



# Rickmansworth School

## Attendance Policy

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PART 1. OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
INTENT .....	3
STATUTORY FRAMEWORK.....	3
REFERENCED DOCUMENTS .....	3
REVIEW PROCESS .....	3
<b>PART 2. POLICY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. AIMS & PRINCIPLES.....	4
2. RESPONSIBILITIES – PARENTS AND CARERS.....	4
3. RESPONSIBILITIES - SCHOOL.....	5
4. ISL ATTENDANCE TEAM.....	6
5. USE OF LEGAL ACTION.....	6
6. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES.....	7
7. PROCEDURES .....	7
8. ABSENCE.....	8
9. LIAISON WITH PARENTS/CARERS .....	9
10. ATTENDANCE INVESTIGATION TRIGGER POINTS.....	9
11. LEAVE OF ABSENCE.....	10
12. ABSENCE AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE CATEGORIES.....	10
13. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES FOR ABSENCE .....	12
<b>PART 3. APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>13</b>
APPENDIX 1 - DELETING A STUDENT FROM THE ADMISSION REGISTER .....	13
APPENDIX 2 – NATIONAL CODES FOR RECORDING ATTENDANCE.....	13

## **PART 1. OVERVIEW**

### **Intent**

This policy governs the process of attendance.

Our aim is 100% attendance and this policy will be consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, students and staff

A reference copy of this policy is kept on the shared drive and it will be brought to the attention of all members of staff.

### **Statutory Framework**

The Children Act 1989

The Education Act 1996.

The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2006

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

### **Referenced Documents**

Behaviour for Learning Policy

Home Visits Policy

Child Protection Policy

### **Review Process**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or on the introduction of new or amended relevant legislation



**Tony Walker**  
**CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**



**Matthew Fletcher**  
**HEADTEACHER**

## **PART 2. POLICY**

### **1. Aims & Principles**

- 1.1. Our aim is 100% attendance and this policy will be consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, students and staff.
- 1.2. Rickmansworth School will work closely together in partnership with parents/guardians and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to ensure excellent levels of School attendance and punctuality for all students.
- 1.3. There is a clear link between attendance and achievement – children who attend School regularly and on time are best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.
- 1.4. Students should be at School on time, every day that the School is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Every half-day absence from School has to be classified as either authorised or unauthorised by the School, not the parents. Permitting absence from School without a good reason is an offence by the parent or guardian.

### **2. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers**

- 2.1. Parents/Carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory School age receive an education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents/carers fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a School. Parents/Carers whose children are registered at a School are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at School.
- 2.2. Parents/Carers should: -
  - 2.2.1. ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with correct equipment.
  - 2.2.2. instil in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
  - 2.2.3. take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents' evenings and other relevant meetings.
  - 2.2.4. work in partnership with the school to achieve 100% attendance and enforce the message to their child that poor attendance has a negative impact on academic progress.
  - 2.2.5. ensure that they are aware of the attendance policy
  - 2.2.6. Monitor their child's attendance on the school's information system

- 2.2.7 notify the school if he/she is absent. This should be done as soon as possible on each day of absence and before 8.40am with an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed in writing - when the child returns to school.
- 2.2.8 avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- 2.2.9 avoid booking holidays during term time.

### **3. Responsibilities - School**

- 3.1. The School is responsible for supporting the attendance of their students and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.
- 3.2. The School is required to record attendance at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and to record whether students are present, absent or on an approved educational activity.
- 3.3. For students of compulsory School age, the School is required to differentiate in the registers between absence that is authorised and absence that is unauthorised (see Section 8).
- 3.4. Rickmansworth School will:-
  - 3.4.1. work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual students and for the student body as a whole.
  - 3.4.2. support parents/carers in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of students and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to nonattendance.
  - 3.4.3. be sensitive to the needs of individual parents/carers and families in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. Rickmansworth School recognises that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications, and that some parents/carers are reluctant to come into School.
  - 3.4.4. ensure this policy is consistently applied and clearly communicated to all parents, students and staff;
  - 3.4.5. address attendance from a whole School perspective. The link between attendance and achievement will be actively promoted;
  - 3.4.6. encourage all staff - including ancillary and administrative staff - to see attendance as part of their responsibility;
  - 3.4.7. actively address all issues which may lead to non-attendance.

3.4.8. Work with The Local Authority ISL (Integrated Service for Learning) Attendance Teams and other agencies to support specific needs to improve attendance.

3.4.9. Reward positive attendance.

#### **4. ISL Attendance Team**

4.1. The Local Authority ISL (Integrated Service for Learning) Attendance Teams fulfil the statutory duty of the County Council in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so they enable schools and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

#### **5. Use of Legal Action**

5.1. If a child's attendance causes significant concern the school will refer the matter to the Local Authority ISL Attendance Team which can lead to;

5.2. If a student who is registered at a School, fails to attend that School regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the School fail to secure that student's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the student under Section 36 of the Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the student's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action. ('Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance). If 'exceptional mitigating circumstances' are not deemed to exist then cases which remain open for more than 8 weeks will be referred for legal action. Legal action will, however, be taken earlier when appropriate. If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend School regularly further legal action may be taken if appropriate at a subsequent date.

