



Attendance Policy

Ranelagh School

September 2018

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| Date reviewed by designated SLT lead (HLS) | Summer 2 2018 Amendment Autumn 1 2018 |
| Date reviewed by Governing Body/Achievement and Standards Committee | 14 June 2018 Amendment 17 October 2018 |
| Date of next review | Summer 2 2019 |
| Published | Website Governors' VLE Staff Shared Area (O:Subject Areas;Policy Documents) |

Ranelagh's Attendance Policy is set in consideration and consequence of the provisions of the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Penalty Notice) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended by The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 and The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Department For Education Guidance as from time to time issued in respect of school attendance matters

In so far as any specific provision of the above does not automatically apply to all schools, Ranelagh, as a Multi Academy Trust school, in setting its' own Attendance Policy, adopts and follows the provisions and effect of the above.

Policy Context

Good attendance at school is essential for a student's education and establishes a positive working ethos early in life. There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so do performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.

The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance are the shared responsibility of parents or carers, school with its' Governing Body and the Local Authority.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives an efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the school's Governing Body, Local Authority (LA), and the Department for Education (DfE).

Parents and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence, whether authorised or unauthorised, will have a potential impact on their child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents and carers, together with school staff, all have a part to play in ensuring that the full potential of every child is achieved. The Court has determined that "Regular" attendance means that which is "*in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school*" (*Isle of Wight Council -v- Platt* (6th April 2017) [Supreme Court] [2017] UKSC 28 (on appeal from [2016] EWHC 1283 (Admin)).

Absences

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

- **Authorised absence** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
- **Unauthorised absence** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent or carer's request.

When a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. The child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and, as a result, the absence may not be authorised.

Keeping a child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences may initiate a request that medical evidence is obtained from a doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming the visit or a prescription. One of these will need to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost.)

School Practice

In line with the Government and Local Authority guidelines:

- Registers are taken twice daily, in the morning at 8.50 when school starts and in the afternoon after the lunch break. (Class registers are also taken near the start of each lesson).
- Parents/carers should always telephone the school on 01344 421233 and leave a message on the answer machine each day before 9.00am if their child will not be attending school.
- On each day of absence, telephone calls are made by a member of the school office if the school has been given no prior notification of a student's absence.
- A 'notification of absence' form [on parent portal or available from the school office], giving a specific reason for the absence, must be completed and given to the Attendance Officer when the child returns to school.
- Registers are monitored regularly and where there is an unexplained absence, a request will be sent to parents/carers for an explanation. After three weeks, the absence will be marked as unauthorised if a reason has not been provided.
- If any students are seen to be developing a pattern of absence, staff will bring this to the attention of the Head of Year / Assistant Headteacher (Student Support and Guidance) / Assistant Headteacher (Head of Key Stage 5).
- The Head of Year / Assistant Headteacher (Student Support and Guidance) / Assistant Headteacher (Head of Key Stage 5) as appropriate will write to the parents/carers of those children whose attendance is a cause for concern.
- Parents/carers may be asked to meet with the Head of Year / Assistant Headteacher (Student Support and Guidance) / Assistant Headteacher (Head of Key Stage 5) as appropriate to discuss absences. An Attendance Action Plan may be instigated.
- Should absences persist with no improvement the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice or prosecution.

Absences during term time

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 states:

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school granting leave of absence to a student; except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Parent Action

- Parents/carers with whom the child normally resides, must request leave as far in advance as possible, giving at least 10 school days notice.
- Applications to be made by completing the school's 'request for leave of absence' form [on parent portal or available from the school office], giving the reason for the request, to be given to the Attendance Officer.

Should a student need to be absent for surgery, a copy of the hospital letter should be attached to the 'request for leave of absence' form.

Dental or medical appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Requests for these appointments, and for music examinations, should be made in advance, by emailing attendance@ranelagh.bracknell-forest.sch.uk for the attention of the Head of Year. The student should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

There are approximately 195 school days (390 sessions) a year when children are expected to attend school. There are approximately 71 days (142 sessions) of school holidays. Parents/carers are expected to ensure that holidays are taken during this period. Permission will not be given for holidays in school time.

