

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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The Rivers C of E Academy Trust

Committee:	Board of Trustees
Approved on:	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
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## 1. Introduction

The Rivers C of E Academy Trust is committed to developing and implementing policies and practice which support good attendance, in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and governors, and with other organisations who have an interest in - or are affected by - attendance. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, regular attendance is essential. We will consistently work with parents, carers and pupils to achieve our expectation of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Each year, our schools will examine their attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. Pupils are expected to attend 100% of the time. The Trust and its schools will review their systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that the goals set are achieved.

## 2. School Procedures

Any child who is absent at morning or afternoon registration must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Head Teacher or other person acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

## 3. Responsibilities

### **Responsibilities of School Staff:**

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately;
- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities;
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence;
- Support pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they return;
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the attendance of their children;
- Work in partnership with the Trust's Attendance Officer and Local Authority Education Welfare Service;
- Advise parents/carers if their child has arrived late alone and registered themselves at the office.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils:**

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
- Arrive on time;
- Register with the school office if they are late.

### **Responsibilities of Parents/Carers:**

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.

**Parents/Carers will:**

- Encourage regular attendance by supporting the values of good attendance at home and be aware of their legal responsibilities;
- Inform the school by telephone on the first day of their child's absence by 10.00am and on any subsequent days;
- Alert the school office of any planned absences/medical procedures well in advance;
- Support the school with their child in achieving 100% attendance each year;
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance;
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at the school punctually and prepared for the school day (including extra-curricular activities).

**PLEASE NOTE: Holidays are not deemed exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised.**

## 4. Lateness

The law states that **children should arrive at school on time, every day**. Each school within The Rivers C of E Academy Trust will have their own time-table for the day. All schools will follow the same structure of expectations for timeliness at the start of the day.

**The Start of the School Day** - school opens its doors to children and the registration period begins.

**Registration period closes** - all external classroom and cloakroom doors are closed and lessons begin. At The Rivers C of E Academy Trust, the registers close 20 minutes after the start time of each school.

**Children arriving after the end of Registration Period** - enter the school through the main door and report to the school office. Schools are required to record the time of arrival and the reason for lateness.

**Arrivals within 20-minute period after Registration** will be marked in the register as being **late (L)**. This is recorded on our system but does not qualify as unauthorised absence. It does impact on progress, however, because it disrupts learning and routine.

**Arrivals more than 20 minutes after the close of Registration** will be recorded as **unauthorised absence (U)**. At the point of 5 U coded sessions (within a half term) a warning letter will be issued. This is notification that a Penalty Notice may be issued if persistent lateness, after close of registration, continues. Persistence lateness is defined as 10 U coded sessions within a term.

## 5. First Day Absence

Children's non-attendance, when no reason has been reported by a parent/carer, is a safeguarding matter. Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school via telephone by 9.15am, leaving an appropriate message with full details for the absence. This information will be collated and the registers adjusted to reflect the information. If no call is received, a text message will be sent followed by a phone call home.

The school register is a legal document and as such is checked regularly by the Headteacher and the Trust Attendance Officer. Checks ensure registers are being maintained accurately and assess the reasons and incidence of any absence.

## 6. Frequent & Continuing Absence

A courtesy phone call will be made if your child continues to be absent and you have not notified us further. Contact may be attempted via all of the emergency contacts we hold for your child. If we have not been able to make contact, we may make a doorstep visit with the Trust Attendance Officer and/or the Head Teacher to offer any further support.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of lateness or absence, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents/carers. The school will seek advice from the Trust Attendance Officer and the Local Authority.

## 7. Persistent Absence

If a child's attendance falls below 90% across the academic year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. We monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If a child's attendance level is falling towards 90% after the first half term, we will contact the parents/carers and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may ask for medical evidence or suggest a meeting with the Head Teacher or relevant staff member. During the Spring and Summer terms, we may contact parents/carers if a child's absence falls below 95%.

## 8. Absence Notes

Notes received from parents/carers explaining absence will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

## 9. Promoting Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education and that good attendance is vital. The school will be particularly sensitive to the need to support families where attendance issues are related to a pupil's special needs.

**10. Request for Absence in Term Time** for absence during term time are actively discouraged. Parents/Carers will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. The school will not authorise term time absences, except in very exceptional circumstances. A Request for Leave of Absence form (see Appendix A) must be submitted to the school **at least four weeks in advance of the start of the absence**.

## 11. Understanding Types of Absence

Pupils are expected to attend the school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence.

There are two main categories of absences:

**Authorised absence** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory (see Appendix A for guidance).

For anything other than illness, this requires A Request for Leave of Absence form (see Appendix B) to be completed and returned well in advance of the absence to enable the Head Teacher to reach a decision about such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.

**Unauthorised absence** is when the school has not received a valid reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence following a parent/carer's request.

This includes parents/carers giving their children permission to be absent unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings or absences which have not been explained.

If a parent/carer does not request and/or receive permission for their child to be absent and the absence still occurs regardless, the child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to the school it is suspected that they have been on holiday.

**Where there are several siblings across local schools, Head Teachers will always liaise with other leaders in the event of requests for approval of exceptional leave. If a child is absent from school for any reason, the school may check attendance at siblings' schools in case patterns of absence arise.**

The school reserves the right to ask for medical evidence of an illness as stated by the parents/carers.