5.3. In cases where parents/carers wilfully withhold a student from School, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory School attendance, the ISL Attendance Team will promptly begin legal proceedings on the grounds that no other course of action is available. The Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the County Lead for Behaviour and Attendance will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

## **6. Fixed Penalty Notices**

- 6.1. Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecution and enable parents/carers to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty. A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent/carer is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so, eg where a parent/carer has failed to engage in any supportive measures. It is particularly useful as a sanction at an early stage before attendance problems become entrenched and where the Local Authority considers that a prosecution would not be appropriate as a first action. (Further information on penalty notices is available on the Herts Grid for Learning under 'School Attendance' or from the local Attendance Team Manager.)
- 6.2. Rickmansworth School may apply for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued with regard to unauthorised absence if a parent/carer of a child of compulsory School age fails to ensure their child attends School as required. A penalty notice may be issued to each parent/carer liable for the offence in respect of each child. A student's absence must have been unauthorised for at least 15 sessions in the previous and/or current term. The Penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be made direct to the Local Authority. Failure to pay the fine within 28 days will result in either a prosecution for the offence to which the notice applies, or withdrawal of the notice (limited circumstances apply). Prosecution will be taken by the Local Authority under the Education Act 1996, section 444. All decisions to prosecute (or not) rest with the Local Authority.
- 6.3. The issuing of fixed penalty notices will comply with the Code of Conduct and practice as determined by the Local Authority. Medical evidence or exceptional circumstances may mean that these guidelines do not apply on the advice of the Local Authority ISL Attendance Team.

## **7. Procedures**

- 7.1. Registers
  - 7.1.1. Attendance registers are legal documents and must be taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Registers must record whether each student is present, absent, engaged in an approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstance. In the case of a student of compulsory School age who is absent the register must also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the School.

## *Attendance Policy*

- 7.1.2. Students are expected to be in their class rooms for morning registration at 8:40am. Registers must by law be kept for 3 years and are stored securely in the School.
- 7.1.3. Computer registers are printed out and signed once a month by the Attendance Officer.
- 7.1.4. Afternoon registration is taken during Form Time.
- 7.2. Lateness
  - 7.2.1. Student's arriving after the start of School (08:40) but before 9am will be registered as present, but late before registers close (L). If a student arrives in School late they must sign in at Student Reception and provide an acceptable explanation confirmed by their parent/carer for the lateness. Without an acceptable explanation, this will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence'.
  - 7.2.2. Students arriving after 08:40 and before 08.45 without an acceptable explanation from parent/carer will receive a strike on their strike card. Students arriving after 08.45 without an acceptable explanation from parent/carer will be issued a C3.
- 7.3. Presence on School grounds
  - 7.3.1. The School is open from 08:00 until 17:00 Monday to Friday and until 16:00 on Friday Week B. Students are not allowed on the premises outside these hours unless engaged in an activity organised by the staff.
  - 7.3.2. No student is to leave the School grounds during School hours without a written request from parents/carers, and must sign out on departure
  - 7.3.3. Students signing out during the school day should be collected by a parent/carer. Students in Year 10 and above only may leave school alone provided the parent/carer has given permission in writing or by telephone.
  - 7.3.4. Students must sign in at Student Reception following an external appointment.

## **8. Absence**

- 8.1. Only the School can authorise an absence.
- 8.2. It is the responsibility of the Class Teacher to take the morning registration and the Form Tutor to take the afternoon register and monitor attendance and punctuality in the first instance. This also involves requesting details of absence in writing from parent/carer for authorisation purposes.



- 8.3. Form Tutors can only use the Present (\ /), N or L (late) codes, all other codes are registered by the School's Attendance Officer.
- 8.4. Permission for absence should be requested in advance in writing to the Headteacher by a parent/carer with at least 10 days notice.
- 8.5. Absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher or a delegated member of the Senior Leadership Team in their absence. If appropriate the Headteacher will seek advice from the Local Authority ISL Attendance Team before authorising absence.
- 8.6. If a student is absent from School, they must ensure they catch up with work missed.
- 8.7. The fact that a parent/carer has provided a note or other explanation in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it. If the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence, or if after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered, or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

## **9. Liaison With Parents/Carers**

- 9.1. The School is dependent on effective communication with parents/carers with regard to absence.
- 9.2. Parents/carers should notify the School on the first day of illness and on each subsequent day of absence by calling the Attendance Line (01923 726923) or emailing [studentattendance@rickmansworth.herts.sch.uk](mailto:studentattendance@rickmansworth.herts.sch.uk) prior to 8.40am. The Attendance Officer will then transfer this information onto the registers.
- 9.3. The School is currently using an automated Truancy Call system which will attempt to make contact with parents in response to students registered absent no explanation yet received (N) in morning registration.
- 9.4. Written confirmation of absences for illness should be sent into school for the attention of the Attendance Officer by parents/carers on the student's return to School.
- 9.5. If absence is known in advance – eg medical appointments, written notice and permission should be sought prior to the absence. These absences should be avoided during School hours wherever possible.

