



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) (and [2010](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#) amendments)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school;
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary;

3.3 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level;
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher;

- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence;
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School office staff

School office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry;
- The amended entry;
- The reason for the amendment;
- The date on which the amendment was made;
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45 and will be kept open until 9:05. Pupils arriving at school after 9:05 will be marked as late. Pupils arriving after 9:30 will receive a U (unauthorised absence) mark in the register.

The register for the second session will be taken at 1:10 and will be kept open until 1:30.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:30am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents should report their child's absence either by phoning the school office on: 01628 621741 or by emailing the Attendance Team on attendance@riversideprimaryschool.org.uk

On the first day of absence, the Attendance officer will text parents to seek the reason behind the absence. If a child is open to a child protection plan, the Attendance Office will text and phone the parents.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code;
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.
- Learning Mentors or the Attendance Officer staff the front reception and make a note of any late children. The Attendance Officer adds these late children to the class registers.
- The Headteacher and Attendance Officer identify children who are regularly late at their half-termly meetings and send letters to these families.

4.5 Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carers to ascertain the reason, by a phone call from the Attendance Officer;
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Identify the correct attendance code to use.

4.6 Reporting to parents

We report each child's annual attendance to parents in their end of year report. At the end of every half term, we send letters to parents whose children have dropped below the 85% attendance mark.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will not grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time. Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised. Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail);
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart;
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

The Headteacher and the Attendance officer meet on a half-termly basis to review the whole school attendance data. Any child whose attendance is below 90% is marked as being persistently absent. The Attendance Office will send attendance letters to the parents of all children who fall into this category every half term. Where the Headteacher and Attendance Office are concerned about the child's attendance (below 85%), the Attendance Officer will organise a meeting between the parents and the Headteacher. If the child's attendance does not improve half term on half term – the Attendance Office will invite the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to attend the meeting with the Headteacher. Where a child is open to a social care case the DSL lead for that family will notify the family's social worker of any persistent absences.

5.3 Legal sanctions

The national threshold for issuing a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of term time holiday plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the registers close). These sessions can be consecutive or can now span across different terms or school years. When the threshold has been met the school will either offer appropriate support if appropriate or immediately issue a penalty notice if it is the best available tool to improve a pupil's attendance.

Notices to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or guardian or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents or guardians a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to issue one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (because the parent has already received one for a similar offence). If sufficient improvement is not made following the service of a Notice to Improve, a penalty notice may be issued either during or at the end of the designated time period.

Penalty Notices

From Autumn 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent/guardian in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice is charged at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice will be charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

If the penalty notice is not paid by the end of the 28-day period, the local authority will decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission;
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

As a school, we use the following strategies to promote good attendance:

- Monday assembly – awarding of Oscar trophy to the class with the best attendance the previous week;
- SLT meet and greet children on the school gates and praise children and families who are persistently absent for attending;
- Class teachers praise children and parents for good attendance;
- Each week any class with attendance over 90% will have 5-minutes extra Golden Time;
- End of year 97+% attendance certificates.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this. If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The school collects and stores attendance data using the management information systems. The school provides attendance data to the DfE, using Arbor to send data about the school census. The figures returned are then published by the DfE as part of the annual publication of school statistics. The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils. Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender. The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and to take action to address and improve those areas. The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

School Attendance Codes 2024

Background

The law requires that all schools including independent schools have an admission register and, except for schools where all pupils are boarders, an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register. A school who fails to comply with these regulations is guilty of an offence and can be fined. The DfE are collating all Attendance Data. Data and Benchmarking can take place through your VYED portal.

Present Codes	
/ \	present during registration
B	educated off site and taster days and do not fit K, V, P or W codes
K	attending provision arranged by the local authority
L	arrived after the register has started but before it has closed
P	Sporting activity with prior agreement from school
V	educational visit or trip
W	work experience
Absent Codes	
Authorised Absences	
C	exceptional circumstances
C1	in a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	absent due to part-time timetable
D	dual registered
E	suspended or permanently excluded
I	illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	job/school/college interview
M	medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as C if agreed)
S	study leave
T	parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
Unauthorised Absence	
G	holiday (not agreed)
N	reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within 5 days)
O	absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	late after register has closed
Z	pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (eg holidays, insets and polling station days)

Why it Matters.

A school register is a legal document that must be kept for by law. A school's attendance records are important for effective attendance management. They also provide evidence in the event of prosecution of parents under the Education Act 1996, or if seeking an; Attendance Contract, Fixed Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order, Parenting Order or Attendance Prosecution.

Please Note: Further explanation of the use of the different codes can be found on page 76 onwards of the [Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)

Penalty Notice Changes

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices on 19th August 2024 there are significant changes in the way that Penalty Notices are to be issued and an increase in the charges associated with them. These are nationwide changes implemented for consistency across all Local Authorities.

Term Time Leave is only allowed in exceptional circumstances communicated in advance with evidence provided as soon as possible to the Headteacher.

First Offence

For the first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be;

- £160 per parent per child paid within 28 days.
- Reduced to £80 per parent if paid within 21 days.



Please ensure you communicate all absences for your child to school.

Second Offence

Within 3 years of the first offence. The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised term time leave or irregular attendance the amount will be;

- £160 per parent per child paid within 28 days.
- No reduction for early payment.

Third Offence Onwards – Within 3 years of the first offence

The third time an offence is committed for unauthorised term time leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued and the case will be presented straight to the magistrates court. Fines can be around £2500 per parent, per child. Cases found to be guilty in the magistrate's court can show as a criminal record.

Notices to Improve

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or guardian or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent to give parents or guardians a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to issue one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (because the parent has already received one for a similar offence).

If sufficient improvement is not made following the service of a Notice to Improve, a penalty notice may be issued either during or at the end of the designated time period.

Don't forget.

Penalty Notices are issued Per Parent, Per Child.

For example 3 siblings absent would result in each parent receiving 3 fines. This could amount to £960

DfE Blog for Parents

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/29/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/>



10 sessions in 10 weeks

Penalty Notices will be considered for any 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in 10 weeks. **5 Consecutive days** of term time leave can trigger a Penalty Notice