

# Ravensfield Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy



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## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY STATEMENT**

### **Overview**

At Ravensfield, we believe that a high level of attendance is essential if children are to progress at the maximum rate which they are capable and fully realise their potential in school. Even short spells of absence can interrupt a child's progress, especially if they miss work which is essential for subsequent learning and lessons.

Absence can also result in children feeling a sense of distance from the work of the class, especially if occurring at beginning or end of terms or at times when special events are taking place at school. Absence can also impact on children's friendship circles.

### **Objectives**

1. To ensure that all children attend school every day.
2. Offer a safe and supportive environment, which welcomes children regardless of race, gender or ability.
3. To ensure that all children are punctual.
4. To work effectively with the LA and other agencies to follow up attendance issues promptly and efficiently.
5. To support pupils with attendance and punctuality issues and to work with parents and where appropriate other agencies to bring about improvement.

### **Strategies**

1. To keep good records of attendance through the school registers and to take prompt action to follow up absences.
2. All staff will complete registers accurately for each session and will draw to the School Attendance Officer's attention any absences that cause concern via School Pod.
3. Staff will follow attendance and punctuality procedures when dealing with related issues.
4. Parents must telephone school to inform school of the reason for absence, as soon as possible or before 9.00am on the first day of absence. The information will be stored on School Pod (schools data system) as evidence.
5. The school office will contact the parents when a child is absent and school have not been notified of the reason of absence (see appendix – pupil absence procedures)
6. Where a pattern of 'occasional' absences is noted, the parent will be contacted to discuss the pattern of absences with the School Attendance Officer.
7. The school will use Local Authority services and the school attendance and family support officer to support families where absence and punctuality issues are related to social circumstances and parenting issues.
8. The School's Attendance officer will be used to follow up absences that are suspicious or causing concern or where the family is not engaging with the support the school is providing.

9. Where necessary the school will work closely with the Local Authority to take action against those unlawfully keeping children from school.

### **Legal Framework**

*Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 provides a wide definition of 'parent'. For the purpose of school education provision a "parent" is defined as:*

- *All natural parents, whether they are married or not.*
- *Any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person.*
- *Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person (a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is considered to be a parent in education law).*

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, as some children enter school at an earlier age, Ravensfield aim to follow the same expectations for all children to ensure consistency on a whole school approach to promote good attendance and punctuality. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or unavoidable cause.

**Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. It is essential that parents maximise the educational opportunities available for their children and provide the best possible start in life.**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that **headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the

event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family.

There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to write a letter to the Head Teacher in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the 10 sessions (5 Days) set down in Tameside MBC's *Code of conduct*, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/punctuality, legal action may be initiated with a Penalty Notice, Penalty Notice Warning, or School Prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section (1a) offence.

#### **Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

Under the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 an authorised officer of Tameside Borough Council has the power to issue each parent/carer with a penalty notice for each of their children who fails to attend school regularly. A penalty notice is an early deterrent that is intended to prevent more extended periods of unauthorised absence developing. Penalty notices issued incur a fine of £120, which is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay a penalty notice within 28 days may result in prosecution. Full payment of the penalty discharges the parent/carer from liability for conviction following a prosecution.

A request to the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice shall be made when:

- A pupil is absent from school as they have taken a holiday in term time, or an unauthorised leave of absence.
- When a pupil has accumulated at least 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a term, the parent/carer may be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning. This will advise the parent/carer of the absences and inform that the child's attendance will be monitored closely for a period of no less than 15 days. If any further unauthorised absence is accumulated, a penalty notice will be issued in line with Tameside MBC Code of Conduct.
- A pupil has accumulated at least ten sessions of unauthorised absence and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.

The procedure for issuing Penalty Notices will be in accordance with the Local Authority's Penalty Notice Protocol.

### **Absence Procedures**

The Head Teacher, not parents, determines whether an absence is authorised. Ravensfield Primary School adheres to the Department for Education (DFE) guidelines in authorising absence.

All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Whenever children are ill, parents should:

- Inform school of the reason for absence, usually by phoning the school office, as soon as possible and certainly before 9.00am on the first day of absence.

If no contact is received this will trigger a text message from school. Upon receiving the text message, we do expect parents/carers to telephone school as soon as possible. If no contact is received the office staff will call the parents/carers listed on the child's contact form. If parents/carers cannot be contacted by phone, then a home visit may be necessary.

All actions taken by staff, including administrative staff, will be recorded on School Pod ensuring the Attendance Officer is informed.

### **Categorising Absence**

#### **Illness**

Parent/Carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. When medical evidence has been requested, the absence will be marked as unauthorised until evidence has been provided. In case of uncertainty, please visit: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk).

#### **Medical / Dental Appointments**

Parent/Carers must make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day unless it is an emergency. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parent/Carers are required to show the appointment card to school to confirm the appointment for the absence to be marked as authorised within the register.

#### **Other Authorised Circumstances**

Parents /Carers of a child who requires leave of absence for their child to take part in performance /licencing work will be required to submit written evidence/confirmation of full details. Each request will be dealt with by the Head Teacher.

#### **Requests for leave of absence**

In September 2013, changes to Government regulations and guidance means that Head Teachers can no longer authorise leave of absence for the sole purpose of a holiday (unless in exceptional circumstances). Leave of absence (holidays in term time) *The Education*

*(Penalty notices) (England) Regulations 2004 came into force on 27 February 2004. These were updated with The Education (Policy notices) (England) Regulations 2007.*

All absences associated with a holiday (without exceptional circumstance) during term time will be marked as unauthorised within the register. Any parents/carers known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution. Registers will be marked with a 'G' code.

A penalty notice request or a referral for full prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should: -

- The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in writing at least **one month** in advance of taking the leave
- An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Head Teacher but is still taken.
- A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.

### **Religious Observance**

Ravensfield Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside holiday periods or weekends. Parent/Carers must give advance notice to school if they intend their child to be absent. It is reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance or festival. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may request that a penalty notice is issued or refer the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

### **Recording Absence.**

Legally the register must be taken twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day and again for the afternoon session.

Parents and carers who have patterns of lateness and poor attendance will be contacted to discuss the importance of good attendance/punctuality, and how this may be achieved. If this persists or the parent declines the offer of support and the pupils has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence recorded the parent may be issued with a penalty notice warning, as a way of improving the pupils attendance, this is in line with Tameside MBC Code of Conduct 2017: issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from schools.

**Please collect your child promptly at the end of the day 3.15pm, where late collection is persistent and /or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns with other agencies.**

### **Strategies for promoting good whole school attendance**

- Celebrating good attendance of class achievements through weekly assemblies.

- Rewarding achievements through certificates and extra-curricular activities for 100% attendees.
- Providing regular support and feedback to parents.

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school in this instance contact School immediately and openly discuss your worries. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.

### **Persistent Absence**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops below 90% for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. All pupils who are actually PA, or are considered to be on track to becoming PA, will be discussed at the weekly Attendance Review which will result in contact from the Head Teacher or Attendance Officer to discuss and plan how to improve (or Referral to LA to consider legal implications)

### **Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Attendance Officer will produce a termly report for governors, outlining the attendance data and the key issues arising from this, alongside actions to be taken. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

### **OUTCOMES**

The Senior Management Team and all teaching staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance. The Head Teacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Attendance Officer.