## **10. Attendance Investigation Trigger Points**

- 10.1. Form tutors will contact parents/carers if there are initial concerns about absence and/or punctuality, and further concerns will be followed up by the Director of Learning, Attendance Officer and Deputy Headteacher if appropriate.

- 10.2. The School will contact parents/carers if there are concerns about attendance and/or punctuality.
- 10.3. If concerns remain about a student's attendance and/or punctuality, parents/carers will be contacted and asked to come into School for a meeting with the Attendance Officer and the appropriate member of the Pastoral team to discuss attendance concerns and the significant impact on the student's progress.
- 10.4. We may ask parents/carers to provide medical evidence from a health professional that a student is unfit to attend School in order to authorise absence. If so it is the parents' responsibility to provide this and to meet any costs incurred in doing so. For absences of 5 consecutive school days we would expect a student to have consulted a Doctor, and we may ask for medical evidence to support the absence. Where a child's attendance is causing significant concern medical evidence might be sought for every absence.

## **11. Leave of Absence**

- 11.1. Amendments to The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force from 1st September 2013 - these remove all reference to family holidays and extended leave for holidays in term time. These amendments make clear that headteacher's may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- 11.2. Parents/Carers may make an application for leave of absence in advance, the headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will decide the number of days a student can be away from School. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. Any leave of absence taken without permission in advance will be unauthorised.
- 11.3. A child can be removed from the School's registers if they fail to return from a leave of absence where permission has been granted after both School and LA have tried to locate the student(s), or if there are 20 days continued unauthorised absence and both the local authority and School have failed to locate the student.

## **12. Absence and Unauthorised Absence Categories**

- 12.1. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from School for an unavoidable reason.
- 12.2. Absences will also be authorised for the following reasons:

- 12.2.1. Recognised days set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent belongs.
  - 12.2.2. Bereavement and funerals of close family members.
  - 12.2.3. In exceptional cases at the discretion of the Headteacher. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and the number of days a student can be absent from school if leave is granted.
  - 12.2.4. If the pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision.
  - 12.2.5. To allow a child to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Child and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a Child Performance Licence has been issued. The Local Authority will not issue a Child Performance Licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher.
  - 12.2.6. Absences will not be authorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents/carers or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- 12.3. Unauthorised absences are any absences that do not fit into the above criteria. These would include, but are not exclusive to
- 12.3.1. Truancy for the whole or part of the School day.
  - 12.3.2. Absences which have not been properly explained.
  - 12.3.4. Unexplained late arrival at School after the end of the registration period.
  - 12.3.5. Keeping a student at home to look after other children.
  - 12.3.6. Accompanying parents or guardians on a family holiday
- 12.4. Permission may be granted in exceptional circumstances for the following reasons if requested in advance (at least 10 School days in normal circumstances). These will be considered on a case by case basis;
- 12.4.1. Professional performance opportunities.
  - 12.4.2. External sporting events.
  - 12.4.3. External examinations.

### 13. Summary of Procedures for Absence

Event	First action by parent/guardian	Further action by parent/guardian
Absence due to illness or other unexpected absence	Phone 'absence line' before 8.40am and leave a message or email the school using the designated attendance email address.	<p>Provide an explanation in writing to the form tutor, stating the reason for absence on students return to school. Where absence has been for 5 days or more than provide a medical note/evidence.</p> <p>Parents/Carers are requested to respond as early as possible to our automated truancy text/email system during the school day – these are sent out for all absences on the day that are unexplained.</p>
Absence during the School day for appointments, etc	Write, requesting absence, to the Attendance Officer and provide a note for your child to show at Student Reception when signing out.	Collect student from Reception. Student to sign in/out as appropriate.
Request for absence	Write to the Headteacher and/or Attendance Officer	

## **PART 3. APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 - Deleting a student from the admission register**

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 currently do not provide for a School to delete a student from the admission register where the student has ceased to be of compulsory School age and has failed to meet the academic requirements for entry to their sixth-form.

Amendments to the 2006 Regulations will allow this bringing the regulations into line with the new School Admissions Code 2012, which allows Schools to set academic requirements for entry into sixth form.

### **The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007**

Amendments were made to the 2007 Regulations in the **Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013**. These amendments, as described below, came into force on 1 September 2013.

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at School or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion.

Amendments to 2007 regulations reduced the timescales for paying a penalty notice. From 1 September 2013, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

<http://dfe.gov.uk/Schools/studentsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments-28/08/13>

**Appendix 2**

The following national codes will be used to record attendance by the School's Attendance Officer.

**ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Supervised sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence

<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at

[www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance)