



**Ribbon**  
*Academy*

# Attendance Policy

**(Including COVID19 amendments)**

<b>Ribbon Academy</b>	
Staff Responsible:	Mrs K Jones & Mrs K Maddison
Date of Issue:	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2020
Review Date:	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021

*Growing together*

## **Rationale**

At Ribbon Academy we seek to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 96% has been set for the academic year 2020/2021 and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school is working to establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

### **1. Attendance and Attainment**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

#### **We will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

## **2. The Law**

Parents need to make sure their child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, they will be breaking the law if they do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The School and Local Authority want to help families if they are having any problems. If attendance does not get better or parents do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask parents to attend an interview to ask questions to determine whether the law has been broken.

If parents go to court and are found guilty of an offence, they could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

While attendance remains compulsory there will be no change to these expectations and procedures.

### **3. Attendance Procedures**

#### **a) On the first day off and any further absence**

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then the Family Support Advisor will phone home, send a text message and email to establish contact in order to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why. Establishing a reason for a child's absence is particularly important as this can impact on other children and adults in school.

Doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school time during the 175 days that children are not in school. If this is not possible, a child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

#### **b) Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them, unless they are in a period of isolation. If a phone call is not received then the Family Support Advisor may contact home or carry out a home visit to verify the absence or request medical evidence to support the absence.

If the Family Support Advisor is not able to contact parents and no reason has been provided for an absence the Family Support Advisor will contact parents by letter. If no reason is provided within a 2 week period the absence will be marked as unauthorised. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time). While attendance remains compulsory, there will be no change to these procedures.

If a child is absent from school more than they should be:

The Family Support Advisor will use the Schools Information Management System each day to analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families may be contacted if their child's attendance is a cause for concern.

#### **c) Help & Support:**

If parents need help with attendance, it is important that they talk to the school about the issues as soon as possible. Parents may need to attend a meeting to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place to help. Sometimes, school may need to involve other services to help. Where meetings would normally be held in school during restrictions, the majority of meetings will be held over the telephone or via Microsoft Teams.

#### **d) Communication:**

The school will always try to communicate with parents regarding their child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concern by letter, making telephone calls, inviting parents to attend a meeting in school or carrying out a home visit depending on the circumstances. The school will work with parents to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation. Where meetings would normally be held in school during the restrictions, the majority of meetings will be held over the telephone or via Microsoft Teams. Home visits will still be carried out where adequate communication cannot be established with parents/carers over the telephone.

**e) Enforcement Action:**

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action once a pupil has accumulated 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in any 12 week period.

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. If a child misses school a lot because of illness and are at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee (a pupil with 90% attendance or below), or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean a child could miss school a lot, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting children effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

While attendance remains compulsory there will be no change to these expectations and procedures.

**f) Punctuality:**

Registration times vary while school is required to operate in 'Bubbles'. Pupil entry gates will be locked at 9:02am, all pupils must then enter by the main entrance and parents must remain outside unless they are wearing a face covering. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 30 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at 9.30am and any children arriving after this time will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued). While attendance remains compulsory there will be no change to these expectations and procedures.

**If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the School Information Management System.

**i. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions;**

Parents will be contacted by the Family Support Advisor in order to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. This contact will take place over the phone or via Microsoft Teams.

**ii. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason –**

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with the Family Support Advisor for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality. This meeting will take place over the phone or via Microsoft Teams.

**iii. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;**

A referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required. While attendance remains compulsory there will be no change to these expectations and procedures.

### **g) Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

While attendance remains compulsory there will be no change to these expectations and procedures. Parents are asked to be especially mindful during COVID19 restrictions as a period of quarantine may be required on your return from holiday. Any absence relating to illness following a Leave of Absence will also be marked as unauthorised.

#### **4. Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

It's proven that *attendance incentives* are most effective when part of a comprehensive approach that includes outreach to families with more significant challenges to attendance. The Ribbon School have an Inclusion Team who offer support to families in a multiagency setting.

All families are normally encouraged to come into school to take part in activities and fun events with their children. Parents identified as struggling with these events would be supported by the inclusion team and other school staff to encourage participation and help to build positive relationships. During restrictions activities and events are not possible in school. We will continue to share positive experiences through Class Dojo so please ensure you have this facility.

We believe that incentives should always be part of creating a school-wide culture of attendance and accompanied by a commitment to ensuring students are engaged in the Classroom once they show up.

Students at the Ribbon are rewarded for improved attendance, not just perfect records.

At the end of each half term, children who have 100% attendance that half term and a pupil from each class who has the most improved attendance (based on the previous half terms attendance) will be awarded Dojo points during to reduce the amount of school to home contact being made with certificates.

The sense of competition between classes can be a powerful motivator; this can encourage students to feel accountable to each other for attending class. 2 Class trophies will be awarded each half term for, Best Class in Upper School & Best Class in Lower School (This award is not necessarily for the class with the highest attendance but could be a class who have improved a lot or have children who have made extra effort to attend). Trophies will be sanitised before being awarded to a new class.

To encourage punctuality in school we have 2 "On Time Teds" who are awarded to the class with the least lateness in both upper school and lower school each half term. Unfortunately the Teds cannot be used while restrictions are in place.

Annual awards pupils who managed to get 100% attendance across the academic year will be given a badge and certificate to acknowledge their attendance achievement. Trips are to be arranged for the end of the academic year by the Family Support Advisor for pupils who have 100% attendance and those who have been set and met a specific target to improve their attendance. Currently no external visits can take place. This will be monitored throughout the academic year and provision, for a reward, will be made in line with COVID19 restrictions in July 2021.

Achievements are publicised within school during assemblies, on notice boards and we use social media to keep parents informed.

## **5. Children Missing from Education:**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

This is especially important during COVID19 restrictions, we need to be able to contact parents immediately should a 'Bubble' dissolve.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Governing Body:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

### **School Leadership Team:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Behaviour and Attendance Governors Sub Committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

**Teachers and support staff:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each session.

**Parents/Carers:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.