

ROTHWELL VICTORIA PRIMARY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY January 2014

Every Child Matters

Enjoy and
Achieve

Make a
Positive
Contribution



Be Safe

Be Healthy

Achieve
Economic
Wellbeing

Rothwell Victoria Infant School



CARE SHARE
HELP SMILE



Signed _____

Date _____

Where the term parent is used in this policy it relates to Parents & Carers

Introduction - *'Every Lesson Counts'*

RVPLP seeks to ensure that all its children receive full-time education, which maximises opportunities for each child to realise his/her true potential. This can only be achieved if a child attends school regularly and punctually. There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attainment; schools with high attendance levels tend to have higher levels of attainment. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell.

The DFE states:

Parents of compulsory school age (five to sixteen) children have a legal duty to ensure their children receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise than at a school (this includes home education). If a child is registered at school, parents have the legal responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly.

We take attendance seriously at school and have put a great deal of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Philosophy

Within the RVPLP we are concerned with the care and growth of every child. All the policies we promote are aimed directly at fostering the development of every child emotionally, intellectually, morally, physically, socially and spiritually, providing the appropriate learning situations to achieve this.

As members of the RVPLP we share an agreed code of values, based on a firm belief that we are all significant individuals, with major contributions to make towards the life of our school. Everyone within the school has their own aspirations and abilities, and through the provision of an ordered, caring and happy community, we strive to help everyone reach their full potential.

Aims of the Policy

- To emphasise the importance of and, to secure from families and children, maximum attendance at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities;
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance levels;
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- To communicate to all relevant parties (teachers, parents, children) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; put simply: absence means missed learning. It is also a legal requirement that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school.

Irregular attendance leads to children missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential; it also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social behaviour. *Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our children.*

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will clearly be scrutinised by OFSTED.

National data plainly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

The vast majority of our children achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all our children as a minimum. From July 2011 the DFE increased the threshold for persistent absence from 80% to 85%.

Sickness usually comes in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the child is marked present on all ten sessions); Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

The school may involve the support of the School Nurse with attendance issues.

Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance within the RVPLP is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - children, parents, governors and the staff.

School

Staff will encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff.

Staff will provide a high quality learning environment in which children feel valued and welcomed. Our ethos demonstrates that children feel their presence in school is important and that they will be missed when they are absent or late.

The school will employ a range of strategies, including late gates, to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Staff will follow up promptly concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to attending or their feeling of well-being and will work with parents to resolve any issues. We recognise good or improving attendance, regularly reminding parents/carers of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.

The school will include an annual summary of a child's attendance when they receive their annual report.

All the settings within the RVPLP will share attendance data to monitor patterns of attendance in relation to siblings.

Children

All children are expected to attend school and all of their lessons regularly and punctually. Children who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, from a member of the senior management team.

Parents/Carers

Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences. As a school we place great emphasis on this in our communication with parents.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are required to notify the school on the first day of absence.

This means that parents should contact school before 8.55 am (but no later than 9.30am) on the first day of absence to inform us if their child is going to be absent from school. If we don't receive a call, school will contact parents in the morning to ascertain the reason for their child's absence. If there is no response to the phone call an initial letter will be sent. (Appendix 1)

A phone call should be made by the parent on each day the child is absent, unless it is known in advance how long the child will be absent from school in writing or by completion of a school 'Leave of absence in exceptional circumstances request form' available from the School Office.

A note/letter from a parent does not automatically make the absence authorised. Reasons for a child's absence such as holidays, shopping, birthday treats and siblings' birthdays are not justifiable causes warranting authorised absence. Parents should avoid, where possible, making medical and dental appointments for their child during school time. Leave may however be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Where parents have not contacted the school to explain their child's absence after the second day, a further letter will be sent asking for a reason for the absence. (Appendix 2)

If a child is still absent after 5 days without any notification or the school has concerns, then a home visit will be arranged by the school's Family Pastoral Support Officer or if necessary a member of the senior management team. A letter outlining concerns will be delivered. (Appendix 3)

Failure by the parent to make contact after 10 days will result in the child being referred to the Education Entitlement Service as a missing child. The RVPLP reserves the right to refer before this period if concerns warrant this. The school may also insist on parents attending a Parenting Contract Meeting to improve attendance.

