



# **Windsor Academy Trust**

## **Rivers Primary Academy**

### **Attendance Policy (Primary)**

<b>Responsible Committee:</b>	<b>Education Performance and Standards Committee</b>
<b>Implementation date:</b>	<b>September 2024</b>
<b>Next review date:</b>	<b>September 2025</b>

## **Contents**

1. How have we written this policy?
2. Attendance is important
3. What is the process for attendance?
4. How can families and parents help?
5. Supporting pupils, families and parents if attendance becomes a problem

## **Extra information**

- A. Roles and responsibilities
- B. Local Support for Attendance
- C. Authorised and unauthorised absences
- D. Legal Sanctions
- E. Keeping and Maintaining Registers
- F. Monitoring Attendance
- G. Arrangements Links to Other Policies and Legislation
- H. Policy Monitoring
- I. Attendance Codes

## **1. How have we written this policy?**

This attendance policy is primarily for families and parents to help them understand how we approach attendance at Rivers Primary Academy. Therefore, we have written this policy with a group of parents to make sure that it is as clear and helpful as it can be.

## **2. Attendance is important**

Attendance at school is deeply important. If pupils are not in school, they cannot participate in all of the valuable things school can bring. Developing academically is, of course, important, but being a part of a school community and the development of pupils' personal potential. is an equally important part of a pupil's thriving at school.

Therefore, we will:

- work consistently to make school an irresistible place to be;
- listen to pupils and their families, building strong relationships;
- look at pupils' attendance very carefully;
- reward and recognise excellent attendance and improvements in attendance;
- make sure that families have the support they need to promote excellent attendance and punctuality;
- support pupils and their families to reduce absence from school.

At Rivers Primary Academy, Mrs Rebecca Bailey has overall responsibility for promoting regular, punctual attendance at school.

## **3. What is the process for attendance?**

Each day, we take a register of those pupils who are present. We also note those who are absent and note down pupils who are late and why they were late. We use a range of 'codes' so that we can keep careful records of attendance and reasons for absence. You can see the different codes we use at the end of this policy.

If we haven't heard from a family whose child is absent, we will give you a call to check in. If we can't get in touch, we will try to leave you a message.

Where we don't have an explanation for an absence and/or a pupil remains absent, we will call each day and we may make a home visit. We might also ask you to come into school to discuss ways we could help with school attendance. In some cases, we will need to involve other agencies to check if a pupil is safe, or we may involve an education welfare officer.

We always look carefully at each pupil's attendance. If we see any patterns of absence emerging, we will contact you to see if we can help.

Because attendance at school is so important, it is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends school. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, we might need to work with other agencies such as the Local Authority to take legal action to ensure regular attendance. This is relatively rare, and we will try to work with pupils, families and parents before things get to this stage.

We will reward and recognise excellent and improving attendance.

- Classes whose weekly attendance is 97% or higher will be rewarded with additional play time.
- Sharing attendance figures will be shared on the school newsletter and on Facebook.
- Certificates for 100% each half-term.
- Postcards are sent home for improved attendance.
- Regularly listen to our pupil's voice.

#### **4. How can families help?**

We are here to support families so that pupils have good attendance and punctuality. We appreciate families' support in three key areas: getting to school regularly, getting to school on time and letting school know when a pupil is absent.

##### **Regular attendance**

Regular attendance is really important to a pupil's personal and academic development. Families can help with regular attendance by taking holidays in school holidays, booking medical and other appointments outside of the school day if this is possible, and making sure that if a pupil is well enough to come to school, they do attend. We encourage pupils to attend school at least 97% of the time. When a pupil's attendance drops to 95%, this is the equivalent of being absent for half a day a fortnight. Missing this much school means that a pupil falls behind in their learning, misses personal development activities and extra-curricular activities.

##### **Being on time**

Pupils need to arrive on the school site by 8:50am. Being on time is important so that the day can start crisply and pupils are ready for the school day.

The register is open until 9:20 am. Pupils who arrive after 8.50am but before the register closes will be recorded as late. If a pupil arrives after the register closes at 9:20am they are marked as an unauthorised absence for the whole session (U).

##### **Letting school know about absence**

Of course, there are unforeseen occasions when a pupil needs to be absent. We ask that families support the school by letting us know the reasons for any absence straight away. per

- On the first day of absence, parents/carers must report absence by verbal communication to a member of staff either in person, on the telephone (01922 710164 (option 1) - absence line or by emailing [attendance@rivers.windsoracademytrust.org.uk](mailto:attendance@rivers.windsoracademytrust.org.uk).
- We ask that the absence is reported by 9:00am - the pupil's name, class and reason for absence must be reported.
- Absence due to illness will usually be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. When the school is concerned about the

authenticity of the illness, we will ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card. If we are not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in this instance parents and carers will be notified.