Please note that for students on examination courses, the School's policy is not to sanction any request for absence during this time.

School Action

On receipt of the 'request for leave of absence' form, the Headteacher or such person as duly authorised by the Headteacher to do so on their behalf, will consider the submitted application, taking into account the reason given by the parent and making a decision as to whether or not such given reasons are, in their view, "exceptional" to merit the granting of leave of absence during term time.

The parent, who submitted the application for leave of absence during term time, will be informed by the school, returning the completed 'request for leave of absence' form within 10 school days of the school's decision in response to the application.

Leave of absence taken without authorisation may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. This may result in prosecution proceedings, or a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued in accordance with Bracknell Forest Council's 'Code of Conduct and Protocol for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices', which as a school we endorse. **If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, a separate Notice would be issued to each parent for each child.**

As of 1st September 2013, the rate per parent per child will be £60 if paid within 21 days and rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

As of April 2017, if the issued Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid, within the prescribed time limit for payment, each parent may be liable to prosecution at the Magistrates' Court for an offence contrary to Section 444 Education Act 1996, (failure to secure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil of compulsory school age), in the same way as if the Fixed Penalty Notice had never been issued. The purpose of the Fixed Penalty Notice, where it is considered appropriate for such Notice to be issued, is to give a parent the time limited opportunity to avoid prosecution for a substantive offence contrary to Section 444 Education 1996. Any such prosecution following non payment of an issued Fixed Penalty Notice will be for a substantive offence contrary to Section 444 Education Act 1996, rather than for non payment of an issued Fixed Penalty Notice.

Prosecution for the substantive offence, if proved, may, in respect of the less serious offence contrary to Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996 (being the parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to regularly attend school), result in each such parent receiving a criminal conviction and / or Sentence by way of a Fine not exceeding £1,000.00.

Prosecution for the substantive offence, if proved, may, in respect of the more serious offence contrary to Section 444 (1A) Education Act 1996 (where the parent knows that the child is failing to attend regularly at the school and the parent fails without reasonable justification to cause that child to regularly attend school), result in each such parent receiving a criminal conviction and / or Sentence by way of a Fine not exceeding £2,500.00 and / or a jail sentence of up to three months, or else any such community based Sentence as deemed appropriate by the Court.

In addition, in all cases where one of the substantive offences is proved, the Prosecution will seek an Order for the Defendant to pay a contribution towards the Prosecution Costs of the case, including investigation costs, the application for which will be served upon the Defendants at the time of the relevant Court proceedings.

In addition, when a Court passes a sentence, it must also order that the relevant "Victim Surcharge" be paid by Defendants. Revenue raised from the Victim Surcharge is used by Central Government to fund victim of crime services through the "Victim and General Fund". The amount of the Victim Surcharge to be paid by Defendants depends on the type of Sentence imposed and, in the case of an adult offender receiving the maximum level of Sentence applicable for the type offences covered by this Attendance Policy, may result in a Victim Surcharge of up to £170.00 per Defendant / parent.

In addition to any other Sentence imposed, the Court has the ancillary power to impose a "Parenting Order", not exceeding 12 months in duration, on parents, where the Court considers such an Order appropriate. Any person found guilty of failing without reasonable excuse to comply with the requirement of a "Parenting Order" or with a direction of the nominated Responsible Officer in respect of it is liable to Breach proceedings and, in the event of conviction for the same, to a fine, not exceeding £1,000,00, and or any other non-imprisonable Sentencing option available to the Court in such case.

Authorisation for term time leave will not be given for the following reasons:

- Availability or cost.
- Extended holiday at the beginning or end of the term.
- A term-time booking made in error by the parent or another person.

Lateness

Students learn best when they arrive punctually to school. The school day begins at 8.50am and all students are expected to be in school by this time. Registers are open at 8.50am and close at 9.30am. A student will receive a late mark 'L' if they are not in the classroom at 8.50am when the registers are taken.

Any student arriving late should report to Reception to sign in on the Late Arrivals sheet. His/her name will be entered in the register as 'late' with the reason. The number of minutes that the student is late will be recorded. The number of minutes late will be monitored each month. The student will then be expected to go straight to the classroom of the lesson relevant to that time. The student may be required to make up the time lost.

