

# **Riverside School Attendance Policy**

- **Policy, pp 2-5**
- **Appendix 1: Attendance – roles & responsibilities, pp 6-7**
- **Appendix 2: Parental application for student leave from school, p 8**

*(During the Covid-19 pandemic crisis all the school's systems for effectively monitoring student attendance will continue, with regular meetings as outlined in the policy, and regular contact with the school's link Educational Welfare Officer, but sensitive interventions will be implemented when families are fearful of sending their students to school. Interventions will include phone calls, zoom meetings and/or encouraging parental visits to school after hours to fully explain the school's safety arrangements).*

**Reviewed and approved at Meeting 2 of the Governing Board –15 October, 2020**

This policy will be reviewed on a biennial model

**Next review date: Autumn 2022**

# **Attendance Policy**

## **1. Introduction**

At Riverside we provide a safe and welcoming environment, where all members of the school community are socially included.

The school also ensures that all its students receive an educational experience of a high quality - appropriately differentiated to meet individual learning needs - to enable them to achieve their full potential.

All staff work with students and their families to ensure each student attends school as regularly and punctually as possible.

The school has established a range of strategies to support students in maintaining high levels of attendance and to support and challenge those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. These include an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support.

## **2. Policy Aims**

- *To maximise the overall attendance of all students.*
- *To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, staff and governors.*
- *To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.*
- *To maintain a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data, and to address any issues that become apparent.*
- *To continue to develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.*
- *To promote effective partnership with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and other agencies.*
- *To recognise the needs of individual students with regards to their attendance.*
- *To ensure that parents are aware of national guidance relating to holidays taken in school time.*

## **3. The law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education act 1996 states that –

*the parent of every student of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-*

*(a) to age, ability and aptitude and*

*(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have*

*.....either at school or otherwise*

#### **4. Impact on learning**

We know from experience and from studies that regular absence and poor punctuality can have a serious effect on a student's learning. When a student is absent or arrives late it disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning not only of that student but also that of others in the same class.

Ensuring a student's regular attendance at school is every parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a penalty notice or prosecution.

#### **5. Safeguarding**

Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of students whilst they are not in the care of their parents. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or a student missing from education will be considered a safeguarding matter as this may place those in this position student at risk of harm.

Safeguarding around attendance and punctuality involves offering early help and support to students and their families experiencing problems. These are often the first signs that there are difficulties with student or within the family. *(The attendance of looked-after students is checked daily by the agency concerned).*

Safeguarding the interests of every student is a whole-school community responsibility. Further information on this area of the school's work can be found in the following policies, all available on the school's website:

- *Anti-Bullying Policy*
- *Behaviour Management Policy*
- *E-Safety Policy*
- *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy*
- *Student Wellbeing Multi-Agency Group*

#### **6. Students Missing from Education**

New government guidance has recently been issued regarding students missing from education. The LA can advise on setting up a joint investigation with the school and to whom to refer students missing education.

In accordance with Section 8 of the pupil registration regulations schools must notify the LA prior to removing a child who is considered missing.

#### **7. Parental contacts**

Parents are asked to provide the school with their own current contact details and also contact numbers for at least two other adults who can be contacted in case of emergency.

## **8. Registration**

Class staff are responsible for completing electronic registers on SIMS during am and pm registration times, (9.00-9:30 am & 1:15-1:30 pm). Staff will insert information about an absence if known.

At 9:30 am and 1:30 pm, the Attendance Admin Officer checks for absences on SIMS and calls home in every case to try and find the reason for absence in cases where the class staff have not recorded a reason.

## **9. Lateness**

Should a student arrive at school after the register has been completed they will be given a late mark and included in the totals for that session

Since the majority of the school's students come to school on local authority transport, punctuality is not a significant issue for them although the headteacher maintains close links with the authority's transport service to ensure all students arrive in school between 9.00 and 9:15 am.

In the case of independent travellers and those brought in by parents, direct contact is made to the parent if there are any punctuality concerns. Prior to becoming an independent traveller all students receive intensive travel training from the school's accredited trainer.

## **10. The Attendance Lead**

The Attendance Lead (Deputy Headteacher) meets monthly with the administrative officer responsible for recording attendance and any patterns in absences or lateness noticed e.g. regular Monday or Friday absences. Any student whose attendance is 85% or lower has their case analysed.

Parents of students with any unauthorised absences are sent a letter seeking an explanation. When absences are authorised, the Attendance Lead will phone home and/or meet the parent to offer support in improving attendance whenever possible. Unsatisfactory responses are sent through to the EWO (see below).

The Attendance Lead can also refer students giving an attendance concern to the school's fortnightly Student Wellbeing MAG (*see Appendix 1 for details of all Attendance Roles & Responsibilities in the school*).

## **11. The Education Welfare Service**

The school has a named Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) who liaises with the Attendance Lead. The school is allocated six hours per year for EWO meetings- The Lead meets with the EWO according to need.

At the meetings students giving cause for concern are discussed with the EWO and it is agreed to either monitor their attendance or make a formal referral to the EWS. (Prior to each meeting the EWO will obtain a SIMS attendance breakdown). When necessary the EWO will visit the family home, and may advise the school to issue a penalty notice.

## **12. Students with medical needs**

Given Riverside's status as a special school, with a significant number of students on role with complex medical conditions, some students are unavoidably and regularly absent from school for medical reasons e.g. regular hospital appointments or frequent and persistent heavy colds.

Where this is the case the school will liaise with the school nurse who will provide advice and support e.g. by arranging an earlier school medical or making a home visit. All such cases are monitored through the school's Student Well-Being MAG meetings.

