

# ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR RIVER VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Date of issue:  
Reviewed:  
Review Date:

*July 2011*  
November 2015  
*September 2019*



## MISSION STATEMENT

River View Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils, starting within our Early Years setting, and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child (including non statutory aged children) to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a minimum of 95% attendance for all children. As at 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, the school had achieved an attendance level of 94.50% which has been a result of the school applying a consistent and whole-school approach in monitoring and challenging attendance and in promoting an ethos of the school's high expectations. Every opportunity will be used to convey to parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

The school will at all times endeavour to support parents/carers in overcoming any barriers to achieving regular school attendance. Particular focus will be made in supporting parents/carers of our Nursery and Reception children who are failing to get their children to school because of the detrimental effect this has on the child's acquisition of language and on their social development.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Children, Schools & Families



## THE LAW

The Education Act 1996 Part 1 Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude and
  - (b) To any special needs he may have
- Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within the Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:  
The education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

Each year the school will set an attendance target and will monitor attendance figures at the end of each **half term** to track progress, monitor the effectiveness of interventions and review systems.

This attendance policy will contain the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets and support all pupils to overcome barriers to regular school attendance.

## SCHOOL 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 [attendance out of school]. Only the head teacher 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.

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### PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

Examples

Pupil voice – consultation with the school council

Acknowledging achievement

Individual pupil targets

Year targets

Celebrations in assembly

PSHE

Posters/Notice Boards around school

Individual and class incentives



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### PUNCTUALITY

Morning and afternoon registration will be managed by the school systems and in accordance with the school timetables.

Any pupil arriving after registers close will have to sign in on the Inventory system located in the office and they will be given the appropriate code. Where there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed or attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

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### FIRST DAY ABSENCE

If a child is absent from school, for whatever reason, it is the responsibility of the parent /carer to inform the school by 9.15 a.m. on the first day of absence by telephoning River View on 0161 921 2670. On your child's return to school, he/she should bring a note to confirm the reason for the absence.

If a parent/carers does not contact school with a reason, the school will contact the parent/carers to establish the reason for absence either by making a telephone call (or send a text message to the contact number school have on file). If the school does not receive a response by these means, then a letter will be sent to the parent/carers upon the child's return asking them to complete and return a reply slip with an explanation of the child's absence. If the school is not satisfied with the reason provided for the pupil's absence, or if no reason is provided, it will be recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence. Parents cannot authorise a child's absence from school, it is the schools decision to authorise/unauthorise absences.

## MANAGING ABSENCE

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

This enables the school to work in partnership with the parent/carer by identifying what the issues are and devising a joint action plan to implement interventions that can improve the situation.

Through reviewing the plan on a regular basis and through listening to the views of all parties it is anticipated that there would be improvements and good working relationships established based on honesty and trust.

If this is unsuccessful the school may refer to the School Health Adviser/School Nurse etc, if the problem appears to be a medical one. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's named Education Welfare Officer.

All absences will be tracked and monitored by the school.

The school's escalation of intervention and actions that will be taken by the school and at what point other agencies will be involved are as follows:

- If no response is received from the parents/carers and absence remains a point of concern, the parents/carers will be invited into school by Miss L Johnson.
- If the reason for absence is school based, River View Primary School will work with the young person to resolve the issue - working within the guidelines of other policies E.G anti-bullying policy.
- In some cases a visit may be made to the family home by a member of school staff.
- Try to gain the views of the child as to the reasons for absences when it is a cause of concern
- A letter will be sent home requesting the parents/carers of that child to contact the school as a matter of urgency.
- The purpose of the meeting will be to establish the reasons for absence and support mechanisms agreed to overcome the barriers preventing regular school attendance. For example, by completing a Common Assessment Framework and making arrangements for a Team Around The Child to take place.

The school has an attendance target which has been set initially at 96%

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### THE GOVERNORS WILL:

- Monitor attendance termly and review all strategies being used.

