

**Redmile Church of England
Primary School**



Attendance and Punctuality Policy 2013

Principles

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carer.

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the 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.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

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***
- ***truancy before or during the school day***
- ***absences which have never been properly explained***
- ***Parents/Carers removing their child from school go on holiday without prior written consent of the Head teacher***

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the family to the Local Education Authority who will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the child may be enforced. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact an independent advisor themselves to ask for help or information as they are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

Attendance Records/Targets

The school's attendance record is subject to formal inspection during the Ofsted process and as such we are expecting to be at least in line with national averages. If a child's individual attendance falls below the average then the Head teacher will have an initial discussion with the parents/carers followed by a formal letter if attendance does not improve.

Persistent Absence

The school monitors persistent absence and where there is cause for concern the following procedures apply:

- Head teacher contacts parent/carer and discusses the issues with them.

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- Formal letter advising parents that if attendance does not improve then an AIS (Attendance Improvement Service) referral will be made.

Responsibilities and Procedures

1 Parents/Carers

1.1 Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school on a regular and full-time basis and arrive on time.

- (i) Parents/Carers may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents/carers. (Should parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence, the school will record such absence as unauthorised).
- (ii) Parents/Carers should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school on the first morning of absence by **9.15 am**. This may be done by 'phone, letter, e-mail, fax or word of mouth from a responsible adult. Failure to do so will mean the school 'phoning the given contact numbers to ascertain the reason for absence. The secretary, Head teacher or member of support staff will call contact numbers after registration to ascertain reasons for absence if no explanation is available. This maximises the health and safety of all pupils. If contact can not be made, the school will seek advice from County Hall to ascertain the next steps in locating the child's whereabouts.
A written explanation should be given to the school office upon returning.
- (iii) Parents/Carers should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (8.50 am). If a child arrives after 9.00 am his/her parent/carer should report directly to the school office via the main entrance as all gates will be locked at 9.00 am. A child will be deemed late if they arrive after 9.00 am without prior arrangement.
- (iv) Under new legislation starting 1st September 2013, holiday requests during term time can no longer be authorised
- (v) Leave of Absence may only be requested if the circumstances are deemed **exceptional** and are granted purely at the discretion of the Head teacher. If this is absolutely unavoidable, parents should complete the appropriate request form and return it to school at least 2 weeks in advance of the period which leave is to be requested (see Appendix 1.) Any parents/carers requesting leave of absence will have their request reviewed by the Head teacher in light of current attendance figures, as well as academic attainment.
- (vi) Parents/Carers should avoid absence during the preparation period and administration of SATs which take place in May (Year 2 and Year 6.) Absences will only be authorised during this time in extreme cases such as serious illness or bereavement.
- (vii) **Parents/Carers should endeavour to book all appointments outside of school hours, e.g. dentist, optician, doctor's; when this is not possible, the child should come to school at the normal times in order to obtain their mark and leave at the appropriate time.**

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- (viii) It is not appropriate for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, getting a hair cut, etc. Authorised leave may however be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for hospital appointments, for example, which have to be in school time.

2 School

Schools' responsibilities relating to attendance are detailed in the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 and The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2010.

These responsibilities include:

- (i) Taking a register twice each day (at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon).
- (ii) Using the appropriate codes
- (iii) Complying with statutory registration and deletion procedures.

2.1 The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

2.2 Registers will be called twice daily (at 8.50 am and at 1.15 pm). Registers will close at 9.00 am and at 1.20 pm Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as 'late' for that session.

2.3 Teachers will complete registers in accordance with the guidance contained at the front of the register, including the codes for absence as set by the LA. The Head teacher will inspect registers regularly in order to ensure that these are being satisfactorily maintained and to ensure that any potential attendance difficulties are identified at an early stage.

2.4 Should a class teacher have particular concerns about an individual child's attendance or punctuality, the class teacher will speak to the head teacher immediately.

2.5 Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation be received from the child's parent/carer, the school will endeavour to make contact with the parent as stated above.

2.6 All absence notes received should be handed in at the school office by the class teacher and placed in the child's personal file. Only notes about which there are queries/concerns should be brought to the attention of the head teacher who may choose to speak to the parents concerned.

2.7 The governing body will elect a link governor each year who together with the Head teacher, will be responsible for monitoring the schools attendance and punctuality record.

2.8 The Link governor and the Head teacher, will complete a written record of monitoring for Attendance and Punctuality on an annual basis and will present it to the School Development Committee.