## **13. Family Holidays**

Parents should only ever take family holidays during statutory school holiday periods. At Riverside family holidays in term-time are generally not allowed.

However sometimes there are genuine mitigating circumstances which the headteacher will consider (see below). Parents are sent an annual reminder that they can be fined for taking such family holidays without the permission of the headteacher.

Headteachers retain the discretion to grant leave, but they can only do so in very exceptional circumstances. If the headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for him to determine the length of time that the student can be away from school, weighing up such factors as any previous requests, (*see Appendix letter attached*).

Parents are reminded of dates of INSET days and reminder slips are sent home at the end of each term clearly stating the return date for students.

---

*Appendix 1*

**Attendance - Roles and Responsibilities**

<p>Headteacher</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Devise and agree an attendance policy with assigned roles and responsibilities. Ensure these are shared with school governors, teaching and support staff (including the office staff who are often the ones who see parents and / or children at the start and end of the school day and receive messages from parents).</li> <li>• Appoint a senior member of staff as Attendance Lead and ensure they have the time and knowledge needed to be effective.</li> <li>• Set ambitious attendance targets for the whole school.</li> <li>• Ask for regular reports on attendance by whole school, year group and class level. Review pupils meeting persistent absence thresholds. Recommend this is carried out at least half termly.</li> <li>• Agree consistent and reasonable interventions for poor attendance / punctuality and rewards for excellent attendance.</li> <li>• With your Attendance Lead and Safeguarding Lead build a picture of children who are most vulnerable and make arrangements for their absence to be reported and / or monitored more rigorously.</li> </ul>
<p>Attendance Lead</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the headteacher to devise a working attendance policy that is regularly reviewed to ensure it is relevant and effective and adapted to meet the changing needs of the school and its pupils.</li> <li>• Monitor attendance at a whole school, year group and class level.</li> <li>• Identify pupils who may be classified as particularly vulnerable therefore requiring an accelerated response time.</li> <li>• Identify pupils meeting or at risk of meeting Persistent Absentee thresholds and agree appropriate action plans (involving parents) to address absence / punctuality concerns.</li> <li>• Liaise with Safeguarding Lead and SENCO to ensure crucial information on vulnerable groups with attendance concerns are shared where appropriate.</li> <li>• Provide regular reports on attendance rates / patterns / trends to headteacher.</li> <li>• Involve all school staff in monitoring attendance – recognise the role of class teachers, learning mentors and front office staff in identifying children who absence / punctuality is causing a concern.</li> <li>• Assign a weekly slot with officer with daily responsibility for following up absence and liaising with parents.</li> <li>• Liaise with HLT – Education Attendance Service where appropriate.</li> </ul>
<p>Attendance Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Attendance Lead to monitor attendance at least weekly</li> <li>• Carryout daily checks on attendance and follow school’s attendance policy</li> <li>• Keep record of vulnerable groups whose absence needs to be reported to attendance or safeguarding lead and acted on as agreed.</li> <li>• For any unexplained absence carryout first day calling / texting / emailing</li> <li>• Follow-up unexplained absences with 3 day letters / emails.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange home visit at schools agreed trigger points.</li> <li>• All actions should be accelerated for identified vulnerable groups.</li> <li>• Challenge parents /carers where the absences are unexplained or unauthorised.</li> </ul>
All staff	<p>Report attendance concerns to attendance lead</p> <p>If parents speak to you about attendance – make sure this is passed on</p> <p>Welcome children back after an absence – often fear of others reactions prevents a child successful return to school</p>

**Consider vulnerability of individual student when following up on an absence**

- Student's age and understanding – if their parent is injured would they be able to call for help?
- Parent potential vulnerability – if a lone parent became incapacitated is there support from extended family or friendship network?
- Is the student a subject of a Student Protection Plan?
- Has the school or other agency raised safeguarding concerns e.g. section 47 enquires?
- Is the student a 'Looked after Student' (LAC)?
- Does the student have any Special Education Needs or Disability that makes them more vulnerable than their peers?
- Do they travel to and from school alone (especially important if primary age)?
- Is there a history of the family moving frequently?
- Has the student changed schools without any definable reason?
- Has there been a change in the student's behaviour or attendance patterns?
- Has there been a change in the parents'/carers' engagement with school?
- Is there a history of Domestic Violence in the family/household?
- Is there a history of substance misuse?
- Is there a known person posing a risk to the student in the household or in contact with the household?
- Are there any religious or cultural reasons to believe that the student is at risk

- Persistent Absentees (PA)
- Looked After Children
- Children with EHCP / Statement
- Attendance by ethnic groups
- Children receiving free school meals
- Schools must notify the Local Authority of children who are absent for 10 consecutive days without authorisation.

*Appendix 2*

**RIVERSIDE SCHOOL**  
Wood Green ILC  
White Hart Lane Wood  
Green London N22  
5QJ Tel: 020 8889  
7814



**APPLICATION FOR A STUDENT'S EMERGENCY LEAVE OF ABSENCE,  
UNDER EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM SCHOOL \***

**Name(s) of student(ren):**

**Address:**

**Reason for emergency application and dates of leave requested:**

**Signature of parent(s)**

**Date:**

*Office use only:*

**Anticipated date of return:**

**Signed:**

**Leave Granted / Refused**

**Date:**

- ***PLEASE NOTE THAT FAMILY HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME ARE NO LONGER ALLOWED. This information is published in the School Offer on the school's website and in the headteacher's letters to parents.***



