



Attendance Policy		Associated Policies
Last reviewed	January 2021	<i>Safeguarding and Child Protection</i>
Next review	January 2024	<i>Supervision and missing child</i>
Gov. sub-committee	Education	
Owner	Headmaster	

**Covid 19 caveat:** On our return to full time education in September 2020, the Governors and Senior Leadership team, under Government guidance to reduce the potential transmission of the virus, reviewed the policy and have decided that the changes to attendance must follow Government guidance as a minimum but would always try to work on best practice. As such, access to school site will be limited (when deemed necessary) and for those who attend the children will be registered as present in school. Remote learning attendance at lessons will also be recorded and non-attendance will be chased up by office staff with parents. These arrangements will remain in place until such time as the guidance indicates otherwise or the School reviews the policy again. Once the sanctions are lifted and the policy reviewed, this caveat will be removed.

**Chris Bouckley Headmaster, 16/12/2020.**

## Aim

The purpose of this policy is to give clear guidelines and expectations about pupils' attendance at Richmond House School to ensure good levels of attendance and avoid absence from school unless for a genuine reason.

The policy is written following guidance on attendance from the Department for Education (DfE 2020) including the statutory guidance on Children Missing in Education (DfE September 2016).

## Introduction

It is important that all parents and children understand the impact that regular school attendance has on a child's educational progress and success, and the school seeks to gain the support of parents in its implementation. Poor attendance disrupts a child's education. This causes a lack of continuity and progression in school work and can establish patterns of behaviour which may lead to long term truancy.

## Legislative Framework

Parent/carers and schools have legal responsibilities in ensuring that children attend school. Parent/carers of children of compulsory school age must ensure that their children receive an efficient and full-time education, either at school or otherwise (Education Act 1944 S.36). Schools must maintain an attendance register in which each child is marked present or absent at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

School keeps a record of attendance data showing the number of unauthorised absences in each term of the preceding school year, expressed as a percentage of the total number of possible attendances that term.

## Partnership between parents/carers and the school:

Attendance and punctuality is regarded by the school as the responsibility of the whole school community. All school staff, governors, parents/carers and children must work in partnership to ensure regular attendance, so that pupils have the opportunity to reach their potential. Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their child of compulsory school age attends school.

**School responsibilities to maintain high levels of attendance and punctuality:**

The school is committed to promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence. It will ensure that every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled and will act early to address patterns of absence.

The school undertakes to:

- Provide a stimulating and differentiated curriculum so that children enjoy learning and want to come to school.
- Provide for the individual needs of all pupils offering an inclusive environment where all pupils can achieve success.
- Complete registration accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon using the appropriate codes, noting reasons for absence.
- Ensure parents of children who arrive late or leave early sign in/out at the office giving the time of arrival/departure and the reason for it. Telephone parents/carers on the first day of absence if no explanation has been received.
- Contact parents/carers to follow up unexplained or unauthorised absences and persistent lateness.
- Follow school policy guidance on missing children (see Appendix One).
- Monitor the attendance of individual children and families and seek to identify concerns and bring about improvements in attendance through telephone calls, interviews and home visits.
- To work collaboratively with other agencies e.g. Social Workers, Child Protection Officers as and when necessary.

**Children are expected to:**

- Attend school regularly and punctually

**Parents/carers are expected to:**

- Ring the school office **before 8.30am** to inform them that a child is ill or give any other reasons for absence that day.
- Inform the school again if absence is likely to continue beyond three days. A note, a medical certificate or proof of medication should be sent to confirm the reasons for the absence.
- Make medical appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the school must be informed in advance of pending appointments. The child must be signed out at the office when taken out of school during school hours by a parent/carer.
- Attend scheduled meetings regarding concerns about the attendance and or punctuality of their children with the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster.
- Apply in advance, in writing (letter or email) to the Head teacher for permission for any exceptional absence e.g. a funeral.
- Take holidays or trips abroad during published school holidays.

**Primary School Attendance Procedure**

Procedures in this policy take into consideration statutory and non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education, (DfE on School Attendance 2018).

## Attendance Registers

- The attendance registers are electronically completed on SIMS during morning and afternoon registration (8.30-8.40am and 1.05-1.10pm). Registers are taken at 8.30am. Registers officially close at 8.40am. Any children who arrives after 8.40am must sign in at the office
- If a child arrives after 8.40am they are recorded as 'late' unless they have a genuine reason such as a medical appointment.
- Registers clearly indicate if a child is present or absent. If absent, the relevant code is used to identify if absence is due to a medical appointment, an approved educational activity outside of school, ill, or authorised absence.
- Pre-school children will be registered in the same way.