If the arrival at school is after the registers have closed, the student will receive a 'U'. This equates to an absence although the school is aware that the student is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

If a student is late due to a medical appointment, he/she will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Parents/carers are advised that, where possible, doctor and dental appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. Parent/carers may be asked for proof of the appointment.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence. Parents/carers of students who seem to be developing patterns of lateness will be reminded by letter of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem with the Head of Year / Assistant Headteacher (Student Support and Guidance) / Assistant Headteacher (Head of Key Stage 5) or as appropriate.

The Role of school staff

Students learn best when parents and staff work in partnership to maximise students' attendance at school and everyone is clear about expectations and procedures.

- The staff at Ranelagh has an obligation to enquire and challenge the reasons for students' absences and/or lateness and to insist on written evidence for any such absences.
- There is also an expectation that staff report concerns over absence and lateness to the Head of Year / Assistant Headteacher (Student Support and Guidance) / Assistant Headteacher (Head of Key Stage 5) as appropriate.
- The school will send letters to parents/carers as to their child's current attendance level, unexplained absences or lateness's or any other concerns.
- The Parental Portal is kept updated with respect to the punctuality and attendance of each student; parents can log in, using their login and password, to check their child's attendance records.
- The school collects information daily and weekly from the registers on absences. This information is forwarded to the Local Authority and Department for Education.

The Role of the Education Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service strives to support schools, parents and students with the aim of ensuring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. However, the Education Welfare Service also has a statutory responsibility under the Education Act 1996 to pursue non-school attendance and persistent lateness. As an Academy, we have a Service Level Agreement with Bracknell Forest.

Section 444 of the Education Act states that *"if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered student at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence."*

Bracknell Forest Council, through the Education Welfare Service, may issue Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecute parents when children do not attend school regularly.

A Fixed Penalty Notice, when requested by a Headteacher, can be issued as long as the evidence for the request is robust and the following criteria are met:

- Where there is a minimum of 10 sessions (equivalent to five school days) of unauthorised absence by the student in any 10 week period (these do not need to be consecutive).
- Where term time leave is taken without obtaining authorisation from the school.

- Unwarranted delayed return from term time leave without authorization. Persistent late arrival after the register has closed (code U) on 10 or more occasions in a 10 week period.
- Parents' or carers' failure to make arrangements to ensure that children who have been excluded from school are not in a public place at prescribed times during the first five school days of any exclusion, without reasonable justification. It is incumbent upon the parent(s) in such circumstances to provide proof of reasonable justification, for example, that the child or young person needed to attend a pre-arranged medical appointment, or a medical emergency requiring the child or young person to be supervised elsewhere than at home.

A Penalty Notice will be issued on the first occasion if appropriate.

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When a student is referred to the Education Welfare Service because of persistent poor attendance there are various actions that can be taken to attempt to bring about an improvement. The Fast Track Intervention framework promotes early intervention and aims to ensure that appropriate action is taken to tackle non-attendance as soon as attendance problems become apparent. Fast Track involves engaging the parent and specifying what improvements need to be made over a fixed time-frame (usually 8 weeks). Parents have the responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. Where a parent fails in this responsibility and no improvement is brought about within the specified time-frame, legal proceedings may be initiated in the Magistrates' Court.

Promoting Good Attendance

We celebrate excellent attendance throughout Ranelagh, with certificates awarded to individual children at the end of each term and at the end of the academic year (September to July).

What parents can do to help

Parents/carers are asked to work with the school staff and ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as this has a significant impact on a student's learning.

Parents/carers must:

- not condone their child's absences
- telephone the school each day that their child is unable to attend school due to illness before 9.00am
- send a completed 'notification of absence' form to the school when their child returns
- avoid appointments during the school day

If parents/carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs their help in resolving
- talk to their child's Head of Year in the first instance

Please note: the term "Parent" is as defined under Section 576 Education 1996, meaning:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined by the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

Governors

It is the Governors' legal responsibility to monitor and evaluate the attendance in the school on a termly basis at the Achievement and Standards Committee meeting.