- Unexplained absences will be followed-up by school staff and we will likely complete a safe and well visit.
- The school will liaise with other external agencies including social care, if a safeguarding concern is identified.
- The school will also seek advice from the Education Welfare Service to consider further action during a period of absence.
- **PUPILS MUST HAVE at least 2 EMERGENCY CONTACTS ON OUR OFFICE SYSTEM in line with KCSIE 2024.**

If families/parents know in advance that a pupil will be absent, we appreciate families letting us know in advance. We expect parents and carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Advance notice is required for authorising these absences and evidence of appointments must be provided. It is an expectation that the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The absence will be marked as unauthorised for pupils who do not attend school around their medical appointments when able.

Another way that families can help is to make sure that when there is an appointment that has to take place during the school day, pupils come back into school as soon as possible after the end of the appointment. This means that the minimum amount of school time will be missed.

There are very limited circumstances in which we can authorise holidays during term time. If families are planning to go on holiday during term time, we request that you complete a leave of absence form from the school office before booking or inform us of the application for leave no less than 8 weeks prior to the absence. You can ask for a form in the school office. The reasons for a term-time holiday need to be exceptional for the Headteacher to authorise them. Each case is treated individually.

### **Talk to us**

We know that sometimes, school attendance can be difficult for pupils. We are here to help. If attendance is starting to be problematic, please contact the school office and ask to speak to our attendance officer/champion, Mrs Webb. Alternatively, you can speak to the school admin team or a member of our pastoral team. We will work with you to try to overcome any barriers.

There are other ways that school can help, too.

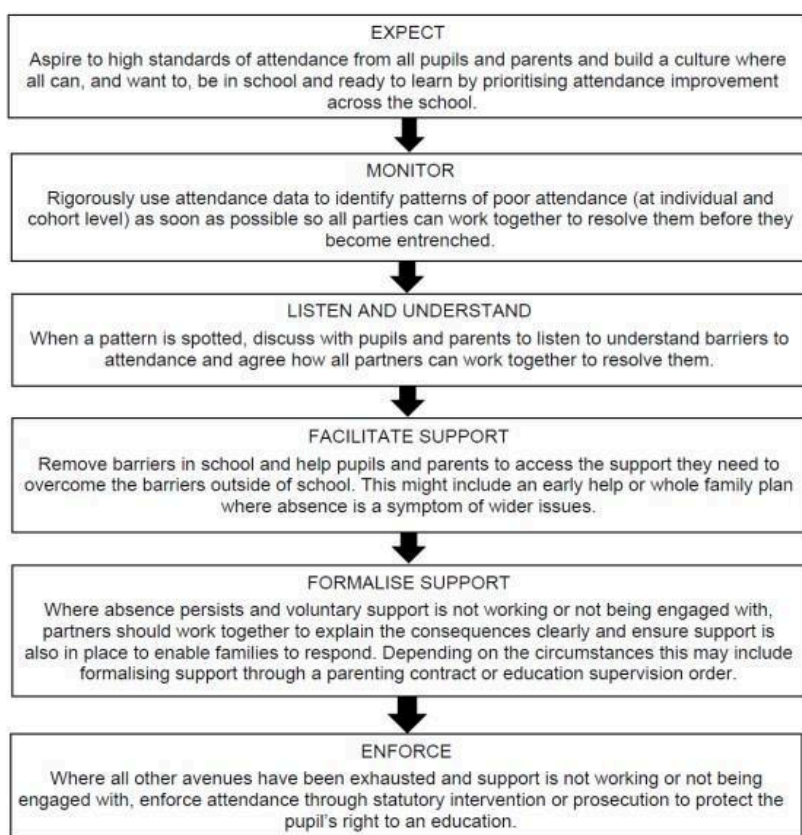
- Offering meet and greets for pupils who may be anxious or require support coming in.
- Child-led attendance discussions.

- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support to families and children.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether additional support is required and if any external agencies can provide this.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed with an individual attendance plans if appropriate

## 5. Supporting pupils, families and parents if attendance becomes a problem

We want to work in partnership with pupils and their families to promote good attendance. Therefore, we will keep a close eye on attendance so that we can help where necessary.

Our approach to supporting families to improve attendance will follow this process:



This is what you can expect from us in response to pupils' levels of attendance.

