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Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. Aims

Pupils need to have regular attendance at school to ensure they have access to education and learn the relevant skills for socialisation for the maximum number of days and hours. Missing school can leave gaps in knowledge and understanding and place the pupil at a disadvantage in both their educational and social development. This school has a short academic year of around 176 days and short days for children from Kindergarten to Class 4. This gives children plenty of time away from school and is a compelling reason to have high expectations on attendance and punctuality during term time.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- We will also support parents to ensure their children attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

This policy applies to all children registered at the school and is available for all parents/carers to read on our website.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [Working Together to Improve 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:

- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6)
- The Education Act 2002 (Part 3)
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 7)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, and subsequent amendments 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on a termly basis. It also holds the SMT to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The School Management Team

The SMT is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to trustees.

3.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer: *Liz Tomkins*

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the SMT
- Works with Inclusion officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

3.4 Class teachers and Class guardians

- Class teachers/guardians are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 Office staff

- Office staff are expected to monitor the message system for messages from parents about absence, and record it on the school system.
- To contact parents, who haven't informed the school, to ascertain why their children are not in school.
- To record information about when children leave school early.

3.6 Safeguarding Team

- Receive concerns from Class teachers and add these to the child's confidential safeguarding files.
- Help and support the child, their family and the Class teacher to improve attendance and punctuality.
- To report concerns to the relevant body if and when they arise (i.e. LA/MASH)
- To provide reports and background information to any relevant body, and to record these interactions.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken 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 A* for the DfE attendance codes used in the school's registers.

Every entry in the attendance register will be kept for at least 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The register for the morning session will be taken at 8.25 (8.40 for Kindergarten) and will be kept open until 9.00. Children arriving after 8.40 (8.50 for Kindergarten) will be marked as late (L). Children arriving after 9.00 without reason will be marked as 'late after registers closed' (U).

The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 13.50 (13.10 for Afternoon Sessions) and will be kept open until 14.00.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 08.45 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents should notify the school by phoning the office on 01425 472664. If it is not possible to contact the school via phone, please email registers@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk or under exceptional circumstances you can email liz@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk with your child's Name, Class, and detailed reason for absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or if the child is absent for more than 5 days, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

If the child has a long-term illness which prevents them from attending school, the school will do all it can to send work home or provide on-line schooling.

4.3 Taking your child out of school in an emergency

If you need to take your child out of school in an emergency, this must be done in writing explaining why you need to remove your child and how long you expect them to be absent for.

The letter must be presented to the school office. The pupil must be signed out at reception and is subsequently entered into the Pupil on/off site book at reception.

Under no circumstances are parents to collect their children from the classrooms.

If the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher or Class Guardian feel that the circumstances under which the child is being removed is concerning, they must inform the DSL or deputies.

4.4 Planned absence, i.e. medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents should notify the school in advance, in writing to the Class teacher who will inform the office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Lateness data is kept by the office and may be passed to the relevant teacher or safeguarding person if lateness exceeds 10% (three times in a 6-week half term).

If a child is late 20% (six times in a 6-week half term), a letter will be sent to the parents of the child, raising the school's concern and giving the parent/carer(s) an opportunity to seek advice and support in resolving the issue. An example of this letter can be found in *Appendix B*. This will be followed up by a meeting between the parents, the child's teacher and a member of the safeguarding team.

4.6 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Where a child is absent from school but we have not been contacted by the parent/carer, we will try to contact them via phone. If we cannot contact the parent, we will phone the emergency contact, or initiate a 'missing child protocol'.

When the school office has not received reasons for the child's absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised.

4.7 Reporting to parents

We will communicate your child's attendance levels in the annual school report.

>95% Good 90-95% requires improvement <90% poor.

If, during term time, a child's attendance level falls below 95%, the school will notify the parents in writing (*Appendix C*). If it falls below 90% a meeting will be arranged between the parents, the child's teacher and member of the safeguarding team (see letter *Appendix D*)

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.4
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Compassionate reasons- i.e. grievances.
- Granted study leave
- Off-site education
- Flexi-schooling requests
- Exclusion

Examples of **unauthorised absence** include:

- Term-time family holidays. Schools are not able to authorise holidays in term time.

However, the school is able to authorise a leave of absence but only in exceptional circumstances. For example, if the absence has a special importance or significance to the child, or if for compassionate reasons, to include weddings and funerals. This must not be a habitual occurrence.

In order for permission to be granted, the parent must apply to the Kindergarten teacher, Class teacher

or Guardian, in advance, in writing. A copy of this must also be provided to the Attendance Officer, Liz Tomkins.

If it is felt that the absence will be detrimental for a child, the teacher may bring the issue to their department meeting, asking for the advice of the wider circle of teachers.

The following will be considered:

- The child's progress so far during that academic year.
- The importance of being in school at that time of year.
- The child's attendance so far during that academic year.

If the child's attendance is already below 95%, the holiday absence will not be authorised.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Ringwood Waldorf School aims to

- create a culture of good attendance and punctuality as the norm, as a sign of respect for the school's aims and ethos, and the teacher's work inside and out of the classroom.
- raise awareness of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and regular punctuality at every stage of the child's education
- promote a safe and secure mood within the school, where pupils feel welcome and encouraged to take ownership of their responsibility
- monitor attendance and lateness data to help recognise positive and negative patterns, for early intervention in any problems.
- Recognise the important role of staff, especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day that a child is absent from illness or email registers@ringwoodwaldorfschool.org.uk

If a pupil's absence goes above 5 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an Inclusion Officer with the local authority.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Severe absence refers to pupils who miss 50% or more of school.

The School collects attendance data via the school registers, and is used for internal purposes. For example, to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify where absence patterns may give cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the attendance officer. At every review, the policy will be shared with the SMT and Trustees.

8. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix A: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix B

For use when a child has been late six times in a six-week half term.

(To be put onto School letter-headed paper)

[Name of Parent/Carer]

[Address]

[Address]

[Address]

[Post Code]

Date:

Dear [Parent/Carer]

[Child]'s punctuality has fallen below 80%.

In real terms, this means that they have been late six times in a half term. As such, we request that you join your child's Class teacher and a member of the School's Safeguarding Team for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss how the School can assist in helping to improve [child]'s punctuality.

Please could you attend a meeting on xx/xx/xx at 00.00 in your child's classroom. If this is inconvenient for you, please contact [teacher, Attendance Officer or DSL].

We are obliged by law to meet the Child Protection regulations for schools, and our Attendance and Punctuality is important in helping us to meet some of these obligations.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[School Administrator or Designated Safeguarding Lead]

Appendix C

For use when a child's attendance has fallen below 95%

(To be put onto School letter-headed paper)

[Name of Parent/Carer]

[Address]

[Address]

[Address]

[Post Code]

Date:

Dear [Parent/Carer]

[Child]'s attendance has fallen below 95%.

If it falls to 90% we will inform you again and request that you join your child's Class teacher and a member of the School's Safeguarding Team for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss how the School can assist in helping to raise [child]'s attendance levels.

We are obliged by law to meet the Child Protection regulations for schools, and our Attendance and Punctuality is important in helping us to meet some of these obligations. Please do speak to either myself or your child's teacher if you are currently experiencing difficulties in getting your child to school, or if you would like to discuss this further.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[School Administrator or Designated Safeguarding Lead]

Appendix D

For use when a child's attendance has fallen below 90%

(To be put onto School letter-headed paper)

[Name of Parent/Carer]

[Address]

[Address]

[Address]

[Post Code]

Date:

Dear [Parent/Carer]

[Child]'s attendance has fallen below 90%.

We corresponded with yourself previously when [Child]'s attendance fell below 95%, indicating that if it fell to 90% we will request that you join your child's Class teacher and a member of the School's Safeguarding Team for a meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss how the School can assist in helping to raise [child]'s attendance levels.

Please could you attend a meeting on xx/xx/xx at 00.00 in your child's classroom. If this is inconvenient for you, please contact [teacher, Attendance Officer or DSL].

We are obliged by law to meet the Child Protection regulations for schools, and our Attendance and Punctuality is important in helping us to meet some of these obligations.

Thank you very much for your understanding.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[School Administrator or Designated Safeguarding Lead]

Appendix E

Flowchart

Attendance per half-term	Punctuality per half-term
100%: outstanding	100%: outstanding
95%: school's expectation	90% (3 days): monitoring
90%: Persistent absence: if attendance below 95% school monitors attendance.	80% (6 days): letter to parents, meeting with Attendance Officer.
85%: if attendance below 90% school to actively support family and may consult Inclusion Officer from the Local Authority	
<85%: considered 'persistent absence' by DfE. School to actively support family in consultation with Inclusions Services from Local Authority.	
<85% with Parental Acceptance: Level 3 Safeguarding Concern. School to make MASH referral.	
<50%: Severe absence: new term introduced by the 2022 DfE guidance	
2 unauthorised absences (without explanation, i.e. no holiday application or notification): email will be sent to parents. If absent without authorisation again, second letter plus meeting.	
2 consecutive unauthorised absences without the school being able to establish whereabouts of child and that child is safe: Safeguarding Team must consider a MASH referral.	
Regular absence, irregular attendance, or 10 consecutive school days or more without permission: the school will liaise with Inclusions Services from Local Authority	
Unexplained absences: school has safeguarding duty to investigate	

