Agree strategy to prevent further school non-attendance e.g. Home-School Agreement etc.

From the information collected, the child's teacher addresses the child's non-attendance at school. This may involve:

- curriculum advice.
- special attention for a time limited period.
- setting attendance targets.
- review date.

Record Keeping: The school will maintain a record of steps taken to meet the child's needs. This will inform each stage of the process and may form part of legal evidence on behalf of the Local Authority. Notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialed by the Class Teacher.

### **Stage 2:**

Trigger: Is usually at a scheduled Stage 1 review or after an earlier review if the non-school attendance has begun to escalate.

Senior staff in schools with responsibility for attendance takes lead responsibility for gathering information and for coordinating the school's strategy with the involvement of parents and child.

Intervention:

- \* The Headteacher and the Attendance coordinator review all available information, including that gathered at Stage 1.
- \* Parents are invited into school to discuss any difficulties that may prevent the child from attending school.
- \* Obtain relevant information from any other agency.
- \* Discuss with the child any concerns they may have.

Agreeing Strategy to prevent further non-school attendance:

- \* Seek further advice.
- \* Monitor closely the child's attendance and agree communication systems with parents.
- \* Develop an Individual Education Plan or add to Special Educational Needs Individual Education Plan.
- \* Attendance targets.
- \* Review date - parents should be invited to Stage 2 review meetings.

Record Keeping: The school will maintain a record of steps taken to meet the child's needs. This will inform each stage of the process and may form part of legal evidence on behalf of the Local Authority. Notes, records of telephone calls and medical certificates should be dated, named and initialed by the Class Teacher.

### **Stage 3:**

Trigger: will usually be after a Stage 2 review. Referral to the Attendance, Compliance & Enforcement Service (ACE) will not ordinarily occur until after a term of significant intervention by the school.

Many cases will not reach Stage 3. Features of a Stage 3 case will commonly be:

- \* A child whose unauthorised absence rises above 10%.
- \* A child whose authorised absence rises above 20% and where school interventions at Stages 1, 2 and 3 are not effecting any improvement in attendance.

Note: A small number of cases will be properly located at Stage 3 without Stages 1 and 2 having occurred for example:

- \* A child who through social or emotional problems has suddenly failed to attend school regularly, e.g. family bereavement, divorce/separation, bullying.
- \* A child is absent from school without a known and accepted reason for a continuous period of two weeks, i.e. 10 school days.
- \* Lack of co-operation by the parents in Stages 1 and 2.

Intervention:

- \* Determine initial course of action (may include more information gathering).
- \* Education Social Work Service when involved will normally visit home.
- \* Obtain from child his or her perception of the problem
- \* Assessment of problem. (Vital component for determining Action Plan.)

#### **Stage 4:**

The Local Authority via the Attendance, Compliance & Enforcement Service (ACE) considers the need for a statutory order or parental prosecution. This decision will be made by assessment during a home visit or panel meeting.

#### **Stage 5:**

The Local Authority (through the ACE team) takes legal proceedings. If an Education Supervision Order is granted the Attendance, Compliance & Enforcement Service (ACE) will supervise, monitor and review the order.

NB. When a student moves on to the next level of support it does not mean that the previous levels of support stop. Attendance is a whole school strategy.

#### **Legal Issues**

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must get a proper full-time education. Parents are responsible for making this happen, either by registering the child at school or by making other arrangements, which provide an effective education. (The Education Act 1996 Section 7).

#### **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.

## **Review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request an annual report from the Head teacher. 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 Attendance governor holds termly meetings with the Office Manager to review attendance and reports to the full Governing Body.

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

The rates of attendance will be reported on the school website.

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