97-100%	The Green Zone	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone, this is ideal. Pupils will be benefiting from the full range of what school has to offer.
93-96.9%	The Yellow Zone Emerging concerns	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone we will begin to keep an eye on attendance patterns. This way, we can get in touch with you to see if any support is needed.
90-92.9%	The Amber Zone Concerns	When a pupil's attendance is in this zone, we will get in touch with families/parents and families to let them know. We will ask you if there's any help you need because we know that there is a real risk of a pupil falling significantly behind and missing out.
Below 90%	The Red Zone Significant concerns	When a pupil's attendance is below 90%, this is classified as 'persistently absent'. This is a real worry. We will ask families and pupils to have a discussion with us and to make a plan to improve attendance really quickly so that attendance is back on track. This may be via an Early Help.

There is a range of attendance support available from school. There is also a range of support available from other organisations which we can signpost and sometimes refer you to.

### Extra information

- A. Roles and responsibilities
- B. Local Support for Attendance
- C. Authorised and unauthorised absences
- D. Legal Sanctions
- E. Keeping and Maintaining Registers
- F. Monitoring Attendance
- G. Arrangements Links to Other Policies and Legislation
- H. Policy Monitoring
- I. Attendance Codes

## **A. Roles and responsibilities**

Attendance is so important that everyone at the Trust and the school has a role to play. This includes:

1. pupils
2. Parents and families
3. Adults in schools including
  - a. Teachers
  - b. Welfare staff
  - c. Attendance leaders
  - d. The senior member of staff responsible for attendance
  - e. Headteacher
4. Other agencies such as the Local Authority
5. Local Academy Advisory Committees
6. The CEO and Director of Education
7. The Trust's Board of Directors

### **What can pupils do to make sure attendance is excellent?**

Pupils can make sure attendance is excellent by being ready for school each day. The extent to which pupils are independent in being ready will depend on their age and development. It can be helpful for pupils to:

- make a list of what needs to be done each night before school the next day;
- check the list each night to make sure that, for example, uniform is ready, iPads are charged and homework is completed;
- speak to a trusted adult in school as soon as there is a problem, especially if something makes school uncomfortable or feel unsafe;
- if attendance problems happen, work with adults in school to understand why.

### **What can parents and families do to make sure attendance is excellent?**

Parents and families play a very important role in making sure that attendance is excellent. They can help by:

medical

- Promoting regular attendance at home, not taking holidays during school time, booking medical appointments outside of school time whenever this is possible and getting pupils to school for part of the day when a some school is missed because of an appointment
- Helping pupils to be on time
- Letting school know about absence as soon as possible
- Talk to school about any issue that comes up so that the right people can help.



### **What is the role of the class teacher?**

The class teacher is the first point of contact for most pupils and their families. The class teacher will build up a good relationship with all pupils and families.

Teachers can help to promote good attendance by:

- taking accurate registers;
- noticing patterns of absence and sharing these patterns with families, pastoral leaders and others in school as relevant;
- working with families to understand these patterns;
- working with pastoral staff when attendance is in the amber or red zones to make action plans to improve attendance
- welcoming pupils back after an absence.
- working with pastoral staff to help pupils to catch up after long-term absence.

### **What is the role of pastoral staff?**

- open door policy and open communication to provide families with support, guidance, information and advice around attendance and services to support pupils
- support through early intervention and early help
- support with signposting to external agencies
- identifying barriers to attendance and supporting families and children to overcome these
- home visits
- liaising with relevant external agencies
- supporting children with meet and greet and transition times
- supporting children with mental health and wellbeing
- working with children to understand their voice
- attending meetings with parents and key agencies
- providing parents with relevant up to date information about attendance
- promoting regular attendance by ensuring this is included on all action plans if attendance is a concern
- working with parents and carers to understand the importance of attendance and the impact of poor attendance
- working with all school staff to promote good attendance and challenge poor attendance
- working with leaders to monitor and review attendance providing meet and greets for pupils
- Supporting with statutory referrals
- Child led attendance discussions
- Interventions that may support attendance

### **What is the role of attendance officer/champion?**

- recording attendance on a daily basis
- contacting parents and carers in relation to daily absence
- liaising with the welfare team to discuss any attendance concerns
- working in partnership with the EWO and other external agencies
- working with parents and carers to understand the importance of attendance and the impact of poor attendance
- working with all school staff to promote good attendance and challenge poor attendance

- working with leaders to monitor and review attendance
- completing trackers and monitoring documents
- termly certificates and letters
- working with key staff to identify areas of concern and patterns of attendance
- communication with parents to provide support, advice and guidance
- supporting children to overcome barriers

### **What is the role of the senior member of staff responsible for attendance?**

The senior member of staff for attendance is responsible for the overall strategy for attendance. This includes:

- making sure that everyone plays their role in attendance;
- the data sharing strategy;
- the listening strategy;
- the mental health and well-being strategy;
- the overall family and parent partnership strategy;
- drawing together the half-termly attendance review;
- sharing the review with all staff;
- making sure that communication with parents and families is effective, especially relating to pupil illness;
- making sure that all pupils in the 'Amber Zone' have home contact and monitoring;
- making sure that all pupils in the 'Red Zone' have contact, monitoring and additional interventions alongside the tiered system.
- making sure that interventions to improve attendance are put in place;
- making sure that any action plans and interventions are reviewed and adapted as necessary
- making sure that the 'local offer' map is complete and kept up-to-date;
- making sure that attendance coding is accurate and consistent;
- advising the headteacher on findings and legal action where necessary.

