



# **Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedure**

## **River Bank Primary School**

### **2020**

## Introduction

We firmly believe that good attendance is of paramount importance if children are to fulfil their potential and make the most of the educational opportunities available to them. All children have the right to a stimulating, enjoyable and high quality full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability, gender and cultural background. We acknowledge that irregular attendance can seriously disrupt continuity of learning, undermine educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within the school. We expect all children to attend school at all times and firmly believe that this is fundamental to developing a love for learning, and achieving the high academic standards expected of them.

This policy should be read in conjunction with, and with reference to, the advice outlined in 'School Attendance – A Parent's Responsibility' written by Luton Borough Council and the medical needs policy.

## Aims

Our school aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by providing pupils with a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience where they want to come to school to learn and where they feel safe, secure and valued. We expect our pupils to be positive role models within the school and to maximise the educational opportunities available to them.

Working in partnership with staff, parents and the pupils themselves, River Bank Primary School ensure that everyone is both fully aware of the policies and procedures relating to attendance and of our schools commitment to ensuring that all pupils attend on a regular basis. As a school, we will encourage parents and carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted upon promptly.

## Attendance

The following guidelines show our thresholds for judging attendance.

- 98 - 99% = Good
- 96 - 97% = Satisfactory
- 94 – 95% = Improvement needed
- below 94% = Poor

Parents can be taken to court under the Education Act 1996 if they do not make sure their child attends school without good reason (as defined in law) and if the child has too many unauthorised absences. This could lead to prosecution in a magistrates' court and if found guilty parents could be liable for a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment.

It is the school's decision whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. A note from a parent will not count as an authorised absence if the reasons given are not acceptable to the school.

The following lists show examples of authorised and unauthorised absences; although these are not exhaustive:

Examples of authorised absences:

- Unavoidable urgent medical or dental treatment.
- Special occasions agreed with the school as an authorised absence.

- Religious observance days, the number and timing of which are determined by the school.
- Off-site activities e.g. music exams or participation in a music festival in a school.
- Exceptional circumstances.

Examples of unauthorised absences:

- Where children miss registration and are unable to give an acceptable reason.
- Medical and dental appointments which could be made after school or in the school holidays.
- Additional days taken for special occasions or days other than those specified by the school.
- Shopping during school hours. For example, buying uniform.
- Going to the airport to meet or say goodbye to relatives.
- Looking after brothers and sisters. Staying at home to spend time with members of the family.
- Absence for more than the agreed period.
- Attendance at any function without prior agreement with the school.
- Term time leave except in exceptional circumstances.
- Medical related absences unsupported by medical evidence and where attendance is below 94%.

## **Procedures for recording attendance**

### Registers

The class teacher takes a register using our school management data system and records who is present and absent from school first thing in the morning. Office staff will then review the registered attendance and will ensure that absence is recorded if a telephone call or a verbal message has been provided to the office by 9:00am. Registers are then reviewed by a member of the office staff. Additional information will be recorded against a child's data folder if required, especially if the child currently has poor attendance (below 94%).

### Late arrivals

At 09:00 class registers are closed. Any pupil arriving after this time is required to enter via the main school entrance. Pupils arriving late will have their name, class, time of arrival and reason for lateness recorded using the electronic sign in. In addition, the school will text parents of those children arriving late, unaccompanied, in order to seek the reason for lateness. Lateness will be monitored and parents will be invited to attend an interview with the family worker or headteacher if their child's lateness is causing concern. If lateness persists, the Education Welfare Officer (from Luton Education Welfare Team) may issue a penalty warning, which could lead to a penalty notice being served.

After 09:15, a designated member of the office staff will contact the parents of children not in school, via the telephone, to ascertain why this is the case. If no contact can be made, the family worker or a member of staff, along with another member of staff may visit the family home; particularly if there is a concern relating to persistent absence from school (below 94%).

### **Absence notes**

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone but must be followed by a letter on the child's return to school. The school will then decide whether to authorise the absence or record it as unauthorised. This decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996

Education Act, which identifies a clear set of circumstances whereby a child's absence can be authorised.

If a child is repeatedly absent without any communication from the parent, it is our policy:

- To send a letter to the parent with a reply slip to enquire as to the reason for absence.
- For the family worker to meet with the parents to discuss reasons for absence.
- To follow up with a telephone call if there is no response, or if we have concerns that the child might be truanting.
- To make a home visit or contact the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) to follow up the absence.

After the above procedures, where we have concerns about a child's level of absence for which we have no legitimate explanation, the family worker will contact the Education Welfare Service who will contact the family to try to resolve any difficulties. At this point we may record all subsequent absences or times when the child is late, as unauthorised absences unless covered by a medical certificate.

### **Children missing in education**

Local authorities have a duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise. This duty only relates to children of compulsory school age.

Unexplained absence is a concern and it is essential that unexplained absence is monitored. It is important to implement 'Children Missing in Education' procedures requiring an inter-agency approach. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life (Children Missing in Education DFE 2016). Prompt action and early intervention are crucial to discharging this duty effectively and in ensuring that children are safe and receiving suitable education.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead needs to be informed by the family worker and office staff if unexplained absence reaches ten days. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then contact Education Welfare Team, Admissions Team and Social Services so that immediate action can take place to safeguard the child/children. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. Pupils will not be removed from roll where there is a safeguarding concern.

Where a school notifies a local authority that a pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register, the school must provide the local authority with:

- a) the full name of the pupil;
- b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- c) at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the pupil lives;
- d) the full name and address of the parent who the pupil is going to live with;
- e) and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- f) the name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start

- date there, if applicable and
- g) the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register (see appendix A).

Where a parent notifies the school in writing that they are home educating, the school must delete the child's name from the admission register and inform the local authority. However, where parents orally indicate that they intend to withdraw their child to be home educated, the school will notify the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

### **Penalty notices**

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. This introduced new powers for Education Welfare Officers, headteachers and the Police to issue penalty notices for unauthorised absences, unauthorised lates and unauthorised term time leave from school as an alternative to prosecution. The fine is £60 per parent per child, if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days.

Any pupil who incurs ten sessions of unauthorised absence will be issued with a penalty notice. The parent will be informed of this action, having previously been made aware of the possibility by the family worker.

The Education Welfare Officer works to support children to get the most from their education through regular and punctual school attendance. Education Welfare Officers (EWO) will work with families experiencing difficulties in ensuring their children attend school. The Education Welfare Service has enforcement powers which are used to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their children attend school regularly.

### **Holiday requests**

Under normal circumstances, any holiday requests will be refused. Leave will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. In these circumstances the headteacher will only authorise up to five days leave in any one academic year. Requests for extended leave will be actively discouraged and considered on an individual basis. Only one period of extended leave will be considered for approval during the pupil's time at the school which also excludes any time during SATs year and government testing periods.

### **Arrangements for sending home children who are ill**

If children are sent home unwell, the Welfare team will contact parents to inform them, complete the sickness/accident form which will then be given to the parents when the child is collected. The absence is recorded in the class register.

Regular monitoring of the children who are being sent home by the Welfare Officer will take place and children will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer if necessary, in order to improve attendance.

### **Rewards**

We provide a breakfast club offering a healthy breakfast; along with participation in a range of activities that the children have indicated they would like to participate in. This is used as a tool to encourage increased attendance and punctuality. Pupils with attendance at 94% or below are actively encouraged by the family worker to attend breakfast club in order to ensure pupils are in school and develop a positive attitude towards the importance of attendance at school.

### Monitoring attendance

Data concerning classes and individuals is regularly analysed for monitoring purposes and is shared with governors.

The Senior Leadership team must be informed by the attendance officer, of any children who are causes for concern or who are absent for extended periods. Initially support to address concerns will be sought from the family worker, and then from the Education Welfare Officer (from LBC) for those who are persistently absent.

Attendance is measured and monitored on a half termly basis by the Governing Body and whole school targets set by the headteacher. For any pupils causing concern a letter is sent home and the parents invited into the school to meet with a member of staff to devise attendance strategies. If, however, an individual pupil's attendance falls below 94% then the parents will be invited into the school to meet with either the family worker and/or the Education Welfare Officer (from Luton Borough Council) to discuss any issues that may be contributing to this and agree some strategies to ensure their attendance is improved. The child's attendance will then be monitored closely for a minimum of half a term. Where it continues to be a cause for concern, or falls below 90%, support will be sought from external agencies, who will work closely with the school and family to address the issue.

### Equal opportunities and attendance

All pupils may experience difficulties in school at some time which may lead to them not wanting to come to school. It is imperative that parents/carers contact the school so that help can be given in relation to:

- Catching up with work missed
- Providing distance learning materials for long absences
- Support teachers and assistants providing individual attention where appropriate
- Personal attention and encouragement from class teachers and other specified staff
- Differentiation by task

### Communication

If any parents are concerned about any school issues, including attendance, they are welcome to meet with our family worker or to make an appointment to see the class teacher.

### Monitoring and Review

This policy will be annually reviewed by the Full Governing Body.

**Signed:**

**Adopted: Autumn term 2020**

**Review Date: Autumn term 2021**

**Appendix A**

## Annex A: Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register

	<b>Grounds for deleting a pupil of compulsory school age from the school admission register set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended.</b>
1.	8(1) (a) – where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school.
2.	8(1) (b) – except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school, in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) or regulation 9, that he/she has been registered as a pupil at another school.
3.	8(1) (c) – where a pupil is registered at more than one school, and in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (j) or (m) or regulation 9, that the pupil has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion.
4.	8(1) (d) – in a case not falling within sub-paragraph (a) of this paragraph, that the pupil has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
5.	8(1) (e) – except in the case of a boarder, that the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which the pupil is registered.
6.	8(1) (f) – in the case of a pupil granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation 7(1a), that – (i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted; (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
7.	8(1) (g) – that the pupil is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither the pupil nor their parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
8.	8(1) (h) – that the pupil has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days – and  (i) at no time was the pupil’s absence during that period authorised by the proprietor in accordance with regulation 6 (2);  (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and

	(iii) the proprietor of the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquires, to ascertain where the pupil is.
9.	8(1) (i) – that the pupil is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the of the period.
10.	8(1) (j) – that the pupil has died.
11.	8(1) (k) – that the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets and –  (i) the relevant person has indicated that the pupil will cease to attend the school; or  (ii) the pupil does not meet the academic entry requirements for admission to the school's sixth form.
12.	8(1) (l) – in the case of a pupil at a school other than a maintained school, an Academy, a city technology college or a city college for the technology of the arts, that the pupil has ceased to be a pupil of the school.
13.	8(1) (m) – that the pupil has been permanently excluded from the school.
14.	8(1) (n) – where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that the pupil has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher, class at the school.
15.	8(1) (o) – where –  (i) the pupil is a boarder at a maintained school or an Academy  (ii) charges for board and lodging are payable by the parent of the pupil; and  (iii) Those charges remain unpaid by the pupil's parent at the end of the school term to which they relate.