

# RAINFORD CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL



'School, church and community working together'

## Attendance Policy

Approval by Full Governors: 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015

To be reviewed on or before: Summer 2017

Signed..... Chair of Governors

Signed..... Headteacher

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## Our Mission Statement

At Rainford CE Primary School we foster Christian beliefs whilst nurturing our chosen values of love, peace, trust, friendship, forgiveness and thankfulness. Through this we aim to maintain and develop a Christian ethos and encourage an atmosphere of warmth and calm where all in our school community are equally valued and work together as part of the wider community.

## School Aims

At Rainford CE Primary School we strive for excellence in all areas and we aim to:

- foster a Christian ethos,
- maintain a happy, secure and caring environment, in which our Christian Values of love, trust, peace, friendship, forgiveness and thankfulness are developed throughout the School Community,
- develop positive attitudes to enable children to become independent learners
- provide a stimulating learning environment with opportunities for each child to reach his or her full potential,
- encourage tolerance and respect for people, property and the environment whilst developing our chosen Christian values,
- help each child to become a confident and well-adjusted individual with high standards of self-discipline,
- foster close links with parents, the local community and the Church.

## Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Rainford Church of England Primary School and Raindrops Pre-school fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and

agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## **Aims and objectives of this policy**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Pre School and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.

- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **Rights and Responsibilities**

### **School**

- Rainford Church of England Primary School expects all pupils to attend regularly and to arrive on time in a fit condition to learn.
- Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality with all pupils and will lead through personal example.
- The school employs a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and works closely with parents when attendance/punctuality gives cause for concern.
- Parents who use English as a second language or who have literacy problems will be offered support from school in matters of communication if school are made aware of these issues.
- Parents are informed promptly either by the school or the school's Education Welfare Officer of any attendance concerns that may arise.

## **Pupils**

- Pupils are expected to attend regularly and on arrive on time.
- Pupils will be encouraged to achieve and maintain a good attendance through assemblies, incentives and reward certificates.
  
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- Parents are responsible for informing the school before 9.30am

## **Parents**

- Parents should report to the school office on the first day of any absence the reason why their child is absent by phone call or personal visit. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to support absences.
- Parents should avoid routine medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours unless it is a specialist appointment that cannot be arranged outside school hours. Parents should inform school before an appointment and a copy of any documentation should be shown to the school office so that the absence can be authorised.
- Parents are expected to attend meetings on request if concerns arise about their child's attendance.

## **Registration**

- The attendance register is a legal requirement and must be taken twice daily. The register is taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. School must distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences.
- Registers are recorded electronically and coded in accordance with current government advice. Pupil absence will be recorded as 'N' (reason not known) until school accept a reason for the absence. This will then be changed to either an authorised or unauthorised code. School will make the decision whether an absence will be authorised.
- The schools register will inform the fire evacuation register.
- If the computer system fails a paper register will be taken by the class teacher. This will be entered on to the system at the first opportunity.

## **The school day**

Children are admitted into school at 8.50am

Registration begins at 8.55am at this time the school gates are locked. Registration ends at 9.00am for KS2 and 9.05am for KS1 and EYFS.

Children arriving after 9.00am must enter through the front door so as to receive a mark, they will be coded 'L' late on the register.

The morning register will close at 9.15am

Children arriving after this time will be coded 'U' this counts as an unauthorised absence OR any other code the school decides to record the late arrival correctly.

Afternoon registers close at 1.30pm

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. Persistent cases of lateness can lead to legal sanctions such as Penalty Notice fine.

### **Authorised/Unauthorised Absence**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then the Education Welfare Officer will send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. This is a safeguarding procedure. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Absence from school may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments (with evidence)
- Days of religious observance (with evidence)

- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement

## **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the education welfare officer will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. The school nurse is always available to give assistance and advice to parents.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school and the Education Welfare Service with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits the school regularly to monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (less than 90%). She works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

## Leave of absence during term time

School cannot authorise time off for family holidays during term time and parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such holidays.

