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## **1. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Richmond School is committed to providing a full and efficient education for all pupils. The school believes sincerely that all pupils benefit from the education it provides and therefore from regular school attendance. To this end the School will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems affecting attendance will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy received the full agreement of the Governing Body and was agreed at their meeting on 13.3.08

## **3. AIMS:**

It is recognised that

- All pupils of statutory school age have an equal right to access an education in accordance with the National Curriculum regulations.
- No pupil should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance, it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents to ensure attendance at school as required by law.
- Some pupils and their parents may need to be supported at some stage in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.
- The vast majority of pupils want to attend school to learn, to socialise with their peer group and to prepare themselves fully to take their place in society as well-rounded and responsible citizens with the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute to the life and culture of their communities.

## **4. EXPECTATIONS:**

As a Primary school we have day-to-day contact with parents which can mean that many parents are easily contactable and may help to resolve problems and concerns quickly. Good practice could include inviting parents to meetings about attendance and discussing with them the reason why a referral has been made to the EWS or another agency and the expectation that this is to support and assist the family. If there are Child Protection concerns then the Lincolnshire Area Child Protection Procedures should be followed immediately.

**We expect the following from all our pupils:**

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

**We expect the following from parents:** (cf. Appendix 3)

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that they contact the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence or as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day and to check that they have done their homework.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

**Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:**

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- A quality education

## **5. ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE THROUGH GOOD PRACTICE AND REWARDS**

### **Attendance can be encouraged in the following ways:**

- Accurate completion of the registers at the beginning of each session and within 30 minutes of the start of the session.
- Attendance checks at appropriate times.
- Recording of good attendance on individual Records of Achievement.
- Awarding the Lincolnshire County Council's Certificate, for 100% attendance achieved throughout the year.
- Individual awards and certificates for 100% attendance at times decided by the school.
- A certificate to be presented to the class with the most improved attendance in any term and awards for any class with 100% attendance in any month.
- All awards to be awarded by the Head Teacher and/or a school Governor as appropriate.
- Identifying and supporting pupils who have attendance problems in advance of the transition between KS2 and KS3. This should include the sharing of relevant information with the destination school.
- Establishing a mechanism for working with those parents who are concerned that their children may be experiencing difficulty in attending school.
- Providing parents with absence reports at termly parents' evenings and on the end of year reports.
- The efficient use of computerised registration systems can provide valuable, year group, class and pupil level attendance data which enables speedy analysis and timely responses by the school.

## **6. RESPONDING TO NON-ATTENDANCE:**

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.

- If a note or telephone call is not received from parents, the parents will be contacted on the first day of absence by telephone.

- Where there is no response, further telephone calls will be made each day. For unexplained absence all effort will be made to contact the parent/carers and the EWO/EWS will be contacted.
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer for the school and further action planned. This may, in appropriate cases, result in a referral to the EWS.
- After 10 days, unless other action is planned, the parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school. This meeting will include the appropriate staff, EWO, parent and pupil and will aim to identify and solve the problems that are raised.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be discussed again with the Education Welfare Officer with a view to a formal referral being made to the Education Welfare Service, if one has not already been made at an earlier stage. If a referral had already been made then the case will be reviewed and further action planned.

#### **Reintegration:**

- The return to school for a pupil after long-term absence requires special planning. For example, it may be appropriate to establish a Pastoral Support Programme as detailed in the DfES Social Inclusion: Pupil Support Guidance (Circular 10/99)
- Designated staff should be responsible for deciding on the programme for return and for the management of that programme.
- All staff need to be aware that this is a difficult process that will require careful handling and that any problems should be notified to the responsible staff member as soon as possible.
- Programmes may need to be tailored to meet individual need and may involve phased, part-time re-entry with support in class as appropriate. Support from the SEN Co-ordinator may be required

The success of the Pastoral Support Programme will require the involvement of appropriate school staff, other agencies, the young person and parents. Programmes should be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary. Staff will be notified of the return of the long-term absentees via the staff noticeboard.

## **7. SCHOOL ORGANISATION**

In order for the attendance policy to be successful, every member of the staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education.

In addition there may be specific responsibilities allocated to individual staff such as the following:

### **Head Teacher:**

- To oversee and demonstrate ownership of the whole policy.
- To regularly report progress on attendance to governors, pupils and parents.
- To set challenging but achievable targets to reduce levels of absence
- To liaise with the EWO
- To oversee the efficient operation of the attendance system and the collation and analysis of attendance data.
- To oversee the work of administrative staff.
- To produce the attendance profile for the whole school.

### **Class Teacher**

- To complete registers accurately and on time.
- To follow-up immediately any unexplained absence by informing the school office.
- To query inappropriate reasons for absence
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To inform senior staff of concerns in a timely manner.

## **Governors**

- Governors may be given a specific role/interest in monitoring attendance and/or policies.
- Governors can play a valuable role through representation at school attendance panels, parents evenings etc.
- Request regular attendance progress reports for Governors' Meetings.

## **Parents:**

- Contact with school on first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Provide signed and dated absence notes for absences which are not informed by telephone.
- Support their child and the school in achieving maximum attendance.