### **What is the role of the headteacher?**

The Headteacher is pivotal in making attendance a key priority for everyone. They will:

- make sure that attendance policies are implemented well, and everyone knows their role
- look at attendance daily and make sure that everyone involved is playing their part well, especially the senior leader for attendance.
- make decisions around authorising term-time holidays only in exceptional circumstances, fines and legal routes to secure good attendance when this is needed.

### **What is the role of Local Advisory Bodies?**

- Local Advisory Bodies will promote the importance of attendance through all of the work they do.
- They will receive a report at each meeting showing how attendance is going and what is being done to improve it.

## **What is the role of the CEO and Director of Education?**

Attendance is a top priority for everyone. Therefore, senior trust leaders will:

- maintain an ongoing focus on attendance across the family;
- support school leaders to identify and break down barriers to good attendance;
- ensure that the right resource and training are put in place so that adults in school can effectively promote good attendance;
- support with school-level communications;
- share data and insights with the relevant committee and the board of trustees.

## **What is the role of the Trust's Board of Directors?**

- receive an overview of attendance from the chair of the performance and standards committee;
- offer support and challenge around attendance, seeing it as a key priority for the family as a whole.

## **B: Local Support for Attendance**

There is a range of services that the school can offer. The Education Welfare Service is available by phone on **01922 652860** or via email on **LocalOffer@walsall.gov.uk**

If appropriate, we can make a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or support you to speak to your doctor about barriers to attendance.

In addition, there is a range of local services and organisations who can also help. For further support services, guidance and information please refer to the Walsall website <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-attendance-and-absence#:~:text=You%20should%20talk%20to%20the%20school%20if%20there%20are%20any,member%20of%20staff%20at%20school>

## **C: Authorised and unauthorised absence**

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The Headteacher will consider each application for term-time absence individually. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least eight weeks before the absence. Families/parents should use the leave of absence request form which is available in the school office. The Headteacher may need evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's family/parents/carers belong. If

necessary, the school will seek advice from the family/parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

## **D: Legal sanctions**

We would much rather sort out attendance problems by talking with pupils, families and parents. However, the school, local authority and police can fine parents/carers for unauthorised absences of a child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. We will always use fines in line with the Department for Education's guidance.

- If issued with a penalty notice (fine), each parent/carer (which can also include a step-parent) must pay £80, per parent, per child, paid within 21 days or £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- The payment must be made directly to the local authority.
- From 19 August 2024, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period.
- The second time a penalty notice/fine is issued for irregular attendance or leave in term time the amount will be £160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.
- The third time a penalty notice is issued for leave in term time or irregular attendance, the case will be presented to the Magistrates Court, where fines of up to £2500 per parent, per child can be imposed.

*Note: Cases found guilty in Magistrates Court can show on parents future DBS certificates as a 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.*

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- the number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year;
- one-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission;
- where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **E: Keeping and maintaining attendance registers**

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix F for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, Whether an absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

## **F: Attendance monitoring**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.
- Identify pupils who are persistently absent (absent for more than 10% of the time) and those who are severely absent (absent for more than 50% of the time)
- Support pupils, families and parents where there is persistent and severe absence to access the support they need to improve attendance.
- Letters to share attendance concerns with families
- Late letters
- Late gates
- Statutory referrals
- Application for penalty notices
- Meetings with parents, school staff and key agencies

- Half-termly inclusion meeting with key staff including the leadership team and the SENCO
- Child-led attendance discussions
- Tracking system to identify pupils of concern which records action taken
- Daily absence log
- Half termly QA sessions with headteacher and attendance leads
- Posters, social media and newsletters are used to promote attendance
- Attendance leaflet to promote attendance

## **G: Links with other policies, legislation and guidance**

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## **H: How will we monitor the effectiveness of this policy?**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Windsor Academy Trust's Performance and Standards Committee.

## **I: Attendance codes**

Windsor Academy Trust Schools will use the attendance codes in line with the Department for Education Guidance.