



Whole School Attendance Policy

Riverside Federation

Approved by:	Head Teacher & Governors
Last reviewed:	Spring 2021
Next review due:	Spring 2022

This policy is in support of the Riverside Federation's vision:
Small schools providing opportunity, delivering challenge, building respect.

Rationale

The Riverside Federation is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We have developed this policy in order to give a consistent response to all students and families in our care.

We want to do our best for all our young people and believe that regular attendance at school is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by a parent.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Attendance is subject to various Education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department of Education. As a school we regularly review our attendance figures and set targets. These will reflect both national and Norfolk attendance targets and following this will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals. This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

“Absence” as:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Regular attendance as: •

- Attendance at every session the school is open to pupils unless their absence has been authorised

An “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
- An absence due to a family emergency or unavoidable cause

An “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

“Persistent absenteeism” (PA) as:

- Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason

“Parent” as

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff 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. The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education.

Lateness

The Federation set their own registration times. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:50am. The registers will remain open for 10 minutes. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as late but any child arriving after 30 minutes will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation such as delayed school transport. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

First Day of Absence

On the first day of an absence, parents/carers should contact their child’s school before the registration period closes. If no contact has been made, the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers as quickly as possible during the school day and will transfer information to the registers, alerting the Headteacher or other key staff to any wellbeing issues. If no contact is received from parents by the end of the morning of absence, we will phone or text them. We will continue to make daily contact until a response is received. We will also make general enquires during this time and try other contact numbers.

Five Days’ Absence

Any child who is absent without an explanation for five consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Staff for the local area - this is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Absence notes

Notes of telephone calls received and written notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the child, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period. If there are attendance concerns about the child, then further medical evidence may be required (e.g. doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Headteachers retain the right to unauthorise absence without medical evidence.

Parents are expected to phone the school by 9:30am to report their child as absent. If no call is received the office staff will contact the parent/carer and record this on the register. If the parent/carer is uncontactable, this will be noted on the register and the headteacher advised.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of all staff within the Federation to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. We monitor attendance on a monthly basis. When a child's attendance falls lower than the national average or causing concern, their parents will be contacted by the school. We will look for patterns and reasons for absence, making parents aware of the number of absences and the importance of attendance etc. Additional support may be available from outside agencies. In other cases, the school will seek advice from the school's Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO). Action may include the use of the Fast Track system and/or Fixed Penalty Notices. Monitoring will continue and a Family Support Plan meeting could be considered.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present;

- Absent;
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects.

The attendance of all pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or full prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all children are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the child received help to catch up on missed work and updated on any information which has been passed to other children.

Promoting attendance

The Riverside Federation work actively together to improve attendance in our area and give consistent messages about the importance of good attendance. The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers of their responsibility to ensure that their children receive education and will make clear the links between attendance and attainment

Holidays in term time

Holidays during term time are not permitted. Parents will be reminded of the effect absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. Absences in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances but parents must apply in advance for permission using the school request for leave of absence form. In certain year groups, due to teacher and statutory assessments and controlled assignments, no absences will be authorised during certain periods, e.g. SATs and exam periods.

Penalty Notices

The government states that any excessive absence or any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised on the child's records. You need to be aware an accumulation of unauthorised absences will result in Penalty Notices or legal proceedings against you. The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

1. 85% attendance or less, with at least 15% unauthorised absence over a 6 week period; or,
2. Below 90% attendance within a 12 week period where some or all of the absences are due to unauthorised term time holiday absence.

The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Categorisation of Absence

Any child who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note children recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site If a child is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Riverside Federation believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governors of The Riverside Federation will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with

- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governors' meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Management Team at The Riverside Federation will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Regulations and other relevant legislation are complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governors and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Set out how Pupil Premium will be used to support pupils with irregular attendance

All staff at The Riverside Federation will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents

- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

Pupils will:

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or parents to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

The member of staff responsible for attendance will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support. The member of staff responsible for attendance will support good attendance, respond to concerns and promote improvement in attendance by:

- Monitoring and analysing pupil attendance data
- Undertaking attendance meetings with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and other relevant staff members
- Implementing the identified strategies for promoting good whole school attendance
- Implementing the identified strategies for tackling unsatisfactory attendance
- Managing individual pupil casework files
- Coordinating Individual Action Plans for pupils causing concern including the instigation of a Family Support Plan (FSP) and/ or the implementation of a parenting contract
- Ensuring first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
- Taking an active lead in delivering whole school initiatives such as awards assemblies and reward schemes
- Making referrals to appropriate external agencies

The Riverside Federation request that parents will:

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school

- Install the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

The registration system

The School will use a computerised system for keeping the school attendance records. The following codes /marks will be used to record attendance information. Present / am \ pm

Code	Description	Category
B	Dual Registration Arrangement	Authorised absence
C	Other Circumstances	Authorised absence
E	Excluded	Authorised absence
H	Approved family Holiday	Authorised absence
L	Late Registration closed	Unauthorised absence
M	Medical, Dental or confirmed illness	Authorised absence
O	Unauthorised Absence	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Attendance out of school
R	Religious Observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller child travelling	Authorised absence
U	Unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Attendance out of school
W	Work experience	Attendance out of school
X	Non-compulsory absence	Attendance out of school
Y	Absence due to exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence