

RICE LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

AGREED BY GOVERNORS: March 2024

To be reviewed: March 2025

Headteacher:	Mrs Lesley Roach
Designated Attendance Lead:	Mrs Catherine Sharkey
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Policy produced with reference to:

DfE Guidance Working Together to Improve Attendance

1.0 Introduction

Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery recognises the clear link between the attendance and attainment of pupils. The aim of this policy is to encourage the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality for pupils within Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery to support learning and achievement.

The importance of attendance and punctuality is underpinned by an awareness of safeguarding issues. It is important to see our children every day and provide an educationally safe and secure environment.

To gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that all pupils attend regularly and on time. Pupils should attend every day that the school is open. We set a target for all pupils to aim for 100% attendance with the expectation all pupils achieve at least 97%. ***As a school we define regular attendance as 97% or above.***

Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery believes Teachers, Parents, Carers, Pupils and all members of the school community have an important contribution in improving attendance and punctuality ensuring students attend to achieve. This policy sets out how we will achieve this together and should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Roles and Responsibilities Guidance attached to this document.

2.0 Aims

- Raise the profile of attendance and punctuality amongst the school community
- Maximise the overall percentage of pupil attendance and punctuality.
- Reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent (90% or below) or severely absent (50% or below)
- Provide support advice and guidance for parents, pupils and staff.
- Develop clear procedures for the maintenance of accurate registration for pupils.
- Ensure a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and acting upon attendance data.
- Ensure there is a proactive whole school approach that embeds a consistency of practice.
- Continue to promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority, Children's Services, School Health and other partner agencies.

2.1 Promoting regular Attendance at Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery :

This is everyone's responsibility, all members of staff, parent/carers and pupils. To help us all focus on this, Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery will ensure:

- there is a designated senior leader for championing and improving attendance;
- effective strategies are in place to deter poor punctuality;
- an engaging curriculum is provided and will be reviewed regularly;
- high quality teaching and learning is delivered throughout the school;

- pupils are provided with appropriate support from school and partner agencies to minimise disaffection from school;
- vulnerable groups are provided with effective support at the earliest opportunity and attendance is monitored rigorously;
- effective partnerships with parent/carers are encouraged through regular contact and support provided;
- parents/carers are kept informed of pupil attendance and punctuality through the school's attendance procedures, termly progress reports, individual letters and meetings when required;
- good attendance and punctuality is rewarded through regular individual pupil incentives;
- attendance and punctuality is regularly discussed with children in assemblies;
- attendance roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and all staff should ensure these are followed.

3.0 Attendance Expectations and Absence Procedures

A child not attending school is considered to be a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence from school is required.

3.1 Expectations of Parent/Carer

- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.
- Ensure your child arrives for school on time.
- Telephone school if your child is to be late.
- For routine non-emergency medical and dental appointments please ensure they are made outside of school hours and confirmation of the appointment is provided.
- Contact school by 9am on the first day of absence if your child is unable to attend, giving an indication of the expected duration and return date to school. Absence can be reported by telephone on 0151 525 9776.
- If a text message/phone call is received as a result of your child's absence it is important that you respond to ensure your child is appropriately safeguarded.
- Contact the Headteacher or Attendance Lead if the reason for absence requires a more personal contact.
- In case of emergency we need up to date contact numbers at all times so please ensure you inform us of any changes especially to mobile telephone numbers. (As a school we request a minimum of three emergency contact details be provided)
- Requests for exceptional circumstances leave of absence must be in writing to the Headteacher and can only be authorised by the Headteacher. Reasons such as a close family bereavement or taking part in a significant religious event would be acceptable for short absences. Unacceptable reasons for missing school, include general holidays, weddings, shopping, concerts and birthdays.

3.2 If a pupil is absent, we will:

- telephone and text Parent/Carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them by 9.30am;
- if no response is received, a member of school staff will conduct a home visit. If there are safeguarding concerns contact will be made with the family as soon as possible; if there is no contact and we have safeguarding concerns school can contact the Police for a welfare check on the family
- if a pupil's absence continues the parent/carers will be invited to meet with the Attendance Lead and the Headteacher;
- if the parent/carers does not attend the meeting and the pupil has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence, the parents/carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice Warning letter in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct and in agreement with the EWO;
- if unauthorised absences persist the Headteacher will discuss actions with the Education Welfare Officer.