Parents can only apply for leave of absence during term time in exceptional circumstances. Parents must apply in writing to the headteacher well in advance of the absence. The headteacher will decide if the leave will be granted and how many days will be authorised.

The headteacher will consider the following factors when considering term time absence requests:

- the age of the pupil
- the time of year
- the nature and purpose of the trip
- the impact on the pupil's education
- the pupil's ability to catch up on work missed
- the pupil's educational needs
- the general welfare of the pupil
- history of previous trips taken

If the above factors do not give cause for concern, the headteacher may consider the following circumstances as exceptional:

- Requests for leave of absence from a parent/carer who works for the emergency services upon receipt of evidence of annual shift patterns/annual staff rota.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of a family holiday when parent/carer is in the armed services and on a short/limited period of leave before returning to official duties.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of a family holiday when the family have undergone a recent difficult period/transition. Medical evidence may be requested.
- Application to take a child out of school due to pupil's or sibling's ongoing health/medical needs or the need for specialist accommodation/respite for the family. Medical evidence if appropriate would be requested.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of a close family member's wedding abroad or in the U.K. Depending on the location of the wedding, absence may be authorised up to a maximum of three days to allow travel time. Evidence of the



wedding booking would be requested (A parent's wedding would not be classed as an exceptional circumstance as parents have discretion to book their wedding during school holidays).

- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of visiting a sick close relation abroad or in the U.K. up to a maximum of five days. Medical evidence e.g. hospital admission letter or consultant's letter may be requested.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of a close relative's funeral in U.K. or abroad. Days granted would depend on the location of the funeral. Evidence of the funeral may be requested.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of a religious festival/pilgrimage. Requests for Hajj would be authorized only once in a child's school career; Eid applications for no more than one day, twice each year. The school would request evidence from the religious body to which parents belong.
- Application to take a child out of school for the purpose of visiting a parent in custody.
- Application for an approved sporting activity. Evidence of the sporting event would be requested by the school.

**If the headteacher does not grant an application for leave of absence and parents decide to take the leave anyway, the absence will be unauthorised and the parents may receive Penalty Notice fines. Penalty Notice Fines can be issued to each parent for every child concerned.**

### **Strategies for Promoting Attendance**

1. Parents and pupils will be reminded regularly (via newsletters, parents' evenings etc.) of the importance and value of good attendance.
2. Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice.
3. The school employs the services of a Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to support the school in meeting its legal obligations with regard to school attendance. The EWO will investigate all arising attendance issues in accordance with current government guidance and legislation.
4. Parents of pupils whose attendance falls below 95% may be invited to agree an attendance action plan OR a parenting contract with the EWO and the headteacher to

help improve their child's attendance; this may include supportive referrals to the school nurse or a parenting course.

5. A pupil with an attendance of 85% or below is categorised by the government as Persistent Absentee (PA). All PA's will be targeted for improvement by the EWO and the headteacher. Parents of PA's with a high incidence of unauthorised absence may be the subjects of legal sanctions including Penalty Notices OR prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. From September 2015, any child with less than 90% attendance will be classed as PA.
6. The school will support Pupils who are absent through long term chronic or life threatening illness by adhering to current government guidance for children with medical needs, this may involve a plan of support with home tuition and a re-integration plan back into school.
7. Teachers and support staff who become aware of issues which may lead to attendance difficulties will report the issues in a timely manner to the Headteacher.
8. When appropriate school will liaise with other agencies – Educational Welfare Service, Educational Psychology Service, Social Services, the School Nurse and other agencies to support and help pupils with attendance difficulties.
9. The Head Teacher will report to the school's governing body termly on attendance matters.

## **Equality statement**

The governors and staff are committed to providing the full range of opportunities for all pupils, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, social, cultural or religious background. All pupils have access to the curriculum, and the right to a learning environment, which dispels ignorance, prejudice or stereotyping. • This policy has been impact assessed by Anya Richardson in order to ensure that it does not have an adverse effect on race, gender or disability.