## **Education Welfare Service:**

The Education Welfare Service has been described as the "attendance enforcement arm" of most local authorities (DES 1991) which complements the role of the school.

Lincolnshire Education Welfare Service will strive to provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves. In accordance with the EWS Service Remit and Procedures we can support schools in a variety of ways:

- We will liaise with identified school staff
- Where a referral is accepted, we will undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Through group work with identified groups of pupils.
- Where necessary we will instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the LEA including parental prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court and applying for Education Supervision Orders through the Family Court.
- We will accept referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- We will plan and review casework.
- We will provide feedback to schools.
- We can offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance, the employment of young people and young people involved in performing.

- We will support schools in the establishment and management of school attendance panels
- We will support schools in the use of penalty notices and parenting contracts within the provisions of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

**Office Staff:**

School administrative staff can play a vital role in supporting the school's attendance and absence management strategies.

- Produce updates from weekly registers, error sheets, absence code sheets, weekly % information, OMR sheets.
- Telephone absence slips to be put in registers.
- Maintain a late book.

**8. LIAISING WITH EXTERNAL AGENCIES**

Research has shown that schools in partnership with the full range of support services have a greater impact on school attendance than when they act alone or when the support services are uncoordinated or disjointed.

Poor school attendance may be a symptom of a wide range of institutional, community, family or individual circumstances. Many of these circumstances will demand expert support beyond the remit of the school or the EWS. It is therefore vital that strong partnerships are established with all agencies that work with children and young people. The EWS may be able to help schools establish multi-agency meetings or may be able to advise on how schools can become involved in existing local arrangements.

**Other Agencies** to be used where appropriate in individual cases.

- Educational Behavioural and Support Services.
- Educational Psychologists.
- Special Educational Needs Service.
- Social Care.
- Local police

## **Data Protection Act**

The Data Protection Act places obligations on all agencies that process, store and share information on any individual. It is important to have full regard for the requirements of the Act. Each school has a Data Protection Notification which details the circumstances under which data is managed. Nothing in the legislation prevents a school sharing information with the police or social services where it is believed that a child or young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or is in need of safeguarding.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **GUIDANCE FOR CLASS TEACHERS: SUGGESTED METHODOLOGY**

Under Section of the Education Act 1996, it is the legal responsibility of parents to see that their child/children receive(s) regular education suitable to their age, aptitude and abilities.

#### **The Importance of Registration :**

- An electronic attendance register, must be kept on which, at the BEGINNING of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. Registers should be collected from and returned to the school office.
- Where electronic registers are used, hard copies, current each session, must be kept to observe the spirit of the law and for Health and Safety reasons.
- Accurate marking of registers, and appropriate maintenance of electronic and computerised systems can have a significant impact on overall school attendance and absence figures.
- Attendance registers, and bound copies of electronic registration print outs must be kept for a minimum of 3 years from the date that the last entries were made.

#### **Categorising Absence:**

##### **Symbols to be used in Registers (Categories)**

From 1 September 2006 all schools are required to use a common set of codes to record pupil attendance and absence.

The Department for Children Families and Schools (DCFS) believes that these codes are best used within electronic systems for recording attendance and absence of pupils. Such electronic systems are capable of producing the data necessary for absence returns to DCFS without time consuming counting up of possible attendance and actual absences.

The use of fixed codes will also assist LAs and DCFS in monitoring not only whether pupils are absent with or without permission of the school, but why pupils are absent from school.

- **Only the school**, in the context of the law **can authorise absence**, a note or explanation from parents does not guarantee authorisation. If a class teacher does not accept the explanation offered for absence as a valid reason then the matter must be referred to the Head Teacher.
- Emerging patterns of authorised absence should be reported to the Head Teacher.
- Reasons for absence should be entered in the register with A and the appropriate code symbol.
- Class teachers who experience difficulty in receiving a parental note should inform the Head Teacher.

#### **Authorised or Unauthorised Absence:**

**Authorised absence** is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence.

All other absence must be regarded as **unauthorised**.

The following may be reasons for authorising absences.

- Illness
- Family bereavements
- Family holiday (up to two weeks) but see notes below.
- Medical and dental appointments where proof is available.
- Days of religious observance.
- Fixed term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated.

#### **Family Holidays:**

Parents should not normally take pupils on holiday during the school term though schools are able to exercise their discretion when granting parental requests. However, each request should be considered individually taking into account the age of the child, previous attendance patterns, parental views and the educational progress of the child. If a request is not granted and the parent takes the child on holiday, the absence should not be authorised. If a request is granted

the absence should not normally be for more than two weeks in any school year. If the holiday goes on for longer than agreed, the extra days absence should be unauthorised.

### **The Use of Penalty Warnings and Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time**

As a general rule, the LA will not issue a penalty notice for unauthorised absence due solely to a holiday without permission. However, there may be circumstances where this sanction is appropriate.

The EWS will work with head teachers to agree the most appropriate course of action for each individual case.

### **Resolving Disagreements**

Where there is a lack of agreement between the school and the LA as to the appropriateness of issuing a penalty warning letter or a penalty notice, the matter will be referred to the County Legal Proceedings Panel whose decision shall be final.

### **Approved Educational Activity**

Where pupils are away from school but are undertaking an approved educational activity, this should be marked in the usual way but are counted as present for calculating data for DCFS absence return. To avoid confusion in emergency situations pupils who are off site should not be marked as present. The following activities fall within this category.

- Field trips and educational visits both in this country or overseas.

Absences should **not** be authorised under the following circumstances.

- Shopping trips
- Holidays in term time where the permission of the school has not been given.
- Minding the house or looking after siblings.
- Lateness if registration is missed without explanation.
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified
- No reason given
- School staff have cause to believe that the note is not genuine or valid.

Unusual circumstances may arise that lead to a young person being absent from school. It is for the head teacher to decide whether the explanation offered is reasonable. In such situations, the individual circumstances, previous attendance pattern and frequency of such incidents should be considered. Further advice is available in DfES Circular No. 10/99.

**Lateness:**

Schools should actively discourage late arrival by challenging young people who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation.

Registers remain open for thirty minutes from the beginning of registration. In the event of bad weather this period can be extended.

Where a pupil arrives during the period when the register is open they may be marked present.

Where a pupil arrives after register closure without good reason, they should be marked with the appropriate coding.

**Removal from the school roll**

There are strict guidelines on the circumstances under which a pupil may be removed from the school roll. These are detailed in Education(Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 (as amended 1997) and the Schools Administration Handbook (section A2) **Removal from the school roll under circumstances other than those detailed below is illegal.**

- Where a school has been notified that the pupil has been registered as a pupil at another school.
- Where a pupil has ceased to attend the school and the parent(s) have satisfied the County Council that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than by attendance at school.
- Where the school has been notified by the School Medical Officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state to attend school before becoming legally exempt from the obligation to attend school.
- Where the pupil has been absent without reasonable cause for four academic weeks and the headteacher of the school has failed, after reasonable enquiry and consultation with the Education Welfare Service to obtain information on the cause of the absence.
- Where the headteacher has been notified that the pupil has died.
- Where a pupil in the nursery class has not been transferred to a reception class at the school.
- Except in the case of a boarder, the pupil has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school.
- If a pupil has not returned to school within ten school days of the agreed return date after a family holiday in term time.

- Where a pupil will cease to be of compulsory schools age before the school next meets and has been notified an intention to discontinue in attendance.
- Where the pupil has been permanently excluded and this decision has been confirmed by the Pupil Discipline Committee.

### **Ensuring Pupil Information is up to date**

School should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on pupils **and parents is accurate and up to date. This will help to ensure that contact with** families is productive and that referrals to other agencies can be actioned effectively. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states 'Personal Data shall be accurate and where necessary, kept up to date.

### **Pupils who are missing**

Where it is believed that a pupil has left the area and enquiries have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil, the Common Transfer File should be completed and uploaded to the DCFS National Missing Pupils Database.

### **GOOD PRACTICE:**

Research suggests that good practice is associated with:

1. A senior teacher being charged with specific responsibility for pupil attendance
2. A list of absentees being produced quickly, ideally by morning break, for use by appropriate teaching and office staff.
3. The school devising a sensitive scheme for the immediate follow-up of absentees eg. by telephoning home or to other pupil contacts.
4. Class teachers ensuring that records of attendance are as accurate as possible and explanations for absence are produced when pupils return to school.
5. Senior member of staff monitoring the attendance records of classes.
6. Staff with responsibility for pupil attendance having regular meetings with EWO on an agreed basis.
7. Rewards introduced for individual pupils or classes with an excellent attendance record in the form of praise or awards.
8. Absentees and truants being quietly welcomed back to school upon their return and efforts made to reintegrate them socially and academically.
9. First day of absence contact. On the first day of absence a phone call to the home of all absentees whose absence has not previously been explained has proved to be effective in addressing casual absence.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS:**

**Suggestions for securing parental involvement in ensuring regular attendance.**

The Home-School Agreement presents schools with an opportunity to underline the importance of regular and punctual attendance at school. The following may be used as a basis for a statement in the Agreement.

Our school is committed to providing a quality education for all pupils. We believe that pupils can only benefit from the education in our school through regular school attendance. We will, therefore, strive to achieve the maximum possible attendance for all pupils and we will make sure that any problems are identified and resolved quickly. Wherever possible, we will make contact with parents where a pupil is absent from school without good reason.

**How parents can help us:**

- Ensure that their children attend school regularly and that they arrive on time.
- Contact the school whenever their child is absent, giving details of the reason or the absence and the length of time the child will be away.
- Help their child prepare for the school day by ensuring that homework has been done and the child has everything he/she needs for the day ahead.
- Attend Parents' Consultation Evenings to discuss progress or problems and talk to the staff if there are problems or changes in family circumstances which may affect the child.
- Contact the school if problems arise which may keep their child away from, so that the school can help.
- To avoid, wherever possible, taking family holidays in term-time. Term time absences, especially during SATs and examination periods, may seriously affect the progress of your child.

Approved by Governing Body *J Jarvis*

Date 13.3.08