4.0 Understanding types of Absence

Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery has to legally record every absence. This is why it is important that parents/carers directly inform school regarding the reason for absence, on the first day of absence.

4.1 Authorised Absence

Authorised absence - the school accepts the explanation offered as satisfactory. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised. It is the Headteacher, not parents who make the decision to authorise absence from school.

4.2 Unauthorised Absence

- Unauthorised absence - when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not Approved a child's leave absence following a parental request. This includes but is not exclusive to:
- Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have not been explained;
- Pupils who arrive after the close of registration.

This type of absence may lead to the use of Penalty Notices or other sanctions from the Local Authority. From September 2018 Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery can issue warning letters (in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct) to parents where their child has accrued 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any one term. The warning period will cover a period of 20 school days. If the child has any unauthorised absence during this time the school will refer the case to the local authority requesting a Penalty Notice be issued.

4.3 Persistent Absence

Pupils are defined as persistent absentees by the Department for Education (DfE) if their attendance falls below 90%. This is for any absence whether authorised or unauthorised. The DfE expects schools to intervene well before pupils reach a level of persistent absence.

Whilst we understand that pupils can be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend. If a pupil is reluctant to attend or a parent/carer has concerns, it is important that contact is made with the school as soon as possible to gain support and to work together to gain a resolution.

Parent/Carers are asked to contact the Attendance Lead in the first instance.

4.4 Severe Absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of school are classified as being severely absent by the Department of Education (DfE). This cohort of pupils are a priority group for Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery and additional support may be required from the local authority and partner agencies to support your child improving their attendance. It is essential that parents/carers work in partnership with the school and its partners, to ensure their child receives the support they require to overcome any barriers that are preventing them from attending school.

5.0 Why Regular Attendance is very important:

Any absence affects education and regular absence will seriously affect pupils' learning. Pupils who have time off often find it difficult to catch up and do well.

90% attendance is equivalent to a pupil missing one half day per week or approximately 118 lessons per year

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting your child to have any absence without a good reason from school is an offence in law (The Education Act 1996) and may result in legal action.

6.0 The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

The Education Welfare Officer – provides support for parents/carer and advice on problems relating to attendance, and encourages good communications between home and school.

The EWO will always try to resolve the situation by agreement with the family but, if a resolution cannot be achieved to improve the pupil's attendance and where unauthorised absence persists the EWO will be required to consider the instigation of legal proceedings which include Parenting Contracts Penalty Notices, Parental Prosecution and Education Supervision Orders. Details regarding attendance law, penalty fines and legal interventions are available from the local authority.

7.0 Leave of absence in Term Time

The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must be in truly exceptional circumstances and the Headteacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

Parents/carers can receive a Penalty Notice for taking their child on holiday during term time without prior consent from school. Consent cannot be given retrospectively. The

Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

8.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and late arriving pupils disrupt lessons.

8.1 How we manage lateness

The school gates open at 8.45am and classroom doors open at 8.50am. The register begins at 9am by the class teacher and pupils receive a late mark if they are not in their class by that time. The doors open at 8.50am to allow children to arrive in plenty of time and start their day well. Classroom doors and school gates are closed at 9am and all children arriving late should be brought to the school office to sign in.

- If a pupil arrives late to school and they are unaccompanied by an adult, parents/carers will receive a text message/telephone call to inform them of their child's late arrival.
- Late arrival to school following the close of registers is classified as an absence. If a pupil is persistently late after the official close of the register, the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice. The close of registration for Rice Lane Primary School and Nursery is 9.10am. Children who arrive after this time will be recorded as absent for the morning session.

If a parent/carer has any problem getting their child to attend school on time they should contact the Attendance Lead or Headteacher who will offer support to resolve the problem.

9.0 People Responsible for Attendance Matters

All school staff, parents/carers and pupils need to work as a team to support the attendance and achievement of pupils. This continued support therefore is vital in making every pupil's journey through school a success.

10.0 Removal from Roll

From the 1st September 2016 changes were introduced to the Pupil Registration Regulations 2016. These amendments affect all non-standard transitions; this is whenever a child of compulsory school age leaves a school before completing the school's final year.