A child's absence from school will be considered as unauthorised until satisfactory explanation is received from the parent.

Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

Education Entitlement Service

The Education Entitlement Service (EES) acts to champion the right of all children to receive a high quality education. The service will work to overcome any barriers to learning through skilled problem solving with a range of partners.

The Education Entitlement Team will ensure that the LA meets their statutory duties in relation to:

- school attendance
- elective home education
- child welfare including Children Missing from Education
- children in Employment and Entertainment
- behaviour for learning and exclusion from school

Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances request form

Holidays should not be taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. The school will not authorise family holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances.

In exceptional circumstances that require a child needing to be absent from school a 'leave of absence in exceptional circumstances request form' must be completed and returned to school in order that a decision whether to authorise the request can be made.

Parents may be prosecuted by the Local Authority for taking their child out of school during term time without authorisation from the school. A warning letter will be sent from the school prior to a request being made to the EES to take further action.

The following extracts are taken from Northants County Council website:

Headteachers would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional. Parents can be fined by the local authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without the consent of the school.

It's important that parents understand that the initial fixed penalty notice of £60 is issued to each parent for each child. A two-parent family with two children would be fined £240.

From September 2013 the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice must be balanced against the option of giving a further warning notice dependent on the level of unauthorised absence which may be:

- a. 18 sessions of unauthorised absence in the last 6 weeks
- b. 10 consecutive days unauthorised absence
- c. An accumulation of unauthorised absence leading to an attendance of 85% or less

Authorised Absences

Exceptional reasons for authorising absences:

- (i) When a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- (ii) Days of religious observance notified in advance
- (iii) Absence due to family bereavement or serious illness

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

Persistent Absences

If it is deemed that a child has persistent absences then the school will initiate the Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 process.

Stage 1 - Review letter sent to family if absence falls below 85% for their information and offering support if required. Appendix 4.

The school reserves the right to send a letter and request attendance at a Parent Contract Meeting before the 85% threshold is reached if deemed to be appropriate.

Stage 2 - If following the initial letter attendance does not improve or continues to be a concern parents may be asked to attend a Parent Contract Meeting.

Stage 3 - If targets set as part of the Parent Contract Meeting are not met then the school will follow the procedures outlined above in relation to asking the LA to take legal action under PACE.

The Executive Headteacher will report on attendance as part of on-going reports to the Governing Body. Families being supported through a Parenting Contract Meeting will be reported to the Family Matters Committee.

If a child is deemed to have a medical condition by the parents then the school can seek to ask to see the Doctor's Appointment Card.

Children reluctant to attend school

If a child is reluctant to attend, it is not appropriate to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Registration

Registration is important as a legal requirement and to ensure an orderly start to the session. Registers are taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

Morning registration will be open from 8.55 a.m. - 9.00 a.m. at RJS

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Late Marks will be recorded up to 9.10 a.m. at RJS and 9:15 a.m. at RVIS.

If the child arrives during the registration period, they must be signed in the late book in the school office giving a reason for lateness. They will then be registered 'late' for that session and coded L.

If a child arrives after 9:10 a.m. at RJS or 9:15 a.m. at RVIS they will be registered as Late after register closed for the session(s) unless an appropriate explanation is received. These late arrivals will be coded with an U.

Persistent Lateness

Persistent late arrivals are monitored by the class teacher, who will inform the Deputy Headteacher or Family Pastoral Support Officer who will take action in accordance with this policy.

Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.

If persistent lateness is a cause for concern then parents will be informed by letter (Appendix 5) and a parental agreement may be put place.

