



ATTENDANCE POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The River School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement and the building of character for all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Trustees, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at The River School.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first and subsequent days their child is absent. This should be done by phone, email or in person by 9.30am. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.40am. All pupils that arrive late must report to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

At The River School there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance. The Headteacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers or form tutors complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher or form tutor notifies the Headteacher of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the overall responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call, usually by 9.30am.

- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes).
- Parents are informed annually of the child's attendance figure.

TIMELINE OF THE STAGED APPROACH FOR MANAGING POOR ATTENDANCE

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher or form tutor to investigate and notify the Headteacher if there are any concerns. The Headteacher to contact parent, if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where there are concerns that a child's attendance is below 90%, a meeting will be instigated with the Headteacher and SENCO to ascertain if there is an underlying issue.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation with the Headteacher. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

LATENESS

At The River School the registers are taken at 8.40am and 1.20pm. The registers will close at 8.55am and 1.25pm.

Pupils arriving after 8:40am will be marked as 'late before registration has closed' (Code 'L') by their form tutor. Pupils arriving after the registers close must report to the School Office where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as 'late after registration' (Code 'U').

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents to find a workable solution.

AUTHORISING ABSENCE

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time will only be granted if the attendance is usually above 95%.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer. In some circumstances, it may be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

Circumstances where permission for absence will usually be granted:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. It is important to note that the Headteacher can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher. It is particularly detrimental to the education of pupils who have begun GCSE courses to be taken out during term-time. Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final.