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Attendance Policy

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Scope of policy:	This policy applies to all students, parents and staff at Riverside School

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INTRODUCTION

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Students of Riverside Secondary School and follows the DfE guidance Working together to improve school attendance.

It represents our commitment to striving for the highest possible levels of attendance, and our expectation that as a successful school we should have overall attendance levels above the national average, and persistent absence rates below the national average. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance. Our current attendance targets are included as an appendix.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.
- Irregular attendance undermines the effective running of the school and thus undermines the achievement and wellbeing of other students.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

Aims of the Policy

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its students to be best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Barking and Dagenham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

Policy objectives:

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children
- To reduce persistent absence
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement
- To maximise the potential of every individual Student

Promoting Attendance:

The Governors, Headteacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement; newsletters; rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance; Assemblies, where we regularly discuss the importance of good attendance and the impact on learning; Visual Information/displays around the school – see appendices.

The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.
Students are expected to attend school every day that the school is open, unless they are unable to do so through illness or an unavoidable cause. At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%)

Our main method of promoting good attendance is by helping students intrinsically motivate themselves. We do this by educating students on the importance of attendance. In addition to this, certificates are awarded not only to individual students but to form groups as well. All students who have 100% attendance are celebrated in assemblies.

The school considers that all absences from school will disrupt continuity of learning. As a consequence we believe that absences should be kept to a minimum. All parents must request leave of absence in writing. All leave of absence for holidays will be recorded as unauthorised; the School and Local Authority have the right to fine parents if they take any unauthorised absence for their child.
Children's attendance is very carefully monitored by our Attendance Officer, Heads of Year, Senior leaders and the safeguarding team.

Key staff roles and responsibilities

The current SLT lead is Mr Wylde (Associate HT) who has overall co-ordination on all aspects of attendance in the school. Working alongside Mr Wylde in the senior leadership team is Ms Kaci (DHT), Mr Bailey (AHT) and Mr Benjamin (AHT). The daily management of attendance is led by Ms Spike-Robertson with the safeguarding team working with the families of students who are at risk of being a persistent absentee (PA). The deputy heads of years lead the drive to improve attendance for their year groups.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS

Understanding types of absence coding

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription,

GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are; illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised are:

- Going shopping with parents, birthdays
- looking after other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members of the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time (unless there are exceptional circumstances)
- Arriving at school after the registers close at 9am
- Truancy

Reluctant attenders/school refusal

Parents should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or bullying, the parents should discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity, and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with a child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse. An action plan will be created for students whose attendance is below 50%. This will involve the school exploring wider services from the borough, social services or charities in an effort to remove the barriers to attendance.
School refusal/school phobia is a rare psychological condition that usually has been medically diagnosed. Other arrangements may be put in place for a child with genuine school phobia.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Registration and punctuality procedures

Registers are first taken during form time at **8.30am** and then at the start of every lesson throughout the day. The registers will remain open for **30 minutes**. (DfE guidance suggests a maximum of 30 minutes). Students arriving after **8.30am** will be recorded at late. Students arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

Only the Headteacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year; or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action. If a student is persistently late then a member of the Pastoral Team will arrange to meet with the family as soon as the pattern is identified.

First Day Absence Contact

For every day of absence, parents are expected to notify the school before 8.30am if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification it will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. The texts are automatically sent after the morning registers close and deputy heads of year will follow up with a phone conversation to ascertain the reasons behind the absence. First day contact will

be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school, but not arrived, as quickly as possible.

If you child is going to be absent, you (the parent / guardian) need to call the school number BEFORE 8.30 am.

1. **0203 946 588 Option 2**, calls are always answered within 3 rings unless busy in which case it reverts to voicemail where you MUST leave a message with child's name, form and reason for absence.

2. Write a message on MCAS https://www.mychildatschool.com/MCAS/MCSParentLogin

3. Emails will **NOT** be accepted

Second Day Absence Contact

If the child is still absent on the second day without contact from the family, a telephone call will be made to the home. The family may be asked to come to school for a meeting.

Continuing Absence Procedures

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit may be made. Any child who is absent without explanation for 5 consecutive school days will be referred to the **Attendance and Welfare officer** in order that further investigations can be made.

Appointments

Booking an appointment with GP/Dentist etc

Parents must call and speak to reception - Call 020 3946 588 Option 5 **BEFORE** the appointment date where this will be entered into the calendar and will avoid unnecessary absence calls from school. If the appointment is an emergency we would expect evidence to be provided when the student returns to school. We expect every effort is made to make an appointment before / after the school day and We would expect students to attend school either before or after an appointment.

FREQUENT/PERSISTENT ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Regular attendance reviews

The school runs regular attendance reports to identify and track students causing concern. There are weekly meetings between the Deputy Head and the Attendance and Family Support Worker. These meetings are to review attendance and any agency interventions required. The following groups of students are reviewed at those meetings:

- Pupils with attendance under 90% (Persistent Absentees)
- Pupils with attendance under 92%
- Pupils of "at risk" groups e.g. Vulnerable, SEN, LAC, Disadvantaged
- School Refusers

Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will refer to the School Nurse if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where

there appear to be issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made to the Local Authority through the Triage system for external agency support. An Action Plan and/or Parenting Contract will be prepared for all PA Students and their parents. Such a plan or contract may include allocation of additional in-school or external support.

Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality

For students whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, in spite of intervention and support by the school, the consequences may include the following:

1. The school will ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. Penalty Notices can be issued if there have been 10 or more unauthorised absence sessions in the preceding 10 school weeks.
   - A first Penalty Notice issued "Per Parent, Per Child" in a 3 year rolling period carries a fine of £80, if paid within 21 days. Between days 22 to 28, it rises to £160.
   - A second Penalty Notice issued to the same parent, for the same child, in the same 3 year rolling period carries a fine of £160, to be paid within 28 days.
   - If Penalty Notices are not paid, the Council will begin processing a court case.

   Barking and Dagenham's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found on the borough's webpage:
   https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools-borough/school-attendance
2. The school can also work with the Council to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or **even** imprisonment.
3. In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.
4. Decisions about the action to be taken will be taken on the basis of individual circumstances, but these actions are much more likely to apply to students whose overall attendance for the year is below 90%.

Children Who Cease to Attend Without Prior Notification/Child Missing Education Procedures

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the CME Policy and Procedures. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a Student, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

Non starters

Students who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the Students to the local authority CME team for further checks.

Vulnerable Children

Children who are Looked After (LAC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP), Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Pastoral Team and Attendance and Family Support Worker. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home and a home visit. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and

young carers will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

Introduction

Riverside is a successful school, and you and your child plays a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to achieve excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the parent/carer to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
90% equates to a day off every two weeks
85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
80% equates to one whole day off every week

A secondary age child whose attendance is 90% will have missed ALMOST A TERM of education by the time they leave school
A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school
IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE IS A MAJOR BLOCK TO ACHIEVEMENT IN CLASS AND NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE SHOWS A CLEAR LINK BETWEEN ATTENDANCE FALLING BELOW 95% AND UNDERACHIEVEMENT.
THE FURTHER THEIR ATTENDANCE FALLS BELOW 95% THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO UNDERACHIEVE.

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible from all of our students. The school has a target of 97% attendance for all our students.

Persistent Absence

Under the new DFE guidance, a student is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA Students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the student's attainment. All our PA Students and their parents are subject to an Action Plan, which may include allocation of some kind of support.

Punctuality

Riverside Secondary School, The Governing Body, OFSTED and DFE place great store on pupils being punctual to school and to lessons. Lack of punctuality affects learning and behaviour not only of the pupil who is late, but it has an impact on all other learners as the teacher is required to recap on missing learning for those who arrive late. This reduces learning time for the rest of the class.
Punctuality is also a key workplace skill which must be learnt at school and adhered to. Employees who are regularly late to work lose their jobs. In the work place you cannot arrive at the start time, you must be in the work place prior to the start time and ready at your desk or work station for the official start time. This principle holds true in school.
At Riverside Secondary School, our expectation is that pupils are in their classroom at 8.30. Pupils who arrive late will receive a 1 hour detention on the same day. If a student is regularly late then the school will invite parents in for a meeting to explore how to prevent it happening again.
Please support us in ensuring your child arrives on time, in correct uniform and with correct equipment, ready to work hard.

Parenting Contracts

You may be asked to participate in a Parenting Contract to support your child's attendance.
These are initiated where school feels you may need help in influencing your child to attend properly. They have no force in law, and are entered into voluntarily. A meeting will be held to which you and your child will be invited. The problems will be discussed and agreement reached as to what the school will do, the child will do and what you as parents/carers will do to try to improve the situation. You may be offered some form of support such as counselling or parenting classes to assist you in setting boundaries and enforcing expectations of your child.

Applications for leave of absence in term time

There has been an amendment in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. These amendments make clear that **Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Your contact details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

Deletions from the School Roll

A student can only be removed from the Admissions Register if their absence satisfies one or more of the criteria set out in Regulation 9 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. The Local Authority must be informed of the removal of a pupil from the school roll within one school day of them being removed. Full details of that student need to be provided.

If a Student has been absent for four consecutive school weeks, he/she can be removed from roll when all reasonable attempts by the school and the Local Authority have failed to locate them. The

school and Local Authority are jointly responsible for trying to locate the whereabouts of that student. It does not apply to students who fail to attend and do not respond to contact efforts, but who are living at a known and confirmed address. Such cases should always be referred to the Local Authority Officer. The Children Missing Education Officer must however, be contacted prior to removing that student from the school roll.

NB: No student who is 'looked after' by the authority should be taken off roll without contact being made first with both Social Services and the Local Authority Officer for Looked after Children.

APPENDIX 1

The school's current targets for attendance are as follows:

Overall Attendance to increase to 97%.

Persistent Absence to stay below 10%

EVERY SESSION, EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning. Attendance percentages can be misleading. The schools expectations are 95% and above.

Percentage of attendance	Days absent / Days of learning missed each academic year	Lessons missed
100%	**0** days	**0**
95%	**10** days of absence / 2 weeks	**50**
90%	**20** days of absence / 4 weeks	**100**
85%	**30** days of absence / 6 weeks	**150**
80%	**40** days of absence / 8 weeks	**200**
75%	**50** days of absence / 10 weeks	**250**

EVERY MINUTE, EVERY SESSION COUNTS

Aim to be in school by 8.20 to start school at 8.30 a.m.

In a school year if you were late everyday by …	You could have lost approximately…	Or you would have missed approximately …..
5 minutes	3.5 days from school	**18 lessons**
10 minutes	7 days from school	**36 lessons**
15 minutes	10.5 days from school	**54 lessons**
20 minutes	14 days from school	**72 lessons**
30 minutes	21 days from school	**108 lessons**