

# Rickleton Primary School



## Attendance - Monitoring Pupil Absence

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## POLICY FOR MONITORING PUPIL ABSENCE.

It has long been recognised that academic success is built upon a solid foundation of good attendance. Where parents have decided to have their child registered at school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school. As a school we have a shared legal responsibility to ensure that all children attend school regularly.

In line with the Department for Education guidance on attendance and persistent absence schools are being targeted to reduce the level of absence for all pupils.

Parents should speak to their child's class teacher about general attendance concerns. This can be done in person, by contacting the school office or on Dojo.

Mrs S O'Connor is the school's attendance lead and can be contacted via the school's telephone number on 0191 4155050 or via email to [info@rickletonprimary.co.uk](mailto:info@rickletonprimary.co.uk). Upon the absence of Mrs S O'Connor, Mrs Price (HT) and Mr Baker (DHT) should be contacted. André Sowerby, the schools parent support worker can be contacted on 07931186087 to offer advice and support.

### **AIMS**

- As a school, we aim to:
- Promote good attendance
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education, which they are entitled to
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Ensure all pupils arrive at school on time
- Build strong relationships with families and ensure support is given if needed

### **AT RICKLETON PRIMARY SCHOOL THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES ARE FOLLOWED:**

1. Parents should contact school with a reason for absence via a telephone call by 8.30.
2. Upon first response to absence, admin staff will send a text to the nominated number. Second response if there is no response admin staff will make a follow up phone call that morning. If no-contact by parents has been made after the start of the afternoon session, admin staff will make a second phone call.
3. If there is no notification by the parent the absence will be recorded as unauthorised
4. If school is unable to make contact by telephone, then a home visit may be conducted to establish the welfare of the pupil.

### **School start and end times**

Nursery – 8.45 – 11.45 and 12.30 – 3.30

Reception – 8.45 – 3.15

Year 1 – 8.45 – 3.20

Year 2 – 8.40 – 3.20

KS2 – 8.45 – 3.30

## **Late attendance**

### **Registers are closed at 8.55 am**

#### **Lateness**

Pupils arriving at school after the doors have closed at 8.55am should enter through the main entrance and school office staff will record their name, time and reason for lateness. A late mark is entered in the register. School will monitor lateness to look for patterns that may be of concern.

If pupils arrive after 9.25am, they will be given an unauthorised late mark and this will show on their attendance as an absence for that session.

The school will monitor late arrivals weekly and will follow up with phone calls by the school's parent support worker where you may be invited in to school for a meeting or via a letter.

## **Monitoring of Absence**

### **Targets**

At least 97% attendance is the target set by the Department for Education, to encourage all children to reach their full potential. Rickleton Primary School uses a 4-stage monitoring process via an online platform from A Star Attendance, which is intended to raise pupil attendance levels.

Stage 1 – Pupils who have an attendance of 97% or below. A letter will be sent out reminding parent/carer of the importance of good attendance.

Stage 2 – Pupils continue to have attendance of 97% or below and have made no improvement. A letter will be sent home with a parent survey requesting more information about any absence and parents may be invited into school for a meeting. Any absence will require medical evidence.

Stage 3 – Pupils continue to show little, or no improvement and attendance has not reached 97% or above. A letter will be sent home advising parents there will be a 4-week monitoring period. During this period 100% attendance is required unless medical evidence can be provided. A phone call will be made by our parent support worker who will offer a meeting in school where reasons for absence can be discussed, support offered including an Early Help referral and an action plan will be drawn up. If parents fail to attend the meeting they will receive a letter requesting them to make contact with school to rearrange.

Stage 4 – Pupils who have not passed the 4-week monitoring period will now be considered for referral to the local authority. Together for Children will formally investigate a pupil's non-attendance as part of the Council's statutory duty.

Formal proceedings are for children who are of statutory school age – over 5yrs old.