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### THE EVERY CHILD MATTERS COORDINATOR WILL:

- Have an overview of attendance for each year group and compile data and attend half termly multi agency meetings in relation to the most vulnerable pupils
- Co-ordinate support strategies for pupils returning to school after periods of absence
- Analyse pupil under performance, put action plans in place and measure the impact of them
- Implement intervention strategies for missed work
- Organise rewards in assemblies
- Analyse data on pupils with persistent absence each half term
- Challenge absence codes when necessary
- Set year class targets for attendance
- Compare attendance figures to previous years
- Write and update the school policy for attendance
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Service to provide the best possible service for the school.
- Be available to support, guide and advise in relation to attendance matters
- Organise Attendance Plans as and when appropriate

- Co-ordinate multi agency meetings each half term to discuss early intervention strategies for the most vulnerable pupils
- Write, lead and update the action plan to improve attendance
- Ensure that stakeholders are aware of their role in ensuring good attendance
- Present information to the Governors as and when required
- Monitor overall attendance and punctuality
- Monitor Persistent Absence (PA) data
- Organise and lead Attendance Panels

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#### ALL TEACHING STAFF WILL:

- Ensure children are registered with their classes in the morning
- Collect absence notes and discuss issues affecting attendance
- Alert Miss L Johnson about occasions of unauthorised absence and any concerns re: attendance/registers
- Promote good attendance by providing meaningful and challenging learning experiences
- Provide appropriate work to support re-integration following a period of absence

If there is no improvement in levels of attendance Miss L Johnson will inform the Education Welfare Officer through completing the referral form on the secure upload which will indicate the perceived needs of the child and the actions taken by school to improve the situation.

### PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Pupils are categorised as being a 'Persistent Absence' pupil if they accumulate 10% or more absences

For children whose attendance falls into the 'persistent absence' category, parents/carers will be contacted by Miss L Johnson and/or they will be invited to school. During this meeting:

- An action plan will be compiled with input from the parent/carer, school and pupil.
- Targets will be agreed and reviewed until that child is no longer in the persistent absence category.
- There would be a focus on links between attendance and attainment.
- A parenting contract will be offered if it is deemed appropriate
- If appropriate the targets will include fast track to prosecution which will involve the Education Welfare officer

If the parent fails to attend the meeting or there is no significant improvement in attendance the issues will be brought to the attention Education Welfare Officer by the completion of the referral form as outlined above.

### HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

River View Primary School, in line with the Local Authority, will treat a request for a holiday in term time to be the exception rather than the rule. Therefore, we will authorise far fewer term-time holidays and we will challenge parents more robustly before a holiday in term time can be authorised. This is because of the detrimental effect the absence would have upon the child's learning.

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## BACKGROUND



There is clear evidence in educational research that lack of attendance at school for whatever reason, can significantly reduce the potential attainment and achievement levels of the young people concerned.

Holidays taken in term time are a significant reason for absence from school both locally and nationally. As with any absence, it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to decide whether the reason given for absence is to be marked as authorised or unauthorised. Therefore it is essential that the school conveys a fair and equitable process of managing holidays in term time. This will entail having a process in place to determine whether the absence will be authorised or not.

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## PROCEDURE

All holidays in term time for all children must be requested by completing the Holiday in Term Time Request form. This will be obtainable from the school office. Once completed the parent/ carer must return the form to the office.

The Head Teacher will then indicate on the form whether or not the request has been authorised. This will then be returned to the parent / carer.

Should the request be declined by the Head Teacher and the parent / carer continue to take the holiday, the absence will be marked as unauthorised. This could lead to a request being made to the Local Authority for the implementation of a fixed penalty fine. This will be dependent on the length of absence. In accordance with the Local Authority code of practise a fine can be implemented for 10 days unauthorised absence which can be accumulative over the academic year.

When paid within 28 days the fine is £60 per child, £120 if paid within 42 days or the parent/carers will be prosecuted for the non school attendance if the fine is not paid within the given timescales.

