

# Ridgeway Infant School

Learn to love, love to Learn

## ATTENDANCE POLICY



Date agreed: 24<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017

Minute Ref: FGB 16/061

Signature of Chair of FGB:

Review Due: SPRING 2020

Responsibility of the Full Governing Body

## **PRINCIPLES**

Derby Pride Trust Schools seek to ensure that all children receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for them to realise their true potential. This policy aims to improve the attendance of children at Derby Pride Trust Schools, to ensure their continuity of education and to contribute to the safety of children, by gaining knowledge of their whereabouts, during the school day.

## **STATUTORY FRAMEWORK**

- Under Section 199 of the 1993 Education Act a child is required to attend regularly at school where he or she is a registered child.
- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents are responsible for making their children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or alternative provision (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home).
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent/carer does not itself authorise an absence.
- Only if the school is satisfied of the validity and appropriateness of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see below)

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Promoting positive behaviour, punctuality and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including parents/carers, governors and staff.

### **Children will:**

- arrive at school by 8.55am
- go quickly to their classroom
- answer the register clearly
- be escorted by a member of staff quickly to their classroom and give their green/ blue slip to the teacher if they arrive in school late.

### **Parents/Carers will:**

- ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn;
- notify the school by telephone/email as soon as possible on the first morning of absence if a child is prevented from attending school
- sign the late book if they arrive with their child after 8.55am, giving a reason for their late arrival at school;

- ensure they arrive to collect their children on time at the end of the day. Telephone the school office as soon as possible if they think that they may be arriving late to collect and ensure that they complete the signing-out log to say they have collected their child;
- arrange medical or dental appointments out of school hours wherever possible;
- inform the school in advance of any known absences e.g. medical appointments and bring the appointment card or letter to school;
- attend meetings to discuss their child's attendance and/or punctuality as appropriate.
- work in partnership with the school to improve the attendance and punctuality of children.

Parents/carers whose first language is not English, or who have literacy difficulties, will be offered appropriate support from the school in matters of communication.

#### **School will:**

- make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including children, parents/carers, teachers and governors;
- strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure;
- promote positive behaviour, punctuality and good attendance through its use of curriculum and learning materials;
- work with children and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually and to improve the overall percentage of children at school;
- provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and children on issues relating to attendance and punctuality;
- recognise the needs of the individual child when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence;
- establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of children to improve their attendance and timekeeping;
- challenge those children and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality;
- develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- promote effective partnerships with the Education Welfare Service and with other services and agencies;

#### **PROMOTING THE ATTENDANCE and PUNCTUALITY OF CHILDREN**

The school will promote the benefits of good attendance and punctuality to school through:

- whole school displays
- assemblies
- inter-class competitions and initiatives

- awards and certificates
- letters home

## **ATTENDANCE REGISTERS**

Attendance registers are taken twice a day. Morning registers open **at 8.55am** and close at **9.20am**. Children who arrive after **8:55 am must report to the school office** where parents/carers must sign them in the late book, they will be issued with a late slip to ensure the register will be amended to show their presence in school. Children will then be escorted by a member of staff to their classroom. Similarly, children who leave school during the day, for example because of illness or medical appointments will need to be signed out and back in at **the school office**.

Registers show whether a child is present, engaged in educational activity off-site, or absent.

### **Approved Educational Activities Off-Site**

The absence of children to take part in supervised educational activities outside the school but authorised by the school is recorded as 'approved educational activity'. This is the equivalent of 'present' for the purposes of the annual absence return and performance tables, however teachers must ensure that all necessary staff are informed that these children are off-site, in case there is a fire or an emergency. The following activities show when the approved educational activity category can be used:

- dual registration arrangements with another educational establishment. Both institutions share responsibility for the child. Failure to attend either institution, as instructed, without good reason is unauthorised absence;
- school trips
- participation in or attendance at approved sporting activities
- special tuition for sick children being taught at home but remaining on the school's roll

## **RECORDING ABSENCE**

Where a child is absent from school, the school must differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents/carers. School staff do not need to accept a parental explanation for a child's absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person, if they doubt the explanation, and it is for the school to judge whether the explanation given is satisfactory justification for the absence. The information at the end of this policy shows types of absences which schools may treat as authorised.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Learning Mentor**

- The office staff will telephone parents/carers of children who are absent from school without reason **on the first day of absence**. If school fails

to contact parents a slip requesting written information about the absence will be sent home

- Monitor morning registration lateness and send letters to parents/carers of children who have been late arriving at school on two or more occasions in a week
- Monitor end of the day collection lateness and send letters to parents/carers of children who have been late collecting on two or more occasions in a week
- Monitor children whose attendance falls below 95% and discuss with the Headteacher at regular meetings
- Send letters to parents/carers of children whose attendance has fallen below 95%
- Contact parents/carers to discuss low attendance/poor punctuality and to offer support where appropriate (see trigger points below)
- Produce 'On Time' certificates weekly for classes where all children have arrived at school on time, to be presented in assembly
- Produce the 'Attendance Trophy' to be presented in assembly to the class with the highest weekly attendance, ensuring that classes with 100% attendance receive a special reward from the Headteacher.
- Produce certificates for children with 100% attendance each term
- Promote good attendance and punctuality throughout the school through assemblies, displays, rewards and competitions

### **Headteacher**

- Promote good attendance and punctuality throughout the school and to ensure accurate registers are maintained punctually
- Meet regularly with the Learning Mentor to monitor punctuality and attendance falling below 95%
- Send letters to parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 85%
- Interview parents/carers whose children's attendance has failed to improve despite intervention from the Learning Mentor

