

Attendance Policy



Author:

Mrs Sally-Ann Evans

Responsibility:

Full Governing Body

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Table of Contents

Statement of Intent	5
Ringwood Junior School Attendance Policy	5
Rationale	5
Good attendance is important because:.....	6
Promoting Good Attendance	6
Roles and Responsibilities	6
Responsibilities of Classroom Staff	6
Responsibilities of Pupils	7
Responsibilities of Parents/Carers	7
Recording Attendance	7
Lateness & Punctuality.....	7
What to do if my Child is absent.....	8
First day absence.....	8
If your child is absent we will:	9
Second day absence.....	9
Third day absence.....	9
Ten days' absence	9
Continued or ongoing absence	9
A welcome back.....	9
Request for Leave of Absence	10
Understanding types of absences	10
Penalty notices for non-attendance and other legal measures	11
Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness	11
Miscellaneous.....	13
My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?	13
What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?	13
Leaving School during or at the end of the School Year	13
Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling	14
Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport	14
Gypsy Roma Traveller and Showman families	14
Record Preservation	14

Statement of Intent

The Governing Body of Ringwood Junior School is committed to equality for everyone across all aspects of school life. We aim to ensure that equality is incorporated into existing and future policies to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity between different groups with particular emphasis towards the “protected characteristics” now enshrined in the Equality Act 2010.

The School Access Action Plan has been incorporated into the Single Equality Policy to incorporate those duties provided in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, as amended by the SEN and Disability Act 2014 (SENDA). We aim to reduce and eliminate barriers to access to the curriculum and to full participation in the school community for pupils, and prospective pupils, with a disability.

Where specific duties come into force under the Equality Act 2010, these will be incorporated into the individual policies by the Governing Body’s sub-committees to ensure a cohesive framework for the benefit of our school, its staff and visitors to the school. Where appropriate, the committees will have responsibility for publishing equality information and objectives.

Ringwood Junior School Attendance Policy

Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

The school places great emphasis on achieving high standards and works continuously to ensure that we have excellent pupil attendance and punctuality. In order to achieve our goals pupils must be highly motivated to learn, keen and eager to attend school. To achieve this, Governors are committed to working in partnership with parents.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment and training.

Promoting Good Attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- provide information on all matters related to attendance in our school newsletters and on our website
- report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events
- set targets for the school and for classes for attendance and display these in the school
- run events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School Attendance Team co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absence to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately.

- Promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Office Manager on matters of attendance and punctuality, who will follow up with the Attendance Team led by the Headteacher.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a pupil's absence.
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.
- Respond to weekly attendance updates and analysis and take appropriate action.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.
Parents will:
 - inform the school on the first day of absence
 - discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
 - support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
 - make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable
 - avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
 - only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording Attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.45am and again for the afternoon session at 1pm.

Lateness & Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

The school gates are open from 8.20am and **all pupils are expected to be in school between 8.20am and 8.45am**, when all children take part in early morning learning

activities. Morning registration is at 8.45am and it closes at 9.00am.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after 8.45am and before 9.00am will be marked as late and coded L, an authorised absence.
- Arrival after the close of registration at 9.00am will be marked as an unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see page 9 for further details).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct: Issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools (see page 9 of this policy for further details).

What to do if my Child is absent

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is required.

First day absence

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us by 9.00am on the first day of absence. This can be via our dedicated school absence line where you will be able to leave a message, or by our absence email.
In each case please give your child's name and class, reason for absence and your name and relationship to the child.
- Come into school and report the absence at reception.
- Send a signed note into school via a sibling or friend notifying us of the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- If we have not heard from you, telephone you on the first day of absence in the morning – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- Telephone you again after the 1.00pm registration if we still haven’t heard from you
- If this call is unsuccessful, we will telephone your named contacts to ascertain the whereabouts of your child
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer, SENCO and/or members of the Pastoral Support Team and Headteacher if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire County Council’s Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

Second day absence

If your child is still absent, and we cannot make telephone contact with you, a member of staff will visit your home address to carry out a welfare check.

Third day absence

If your child has not been seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers or contacts after three days of absence, the school is required to start *child missing in education procedures* as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

Ten days’ absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*. Children’s services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up-to-date contact numbers.

Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you, and depending on the reasons for the absence, will arrange a meeting with the Attendance Officer and Headteacher.

A welcome back

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence 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 with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Request for Leave of Absence

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 fill in an application form (available from the school office on request or download from our website) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down by Hampshire County Council's Code of conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see page 9 for details).

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.

Understanding types of absences

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **authorised absence:** is when school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **unauthorised absence:** is when school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. the child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve attendance
2. the child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence or 10 or more late marks and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- prosecution

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce Hampshire County Council's *Code of Conduct: Issuing Penalty Notices* for unauthorised absence from school April 2018 or follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *Code of Conduct* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

The Code of conduct states that schools or Hampshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded U) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of register (coded L), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as

unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met

- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria, and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve attendance, then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period
2. one or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents and carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child.

NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting those who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have further unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information, parents/carers can request a leaflet from the school and more advice on attendance, including Penalty Notices, for parents/carers from Hampshire County Council can be

found at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents.htm>

Miscellaneous

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value their education.

Your child will bring home a school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and, if they have a school lunch, what they had to eat!

Leaving School during or at the end of the School Year

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to the secondary school) parents are asked to give the Office Manager comprehensive information about their plans in writing:

- Date of move
- New address and telephone numbers
- Child's new school, address and telephone number
- Start date at new school when known

If pupils leave and we do not have the information then your child is considered to be *a child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the required information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller and Showman families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.