### After Registration Closes

- At 8.45am school registers are checked for any absences for which we have no information. School staff will make a call to the parent/carer if there has been no contact with school regarding the absence before 10.00am in order to
  - Ascertain the reason
  - Identify whether the absence is approved or not
  - Identify the correct code to use before entering it in the register, and
  - Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken.
- A home visit will be made if a child has been absent for 24 hours without contact by a parent/carer to ascertain the reason.
- A child who is absent from school without an authorised reason will be marked as 'unauthorised' in the register.

Each month's electronic register is backed up and stored in the Office and retained for 3 years.

### Categorising absence

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991 require schools to determine whether an absence can be deemed to be authorised or whether the child should be regarded as being absent without permission i.e. truanting. In the terms of the legislation it is only the school who can approve the absence, not the parent. At Richmond House School absence will only be authorised for the following reasons (register codes in brackets):

- i. Late arrival (L)
- ii. Child illness (I)
- iii. Child is absent on a day set aside for religious observation by the religious group to which the child's parents belong (R)
- iv. Child is participating in an authorised sporting activity (P)
- v. Child is participating in a pre-approved public performance (C)
- vi. Permission has been granted by the Headmaster through the Absence Request Procedure (see below) (C)
- vii. Child is absent following the death of a close family member (C)
- viii. Child has a medical or dental appointment, confirmed with an appointment card/letter. The child is expected to attend school prior to the appointment or return to school after the appointment - where possible medical or dental appointments should be booked outside of school hours (M)

Richmond House School follows the codes as listed in SIMS.

## Monitoring Attendance

We monitor all areas of attendance. Parents should endeavour to ensure their child's attendance remains above **95%**, allowing them to achieve their potential.

- The Parent/carer may be informed if a child's attendance goes below 95% to find out why (unless specific, known circumstance) and to discuss attendance targets for the following half term.
- The parent/carer of children with less than **90%** attendance will be contacted by the school to discuss attendance targets for the following half term, unless a known reason/ unauthorised absence has been given.
- If their attendance does not improve above 90%, they may be referred to as a "Persistent absentee" and a programme of monitoring and support will be implemented.

## Persistent absentees

Children whose attendance is less than **90% over an academic year** are referred to as "Persistent Absentees" by the DfE and, depending on the reasons known, will be considered for referral to the Education Social Work Service. For persistent absentees, the Assistant Head and Headmaster will implement a programme of monitoring and support.

- Step 1 – parent/carer and Headmaster will discuss the absences and agree an action plan to improve attendance.
- Step 2 – A letter summarising the discussion and a copy of the action plan is given to the parent/carer.
- Step 3 – After 6 weeks the attendance is reviewed by the school. If the percentage has improved to above 90% half-termly monitoring is implemented.
- If the percentage remains below 90% the parent/carer is invited to a second meeting with school staff and to discuss the absences, where further, more formal, actions will be taken. This could be considered as a child missing in education and the school's Safeguarding policy and procedures will be followed.

## Requests for Leave of Absence

The DfE has published amendments to the Pupil Registration Regulations which came into force from September 2013 and relate to Holidays in Term Time, Penalty Notices and Deletions from the school register.

Absence for anything other than through illness or medical reasons during term time is actively discouraged.

Parents requesting time out of school for their child during term time should put this in writing to the Headmaster. **Holidays in term time WILL NOT be authorised unless there are exceptional circumstances and will be granted at the Headmaster's discretion.**

The Headmaster will determine 'exceptional circumstances' and also the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis and no precedence will be set by any one case. The Headmaster reserves the right to request evidence to support the leave of absence request prior to the decision being made.

## Punctuality

It is important that children are punctual so that they do not miss out of the beginning of each school day. This time can be important because information is often given out which allows for the smooth running of the day and helps children feel part of the school community.

- The school bell for the start of the school day is at 8.30am and it is essential each child is at school by 8.30am.
- If a child arrives on or after 8.40am the child needs to be escorted across the back lane by the parent/carer and accompanied to the school office to sign in for safety reasons and monitoring of attendance.
- If a child arrives after the register has closed at 8.40am then they will be entered as late and this will be recorded on SIMS and monitored.
- If children are persistently late for school a letter is sent to a parent/carer to inform them and request that this improves.
- If no improvement is made then the parent/carer is invited to a meeting with school staff to discuss the situation and offer support if appropriate.


### **Collection of children at the end of the day**

The school finishes at 3.30pm for EYFS and 3.35pm for Years 1-6. Children not collected by 3.45pm will be taken to After School Care where parents will be charged. School must be informed if the child is to be picked up by anybody other than the authorised person.

If children are attending an after-school activity, they should be collected promptly at the published finish time and place. Any children not collected 5 minutes after the club finish time will be taken to After School Care and a charge will be made.

### **Entitlement and Equal Opportunities**

All children have entitlement to education with full access to the school's curriculum. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and promptly, and school staff have an entitlement to carry out their roles without obstruction.



Signed (Headmaster)



Signed (Chair of Governors)

**Appendix One:** Referral procedure for a child missing at school.