### **ATTENDANCE TRIGGER POINTS**

Learning Mentor and Headteacher will look at the attendance of all children at the end of each term and the following action will be taken:

- 1) Letter 1 will be sent to parents/carers of children whose attendance falls below 95%
- 2) Letter 2 will be sent to parents/carers of children where previous low attendance has failed to improve, offering support from Learning Mentor
- 3) Following on from Letter 2, parents/carers will be invited in to a meeting/telephone discussion with the Learning Mentor to discuss how to improve attendance and any support needed
- 4) Letter 3 will be sent if attendance has failed to improve after the above meeting and parents/carers will be invited in to a meeting with Headteacher/Education Welfare Officer/Learning Mentor to discuss how to improve attendance

- 5) Intervention and possible fines will be imposed by Education Welfare Service if appropriate
- 6) No holidays will be authorised in the school term. If pupils exceed 20 school days of unauthorised absence the process of removal from role will commence.

### **Rewards**

- Certificates for individual children with 100% attendance each term
- Certificates and rewards for children with 100% attendance for a whole school year
- Trophy for class with highest attendance
- Reward for classes with 100% attendance each week

## **AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

### **Authorised Absence**

Inappropriate use of authorised absence can be as damaging to a child's education as unauthorised absence. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a child to be out of school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All absences will be treated as unauthorised until the school has agreed on a satisfactory explanation.

### **Categories of Absence**

**Family holidays during term time** – Parents/carers should not normally take children on holiday in term time. **All holidays taken in term time will be unauthorised.** Parents/carers who wish to take their child out of school for any reason (only exceptional circumstances will be considered) need to complete a Leave of Absence Request obtainable from the school office. Where a child is absent from school and the school believes that the child may be on holiday, checks will be carried out with other local schools where siblings attend to ascertain whether they are also absent from school. In the case that siblings are absent from school, this will be taken as evidence of the child being on holiday and will be processed as an unauthorised holiday. The school can begin the process of removal from role for a child who fails to return to school within twenty school days.

**Illness, medical and dental appointments** - Where the school believes that a child is genuinely unwell the absence will be authorised. Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is also recorded as authorised absence. If a child is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, or goes home because of illness, no absence will be recorded for that session. The school will keep a record of children leaving or returning to site in case of an emergency. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide proof of the illness e.g. medical appointment card, copies of prescriptions or may consult the School Health Service or the child's GP. A child receiving medical treatment on site will be marked as present.

**Days of religious observance** - This is absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong, including religious festivals. The school will be sensitive to such requests and parents must give advance notice.

**Exclusions** - A child excluded for a fixed period remains on roll and the absence will be treated as authorised as it results from a decision taken by the school. Similarly, the absence of a permanently excluded child is treated as authorised while any review or appeal is in progress. In the case of a permanent exclusion the child's name should be removed from the school roll on the first school day after the day on which:

- i. the independent appeal panel upholds the permanent exclusion; or
- ii. the independent appeal panel does not uphold the permanent exclusion, but does not direct the child's reinstatement; or
- iii. the prescribed period for lodging an appeal has expired and the parent has not lodged an appeal; or
- iv. the parent has, before the expiry of the prescribed period, advised the LA in writing that he does not intend to appeal.

In the meantime the absence will be recorded as authorised. The school will set work for an excluded child who remains on the school roll.

**Traveller child when the family is travelling** - To help ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. This means that the school will not remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. While the Traveller is away, the school will hold the place open and record the absence as authorised.

**Family bereavements** – The school will respond sensitively to requests to attend funerals of close family members or associated events and have the discretion to authorise such absences.

**Family prison visits** – The school will authorise requests for absence which will enable a child to visit a parent in prison.

**Special occasions** – The school will consider each request individually. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence.

**Public performances, including film or TV work** - The Local Authority must licence a child to take part in a public performance. The school will authorise absence where participation has been agreed.

**Lateness** - The school discourages late arrival and will be alert to patterns of lateness which could provide grounds for prosecution. School starts at 8.55am any child arriving after this time will be record as late until 9.20am when the registers close, children arriving after this time will be recorded as a U = late after register closed. Where children are late more than twice in a

week, parents/carers will be notified by letter. In circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, the school may keep registers open for a longer period.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the registers close at 9.20am.

Where the unauthorised absence appears to be a problem with a particular child, the school will:

- write to parents/carers to alert them to concerns regarding the attendance of a child;
- invite parents/carers to an attendance meeting in school to discuss any problems and to set targets to improve the child’s attendance;
- request support from the Education Welfare Service.
- develop a parenting contract as a tool in identifying and focusing the problems behind non-attendance.

Parents/carers whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer.

Parents/carers should be aware that any type of absence will have a negative effect upon a child’s progress at school and be reflected in their attendance record. All absences will be considered to be unauthorised until parents/carers provide a reason to justify the absence that is accepted by the school. The school has a responsibility to report any unauthorised absences to the Local Authority who have powers to ensure that children attend school. Following government guidelines, parents and carers can be prosecuted for irregular attendance and unauthorised absences and fined up to a maximum of £2500 or 3 months imprisonment. The Education Welfare Service now issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) following periods of unauthorised absence. The FPN is £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 28 days and rises to £120 if paid before 48 days from the date of issue. Failure to pay will result in legal proceedings.

Alternatively, parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice

The school’s Education Welfare Officer is: Paul Johnson Contact Number: 01332 641438

Updated January 2017