## 12. Penalty Notices

The Local Authority Education Welfare Service may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Circumstances when a penalty notice may be issued:**

- Pupils identified by police and Inclusion Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013, states that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away if leave is granted. Where a child is taken out of school for 6 days/12 sessions or more and the leave of absence is without the authority of the Head Teacher, each parent/carer is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. These unauthorised absences do not need to be consecutive. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents/carers had previously been warned (e.g. through a warning letter that a fine may be issued as well as reminders in the school newsletter) that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.
- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration occurs on 7 occasions in any six-week period (not including school closures). The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Local Authority Education Welfare Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

### 13. Penalty Notice relating to Suspensions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are suspended from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each suspension. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days

of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any suspension or exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

### 14. Trust Attendance Officer

The Rivers C of E Academy Trust has a Trust Attendance Officer (TAO) who works as part of our Rivers Central Team. The role of the Trust Attendance Officer is to support schools in maintaining good attendance for all children. Our Trust Attendance Officer works alongside schools to monitor attendance and provide support for schools and families at the earliest possible stage of any attendance concern.

## 15. School-level Attendance Officer

To help make sure that every child goes to school regularly and gets an appropriate education, each school has a member of staff who can act on enquiries from schools, other organisations, parents and members of the public with regards to a child's attendance. Where a child's absence from the school gives cause for concern, this member of staff works with everyone involved to create an action plan supporting full-time attendance and will stay involved until this is achieved. Legal action may be taken to ensure your child attends their school.

## 16. Changing Schools

An in-year transfer form is available from the school office and should be completed by the parent/carer and Head Teacher prior to transfer. Pupils' records are sent to the new school. If they fail to attend on the anticipated start date the family will be referred to the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team.

## Appendix A - Absence Guidance

### **Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling:**

The legislation requires that all children, from babies until they cease to be of compulsory school age, be licensed by the local authority in which they live, when they take part in a performance on stage or in a broadcast.

A child remains subject to these regulations until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they turn 16. The academic year runs from 1 September – 31 August inclusive.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head Teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

### **Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport:**

Parents of able sports players can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Head Teacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Head Teacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### **My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding the school for a number of reasons: difficulties with work; friendship problems; family difficulties. It is important that the reason for your child's reluctance to attend the school is identified early and we work together to tackle the problem. For some children the extra support of familiar staff may be called upon. In addition, it may also be helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

### **What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education. Let them know that there is support at the school, either from their class teacher or other trusted adults. Encourage them to seek out a member of staff who they feel comfortable with to talk through any worries or concerns that they have which is preventing them from coming to the school or as a parent/carer, contact the school and request this on your child's behalf.

Be interested in what your child is doing, chat to them about the things they have learnt, the friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!



## Appendix B - Request for Leave of Absence Form & Guidance for Parents

### Request for leave during term time application form

Parents and carers are reminded that leave of absence taken **without** permission during term time may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice by the Local Authority. The cost of the fine is £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to £120 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days. Failure to pay an issued fine could result in prosecution in the magistrates' court.

**To: The Headteacher of (School):** ..... **Date:** .....

**I request consideration of a grant of leave of absence from school during term time for:**

**Name of Child: (full name)** ..... **DOB:** .....

**First date of absence:** ..... **Last day of Absence:** .....

**Please state reason for leave (include any exceptional circumstances to be considered):**

.....

.....

.....

**I have (an)other child(ren) in (an)other school(s) as follows:**

**Full Names and school attended:**

.....

.....

.....

**Signature of 1<sup>st</sup> Parent/carer:** ..... **Print Name:** .....

**Signature of 2<sup>nd</sup> Parent/carer:** ..... **Print Name:** .....

***After consideration, the Headteacher will write to you to let you know if the absence is authorised or not.***

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#### **For Office Use Only**

Number of school days applied for: ..... Child's current attendance YTD .....

Agreed / Not agreed Signed (Headteacher) ..... Date: .....

Notification of decision letter sent to parent(s): Date: .....

## Appendix B - Request for Leave of Absence Form & Guidance for Parents

### Guidance for Parents on Pupil Attendance

We recognise that there are some genuine difficulties and tensions for parents when they decide to take their child out of school. The following information is offered to help.

#### Why keep your child in school?

Some areas to consider are:

- Children have a right to the education that is planned and provided by school;
- Taking a child out of school can be disruptive to the child concerned both at the time, before and after the event;
- Children away from school miss the learning that has been planned. Many learning experiences cannot be packaged and sent home and are part of ongoing programmes. For this reason, children's progress may be interrupted;
- Confidence and self-esteem may be dented as some children can feel separated from their class because the experiences of the class have moved forward without them;
- A high number of absences in a class impact on the general level and pace of learning.
- Teaching may need to be adjusted for the whole class as foundations for the next stage may have been undermined by the absence of several children;
- There are 175 non-school days a year to spend on holidays, shopping and appointments. There are 190 school days a year.

#### Why take your child out of school?

There may be genuinely exceptional reasons for taking a child out of school. The Rivers C of E Academy Trust policy is that absence for other reasons is not authorised.

If, after taking all the factors above into account, parents decide to take their child out of school for other than exceptional reasons as described, the parents should take responsibility for this decision and appreciate that their child's absence will be regarded as Unauthorised.

All of The Rivers C of E Academy Trust schools seek to provide the very best learning experience for your children and this principle is behind our policy on time out of school. We hope this is helpful and our Head Teachers are very happy to discuss individual circumstances with you.

Advice and support are available from the Trust Attendance Officer or by contacting your Local Authority Education Welfare Team.





The Rivers  
C.of E. Academy Trust