The Deputy Headteacher of each school will meet with the Family Pastoral Support Officer on a monthly basis to look at patterns of attendance and lateness data.

Rewards

Children with consistently good attendance are presented with a certificate in the final assembly for each term. A gold award will be awarded to those children with 100% attendance, silver for 97%+ and Bronze for 95% + with a special award being given for 100% for the year.

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

The Head Teacher and Governors, in conjunction with school staff will monitor attendance. The Head Teacher will inform the Governors, through the Family Matters Committee of any attendance concerns.

The Governing Body will review this policy periodically and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Appendices:

The letters below are exemplars but may be amended as appropriate to the situation.

Appendix 1

Dear xxxx

Today we tried to contact you by telephone to ask as to why xxxx was not in school. Unfortunately we were unable to speak to you.

Please may I remind you that we do need to have the information as to why your child is not in on any particular day. It is your responsibility to inform the school that your child will not be present on the actual day of their absence.

One reason for this is to ensure that we do not have a situation where you believe your child to be in school but for whatever reason they have not arrived. We always try to contact the parents of any child for whom we have no reason provided for their absence but this should not be necessary.

Please contact the school office so that the register can be coded and the absence authorised, and to check that the contact information we have for you is correct.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Appendix 2

Dear

We have been trying to contact you by telephone and we also sent a letter dated xxxx to ask as to why xxxx has not been in school. Unfortunately we have been unable to reach you.

It is the responsibility of all schools to ensure that checks are carried out and the relevant professionals are alerted if a child is not accessing full time education, or we have been unable to establish the whereabouts of the child.

Our records show that xxxx has now been absent from school for two consecutive days without the school being contacted.

Any unauthorised absences have to be reported each term to the DFE as a legal requirement, and if absence is a concern this may be discussed with the Education Entitlement Service.

We would appreciate a call to the school office as soon as possible to explain these absences. However, if we have not heard from you within 48 hours from the date of this letter someone from the school will make a home visit to deliver a further letter outlining our concerns and the next steps to be taken.

Hopefully this situation can be rectified promptly and xxxx attendance will improve.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Appendix 3

Dear xxxx,

We have been trying to contact you by telephone and have sent two letters dated xxxx to ask as to why xxxx has not been in school. Despite this we have still been unable to reach you.

As stated in previous letters it is the responsibility of all schools to ensure that checks are carried out and the relevant professionals are alerted if a child is not accessing full time education, or we have been unable to establish the whereabouts of your child.

This situation is now causing serious concerns and we do expect that we receive information from you as a matter of immediate priority in relation to xxxx absence.

If we do are not able to clarify the reasons for xxxx continued absence after 10 days we will report your child as missing to the Education Entitlement Service which may result in legal action being taken under section 444, 1/1A of the education Act 1996.

We may also be seeking to arrange a Parental Contract Meeting with the aim of improving xxxx attendance.

Thank you for your help in resolving this matter.

Appendix 4

Dear Parent

School Absence

We have reviewed figures for absences today and X has appeared on a list for attendance that has fallen below 85%.

We have looked at the records for all the children on the list and are aware that for the majority this is explained through a period of illness or a family holiday. However the purpose of this letter is simply to inform you of the general picture of attendance at school for X.

There is a direct link between your child's academic success and attendance at school .We would encourage you to carefully consider any future time off for X.

If you have any worries or would like any help or advice regarding attendance, please contact the school office.

Appendix 5

Dear Parent/Carer

Persistent lateness is becoming more of an issue for us as a school and we need to reinforce the importance of punctuality for children to ensure they are ready to learn. If a child arrives at school 15 minutes late each day, this equates to missing 2 weeks of their education a year.

Your childhas been late on occasions this term. We would ask that you work with us to help reduce this. If you do have any issues regarding getting your child to school on time and think that we may be able to help you with any of these problems please do not hesitate in contacting the school.