2.9 The Head teacher will report attendance figures and records of punctuality to the full governing body each term

2.10 The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular attendance and punctuality:

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- (i) maintaining the high profile and importance of regular attendance and punctuality via the Head teachers newsletter
- (ii) appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children and thanks to parents
- (iii) pupils with 100% attendance and punctuality or nearly 100% will get a special mention in our Friday assembly at the end of each term and in the Head teacher's newsletter
- (iv) Gold, Silver, Bronze certificates will be awarded at the end of the academic year for pupils with 100% attendance and punctuality or nearly 100%; a prize will be awarded to those achieving 100% for the entire year

2.11 When a child's attendance or punctuality causes concern the following procedures will be followed in order as set out below:

- (i) Class teacher has an informal word with the parents/carers either in person or by 'phone
- (ii) The Head teacher has an informal word with the parents/carers either in person or by 'phone to reiterate what the teacher had previously said and to inform them of the next steps regarding persistent absence
- (iii) The Head teacher sends by Royal Mail a formal letter advising parents that if attendance does not improve then an AIS referral will be made. The letter will reiterate the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and the implications/adverse effect it is having on their child. The Link governor will be copied in on this letter
- (iv) The Head teacher will contact an AIS provider

2.12 Pupils have asked that if they are absent (with good reason) could we send homework and letters, etc home with a brother or sister or with a neighbour; all teachers will endeavour to do this whenever possible. They have also suggested that a homework section is created on the website to enable them to complete work if they are absent for a long time.

NB The school will maintain a chronology of all contact (successful and attempted) in case legal action is taken at a later date.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| • Overall | The Head teacher |
| • Returns to LA/ DFE | School secretary |
| • Reporting to Governors | Head teacher |
| • Liaison with outside agencies e.g. AIS | Head teacher |
| • Contacting Parent/Carers for unknown absences | Secretary, Head teacher or TA/NN |
| • Concerns over absence liaison with home | Class teacher and Head teacher |
| • Monitoring daily absence/punctuality | Teaching staff and Secretary |
| • Monitoring termly | Head teacher and link governor |
| • Monitoring overall | Governing Body |

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3 Pupils

Pupils were consulted and agreed that they should:

- ✓ Try their hardest to get up on time and be ready
- ✓ Be responsible for getting their own things ready, e.g. the night before
- ✓ Not lie about being ill
- ✓ Help and encourage brothers and sisters to be ready on time
- ✓ Report anyone to the Head teacher who is absent from school for no good reason
- ✓ Help to remind parents (if it's appropriate) that we should return to school straight after an appointment if there is enough time to do so, e.g. dentist, doctors
- ✓ Check to see if there's any homework we need to do

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. School staff are committed to working with parents/carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. The Head teacher has discussed this policy with the older children and has made it clear that no child should be discriminated against or bullied because they are absent or late; usually there are acceptable reasons and when there are not, they know the Head teacher or class teacher will deal with it.

Further action

1. Investigate the possibility of creating a homework section on the VVS
2. Share this policy with all stakeholders

This policy was updated in September 2013

Approved by governors _____



NAME OF CHILD/REN:	CLASS:
Date of requested leave	
From:	to:
Number of days requested:	
<p>New government guidelines came in to effect on 1st September 2013, which prevent all head teachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are <u>exceptional circumstances</u>.</p> <p>Please note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A family holiday does not fall in to the category of exceptional circumstances • Holidays taken during term time are subject to a formal warning which may lead to further action by the Local Authority (see reverse for their sample letter to I am now required to send out) • Requests for any leave of absence will also be refused if your child already has poor attendance or if national tests are taking place at the time of the holiday • Any leave of absence taken without prior consultation with the school will be marked as 'unauthorised absence' • Any absences deemed 'unauthorised' may lead to prosecution by the Local Authority • Absence from school disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment. If leave of absence is requested, it is expected that parents support the learning missed whilst their child is absent from school, in order that they don't fall behind with their studies. Parents MUST consult with the class teacher regarding expectations • Before making a request it is important that you read the school Attendance Policy which you can find on our website www.redmile.leics.sch.uk; alternatively a hard copy may be requested from the school office (NB this is due to be updated in view of the new legislation) and guidance on the DfE website: www.education.gov.uk • Permission for leave of absence is granted at the discretion of the Head teacher 	
<p>Please indicate the reasons why this request should be deemed as 'exceptional circumstances' (use additional paper if necessary):</p> 	
<p>I have read and understood the above information. I have also read and understood the school Attendance Policy and guidance from the Department of Education.</p>	
Signed:	Date:

REPLY FROM HEAD TEACHER**Authorised/Unauthorised**

<p>I am able to give permission for you to take your child/children out of school on the days requested.</p>
<p>I am unable to give permission for you take your child/children out of school for the following reason(s):</p>

Signed _____ (Head teacher) Date _____

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: Formal Warning in relation to your family holiday request.

I write in response to your recent request to be permitted to take your son/daughter on a family holiday during term-time from [DATE] to [DATE].

New government guidelines, which came into effect on 1st September 2013, prevent Head teachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. A family holiday during term-time does not fall under the category of 'exceptional circumstances' and I am therefore unable to grant leave of absence for your family holiday request.

As a result I must inform you that, should you disregard my decision and your son/daughter has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, Leicestershire County Council will be advised of this matter and will be requested to issue Penalty Notices in line with their policy.

The parent(s) of any child who has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday will each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21 day period. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120 which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

It is hoped that you will take serious consideration of the information outlined above and reconsider your plans to take a family holiday during school term-time.

continued...

Head teacher