As a school we are now required to: Inform the LA in **every** circumstance when deleting a pupil's name from the admission register. Inform the LA of the pupil's destination school and home address if the pupil is moving to a new school. School must complete an Exit form and submit to the CME@liverpool.gov.uk inbox, provide information to the LA when registering new pupils, including the pupil's address and previous school.

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- provide the attendance officer with comprehensive information about their plans, including: any date of a move; your new address and telephone numbers; your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing;
- if a pupil leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which may include liaising with Children's Services,

- the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Appendices – working towards best practice - (Example guidance for strategies used in schools)

Attendance and Punctuality Roles and Responsibilities Guidance

When	Whom	Actions Expected
DAILY	Pupils	Arrive on school site at 8.45am to enter classroom at 8.50am
	Class Teacher	Registers are completed on the Arbor system each day on time Ensure attendance has a high profile in class and share attendance with parents Discuss absence with pupils returning to school Welcoming long-term absentees back into class
	Attendance Team	Ensuring staff have completed AM/PM registers Ensuring input of accurate attendance marks in the register via Arbor Identify pupils who are absent from school without reason (before 9.30) Record parental contact regarding student absences Notify parents with a message on Arbor when children are late for registration referring them to the policy guidance. First day absence phone contact with parents/carers, following up unexplained absences where no text message/phone call has been returned. SLT and class teachers contacted with specific attendance queries and necessary follow ups required Safeguarding home visits as required. Supporting staff with registration queries, support the interventions of the class teachers. Logging attendance of all pupils going out /in school for medical, dental or visits

		Daily liaison with other settings for pupils educated off site to ensure AM and PM registers are provided within set time parameters and pupils who fail to attend with reasons unknown are followed up through the first day contact systems. Daily Late process. Daily Attendance SA/PA report sent to DAL for attendance.
	EWO	Focused casework interventions with persistent absence pupils and families. Phone call contact with pupils/parent/carers Home visits Instigation of legal proceedings Tracking of actions and interventions and feedback to pastoral staff.
	Designated Senior Leader	Monitoring and tracking of staff not completing registers in line with policy Safeguarding requirements. Liaison with EWO, Pastoral staff and Curriculum Leaders regarding support work with identified pupils.

When	Whom	Actions Expected
WEEKLY	Class teacher	Ensure all members of the class know the school target and their current attendance Monitor/follow up identified pupil absence by contacting parent/carers where appropriate. In specific circumstances, organise help for pupils to catch up on missed work due to prolonged absence
	SLT	Informing SLT and EWO of pupil patterns of absence. Provide weekly pupil attendance figures for DSL for attendance, class teachers and pupil rewards Discuss punctuality issues with identified pupils and parent/carers Pupils rewards Provide weekly punctuality data for the DSL for attendance, class teacher and pupil rewards
	Designated Senior Leader	Monitoring and Tracking of staff not completing registers in line with Safeguarding requirements. Liaison with EWO, pastoral coordinators and curriculum leaders regarding support work with identified pupils

When	Whom	Actions Expected
HALF TERMLY	Designated Senior Leader	Maintain a high profile of attendance as a significant contributor to pupil achievement Use attendance data to identify and act to improve the attendance of vulnerable pupils Ensure that all teaching staff focus on attendance in planning and pedagogy Determine priority actions for the next half term Monitor and track attendance SA /PA Action Plans Liaise with EWO to share information and agree joint actions re action plans or other pupils causing concern

TERM 1	Designated Senior Leader	The importance of attendance is underpinned by awareness of safeguarding issues for all pupils both in school and those at off-site provision School Attendance Review alongside the EWO Ensure that attendance is given a high profile as a key driver of school improvement and provide support and guidance to SLT, for plans to raise attendance Ensure that the attendance policy is implemented across the school and that systems are operating effectively. Report to SLT on attendance matters Ensure school prospectus, parent/carers welcome booklet and school newsletters promote Attendance Ensure that attendance features in ALL parents' evenings Determine priority actions for the next term.
	Headteacher	Ensure that attendance maintains a high profile as a key driver of school improvement through close monitoring and scrutiny of attendance data in conjunction with SLT and Governors