No school or local authority wants to take legal action, and every attempt to resolve parents' concerns and improve a child's attendance will be made before any formal action is considered. 'Prosecution is seen as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate' 'Working Together to Improve AttendanceTake' DFE 2024.

## **Lateness**

As part of the attendance monitoring procedures, children will also be monitored for lateness on a weekly basis by the school's attendance lead. Any children with patterns of lateness will receive a letter, a home visit or phone call to remind them of the importance of being at school for the start of the school day. Children with significant lost learning time will receive a letter at the end of each half term highlighting how much learning time has been lost.

## **Nursery Children**

Strong attendance in Nursery is just as important as it is for all pupils in our school. It is important that good habits of attendance are formed at this early stage. At this young age, children are taking in new knowledge and developing skills rapidly. We have a curriculum in the early years which is carefully planned and which ensures children are given the foundations for learning which are essential for their future success. Absence from Nursery can have a particularly significant impact on young children as it can hamper their crucial personal, social and emotional development, as well as limiting the development of their communication and language. We expect parents of children in Nursery to follow the same procedures for contacting school if their child is absent, or to request any leave of absence. School will monitor the attendance of children in Nursery in line with all pupils at school. Therefore all term time holidays will be unauthorised.

If a child's attendance falls below 70% their school place may be at risk of being withdrawn and offered to another child on the waiting list. This decision requires the involvement and consent of the Governing Body and there is a right of appeal.

## **Planned Absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. We ask parents/carers to notify school in advance of the appointment by telephone or informing the main school office in person. Parents/carers must bring copies of appointment cards where possible. 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 and should return after their appointment if able to do so.

## **Children Missing From Education**

If, after 3 days of the absence, the school has not received satisfactory reason for absence, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed. They will then decide the appropriate next steps which may include a visit to the child's home, liaising with Children's Services or requesting a safe and well check from the police. It is expected that, for pupils identified as vulnerable by the school, these actions would be taken on the first day of absence. The DSL will routinely make the school business manager and school administrator aware of the vulnerable pupils within the school. Vulnerable pupils could include:

- Pupils who are subject to a multi-agency plan
- Pupils who are looked after children
- Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- Any other pupils identified as vulnerable by the school

This is so that the DSL can be informed of these pupils' first day of absence, and each subsequent day. This will allow the DSL to make an informed decision on the necessary response to the absence to ensure that pupils are safe. Where pupils are receiving support from a social worker through local authority children's services, any unexplained absences should be reported on the same day to the child's social worker.

## **Rewards**

Attendance monitoring information is used to recognise and celebrate children who have 97-100% attendance.

There is a termly raffle with prizes. The names of all pupils who have attained 100% attendance that term will be put into the prize draw – winners will be taken from EYFS, KS1, Lower KS 2 and Upper KS 2.

Children will also receive the following badges:

Bronze for 1 terms full attendance

Silver for 2 terms full attendance

Gold for 3 terms full attendance

Class certificates are used to celebrate the class with the weekly highest attendance and they are also awarded 3 Dojo points.

Classes with attendance over 97% will receive a star on the race to 5 board. Once a class achieves 5 stars they will be awarded with an extra playtime.

Communication with an individual or groups of pupils about attendance will only ever be positive and encouraging. No pupil will be held accountable for their own non-attendance as it is a parental issue.

## **Leave of Absence**

By law, parents and carers of children registered at school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Children should attend school every day so that they make the most of the education available to them. We understand that there may be occasions when a child is unwell and is not able to come in to school, but this should be kept to a minimum.

## **The Law**

From September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 amendments to the 2006 Education Act make clear that **Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. "Working together to improve attendance." Aug 2024

There is **no entitlement** for parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Holidays will **NOT** be authorised.

Parents and carers **must avoid** taking their children out of school during term time. Children have 13 weeks holiday per year when holidays should be taken.