River View Primary School will only authorise a holiday in term time when there are **exceptional circumstances\***. For additional information on what this means please refer to appendix 1.

Holidays in term time that have been authorised will be subject to the following conditions:

- No more than 10 school days will be authorised in one academic year per child.
- No requests for holidays will be authorised during or immediately before exams such as SAT's.

Authorisation will not be given when the reason for taking a holiday in term time is:

- availability of cheap holidays
- availability of desired accommodation
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- overlap with beginning or end of term

Approval for holidays in term time should always be made in advance and, wherever possible, prior to booking the holiday.

## BREACH OF THE POLICY

Should a holiday be taken when:

- No written request has been made
- A request has been made and has been denied by the Head Teacher

A request for the implementation of a penalty notice will be made to the Local Authority.

## LEGAL SANCTIONS

River View Primary School will consider applying for penalty notice warnings in the following circumstances:

- Unauthorised absence of ten sessions or more (There are two sessions in a day)
- Unauthorised holidays in term time
- Persistent late arrival (after the register has closed and an unauthorised absence is created).

The Local Authority can instigate prosecution under the Education Act 1996 section 441 or 441(a) when;-

- Parent/Carers persistently fail to respond to any correspondence in relation to their child's absence
- Evidence indicates that support has been offered but parents/carers have failed to engage
- Targets have been agreed with the parent/carers through the Fast track procedure but improvements have not been made
- There is sufficient evidence that parent/carers have failed in their responsibility to ensure that their child receives appropriate full time education.

Disposal for prosecutions for non-school attendance can range from a fine to a custodial sentence.

## REINTEGRATION TO SCHOOL

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

We would help the child with:

- Part time timetable – time limited
- Smaller groups before return to full class
- Additional support to enable young person to catch up on work
- Buddy system
- Peer mentoring
- Review of progress
- Listen to the young person



IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT HEAD TEACHERS CAN DETERMINE THE LENGTH OF THE AUTHORISED ABSENCE AS WELL AS WHETHER ABSENCE IS AUTHORISED AT ALL.

## APPENDIX 1

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### FURTHER INFORMATION ON WHAT EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES MEANS; PROVIDED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HEAD TEACHERS.

- The decision to authorise absence is at the head teacher's discretion based on their assessment of the situation. Circumstances vary from school to school and so there can be no absolute rules on this subject.
- Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Heads will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy should be that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.
- If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
- Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Schools may wish to take the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis. It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.
- It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.



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IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXACTLY DEFINE WHAT THE TERM 'EXCEPTIONAL' MIGHT REFER TO. THE FOLLOWING LIST HAS BEEN DRAWN FROM OUR RECORDS OF REQUESTS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN AUTHORISED.

- Attending a family wedding. Usually the day of the wedding will be authorised and where needed, time to travel. Some requests have been for two or three week extended absence to attend the wedding and these requests have not been authorised.
- Returning to home country to renew a visa.
- An extended visit to home country in term time. Some requests are for additional weeks either side of a school holiday and these requests have not been authorised.
- Extended visit to home country to coincide with a religious festival. The duration of the festival is usually authorised along with reasonable travel time. Some requests have been for an extended period of time either side of the festival and these requests have not been authorised.
- Overseas students studying in the UK who decide to return home at the end of their college or University term but before the end of the school term. On some occasions this has resulted in the child or children being taken off role with the risk of losing the school place. If the child has been taken off role, upon return the parent needs to reapply and may be allocated a place at another school in Salford.
- Holidays in term time. Often the reasons stated include the cost of the holiday or a parent's holiday patterns; these requests have not been authorised.
- Unexplained absence where the international dial tone indicates that the family are abroad.
- Time off due to a parent undertaking an examination in another country.
- Special birthday celebrations. An example of this might be a request due to the whole family going on holiday for a 60th birthday; these requests have not been authorised.
- A surprise holiday. There are occasions where a family member books a surprise holiday without the parents knowing; these requests have not been authorised.