### **How to apply for special leave during term time**

Please complete a special leave request form if you intend taking your child out of school. The form should be completed at least 2 weeks in advance of the date of the proposed leave, giving details of the circumstances of the leave request. However, any forms submitted **after** the period of absence will be automatically unauthorised.

Term time holidays will **NOT BE AUTHORISED** unless there are exceptional circumstances which might justify it. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and you may be asked to attend a meeting in school.

### **What are exceptional circumstances?**

It is the decision of the Head teacher as to what might constitute exceptional circumstances and each request for term time leave will be considered on an individual basis.

Exceptional circumstances are **NOT**:

- Availability of cheap flights and/or holidays
- Arrangements made by a family member or friends
- Schooling abroad
- Visiting family who live in the UK or abroad

### **What if we decide to go anyway?**

If the Head teacher has not authorised special leave, penalty notice fines will be issued for unauthorised term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days. Inset training days are school days and can be included in the 5 or more consecutive days where there was an intent to be absent for term time leave.

If absence from school results in your child's attendance dropping below 97% your children will be monitored on the 4 stage process outlined above.

If attendance remains low or falls below 90% which is called persistent absence then you are at risk of facing possible prosecution and fines.

It is always best to be honest and apply for any planned absence from school, whether Special Leave is granted or not. The chances of possible prosecution increase if it is found that the parent/carer has not been truthful about their child's reason for absence.

### **Fines for taking pupil out of school for leave of absence**

If a parent and carer decide to take a child(ren) out of school for a leave of absence, the matter will then be referred to the **Local Authority** to consider a Fixed Penalty Notice under Section 444 of the Education Act (1996) for failing to ensure the regular attendance of your child. The Supreme Court justices concluded that in section 444(1) of the

Education Act 1996, “regularly” means “in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school”.

The Penalty Notice is being requested in line with the DFE guidelines ‘Working together to improve attendance’ August 2024 and is administered by Sunderland City Council **NOT** school. If accepted, the notice will be sent to both parents at their home address and payment details will be explained.

From Autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second fixed penalty notice within that period 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 issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is 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. Instead the case will be presented to the Magistrates Court. Magistrates can fine up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court can show on parents future DBS certificates, due to the ‘failure to safeguard a child’s education.’

### **If we authorise your special leave**

If we do authorise a special leave of absence under exceptional circumstances, you must understand the educational impact upon your child.

If we do authorise your leave you will receive a letter which confirms the dates when your child will be absent and the agreed date for return. It can only be signed by the Head teacher or School Attendance Officer. A copy will be kept on record.

### **Reporting**

The Head teacher will report on attendance/ absence termly in the Head teacher’s Report to the Governing Body.

Individual parents will receive information about their child with their child’s Annual Report at the end of the summer term.

### **Children absent from education**

The school’s responsibilities to prevent pupils becoming ‘lost’ in the education system are taken very seriously. Prevention is the schools first priority. To this end we have adopted the best practice recommended by the Local Authority Education Team and informed by Ofsted’s publication (Nov 2013).

The school have adopted and use the systems and practice recommended in the document ‘Guidance to identifying children missing from education’ Sunderland City Council 2011. School operates a rigorous system of transfer arrangements prior to a child

moving school with particular care when pupils move between Local Authorities to ensure seamless transition and the handing on of school records; school to school.

Our Parent Support Officer André Sowerby has links with multi-agency teams across LA's to ensure children are tracked and verified as being in education when they move from our school. File transfer protocols are used to ensure all sensitive documentation is transferred and recorded. If a referral is made school will email the CME team at [cme@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:cme@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

When a child leaves in 'unusual circumstances' e.g. the CME team are informed.

When children apply and are accepted into school exhaustive attempts are made to contact the child's previous school to ensure proper transition.

Children in particularly vulnerable groups such as CFC pupils with CAF and TAF referrals, some Ethnic minority and Families in Need are given special attention due to the increased potential for those families to move rapidly between schools and LA's.

September 2024