



Attendance Policy

Staff Responsible:	Mrs A Sheridan
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Rationale

At Ribbon Academy, 'Attendance Matters'. We seek to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. Ribbon Academy strives to provide a warm, welcoming, caring environment whereby all pupils (and their families) feel wanted and secure.

We believe that all pupils benefit from the broad and rich education, by regular and punctual attendance. The aim of this Attendance Policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils.

All staff at Ribbon Academy work with pupils and their families to provide the support required to meet their legal duty; ensuring that children attend school regularly and on time. An attendance target of **97%** has been set for the **academic year 2023/2024**, and robust measures are in place to help us realise this target.

Children at Ribbon Academy enjoy school and want to be here. To support this, we have established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping.

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'Academy Attendance Departmental Advice for Maintained Schools, Academies, Independent Academies and Local Authorities' (October 2014) and 'Academy Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures' (January 2015).

Key Contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs A Sheridan	Head Teacher	0191 5175900 p3517@durhamlearning.net
Mrs K Maddison	Family Support Advisor	
Mrs D Richardson	Assistant Head Teacher for Inclusion/SENDCo	
Sue Hardy	Place 2 Be Project Manager	

1. Attendance and Attainment

We understand that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils is inextricably linked. Regular attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason Ribbon Academy is resolutely dedicated to ensuring full application of the Attendance Policy.

What the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the Key Stages compared to those with lower attainment. Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the Key Stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard. Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the Key Stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

- *Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the Key Stage at KS2, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the Key Stage.*
- *Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.*

We will ensure that:

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

Staff at Ribbon Academy will work with families and partner agencies to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents/carers and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss concerns with parents/carers and explore the barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.







ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

2. Attendance Procedures

a) On the first day of absence:

Parents/carers are asked to contact Main Reception (0191 517 5900), or message Kathryn Maddison or Nicola Ball via Class Dojo, between 8.00am and 9.00am giving a reason for their child's absence. If a child is absent, and there is no phone call from home, then staff will attempt to contact parents/carers to advise that the child has not been registered and establish the reason for absence.

-  If a child is a Persistent Absentee (PA - a pupil with 90% attendance or below) or at risk of becoming a PA, the FSA (Family Support Advisor) may carry out a home visit to establish reasons for absence.
-  If a child has Severe Absence (50% attendance or below) a home visit will be carried out whenever an absence is recorded.
-  If a child is registered with Social Services, an email will be sent to parents/carers, the named Social Worker and the AHT for Inclusion (at Ribbon Academy) to alert them to the absence.
-  Doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time during the **175 days** available. If this is not possible, a child should miss the minimum amount of education necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment, they must.

b) Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days, parents/carers are requested to notify school. If a phone call is not received, the FSA will contact home or may carry out a home visit to establish the reason for absence or request medical evidence to support the absence.

If the FSA is not able to contact parents/carers, and no reason has been provided for an absence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

If a child has not reached at least **97%** attendance, you may be contact by the FSA who monitors school attendance daily. Some families will be contacted to inform them if their child's attendance is lower than it should be and may be asked to provide medical evidence or attend a 'Attendance Planning Meeting' in school.

c) Help & Support:

If parents/carers require help with positive attendance, it is important that they contact school to discuss the issues as soon as possible. Parents/carers may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss concerns and establish a 'Plan of Support'. Sometimes, families may need to access assistance from other agencies, in this instance school may submit referrals to partner agencies to allow further support to be accessed. In most cases, this will be with parental consent, however where a safeguarding concern exists parental consent is not required.

d) Communication:

Staff at Ribbon Academy will always try to communicate with parents/carers regarding their child's attendance if it declines. Depending on circumstances, this may involve a letter, phone call, message through Class Dojo, email, an invitation to attend a meeting or a home visit. The Academy will always attempt to work with parents/carers to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation before any statutory action is considered.

e) Enforcement Action:

If following the Academy'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/carers have not co-operated with the Academy's attempts to improve the situation, the Academy is required to refer the matter to the Local Authority for the consideration of statutory action. This happens when a pupil has accumulated 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence within any 12-week period.

The High Court has confirmed that Head teachers have the discretion to unauthorise absences. If a child doesn't access their education because of illness and are at risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee (a pupil with 90% attendance or below), or if the Academy does not know of any serious health issue that a medical professional has confirmed, parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are resolutely committed to supporting pupils and their families 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.

f) Punctuality:

Ribbon Academy is open at **8.00am for Breakfast Club**. This facility costs £2 per day and is booked through Scopay.

Children can also access **Greggs Breakfast Club from 8.30am**, this allows children the opportunity to access breakfast free of charge and gives them time to settle before the school day begins.

Gates open at 8.45am and all children must be ready for registration by 9.00am. Pupil entry gates are locked promptly at 9.00am and access, thereafter, must be gained through the main entrance. A member of staff will be present in the reception area (Late Gate) so parents/carers can advise the reason for delay and ensure the children are registered on site. Children who arrive alone will also be required to speak to a member of staff in main reception to ensure they are registered on site. Contact will be made with parents/carers to advise why their child was late. It is imperative for all children to be on time; missing the first few minutes of the school day can be disruptive and unsettling, both for the child arriving late and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives at school up to 30 minutes after registration, then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers are closed at **9.30am**, any children arriving after this time will be recorded as (U) which is classed as an unauthorised absence (these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

If you know your child is going to be late, please contact school before 9.00am to advise that your child will be arriving late and provide the reason for the lateness. Where relevant, parents/carers will be asked to order their child's school meal.

If your child arrives late, a reason will be established, and this will be recorded on the Academy's attendance data base (SIMs).

If a child is late on multiple occasions:

- A letter will be sent home to parents/carers to say their child's punctuality is causing concern. An appointment with the FSA may be offered to discuss ways that the Academy can offer support. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils.

If lateness becomes persistent (with no identifiable reason):

- A letter will be sent from the Academy with a specific appointment given to meet with the FSA for a 'Attendance Planning Meeting'. The meeting will aim to address any issues associated with the pattern of poor punctuality.

If the Academy continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality:

- A referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team (at Durham County Council) to establish if enforcement action is required.

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 HT will consider each request of absence individually, considering individual circumstances. **To apply for a leave of absence you must contact the FSA on 0191 517 5900 to make an appointment.** Where 'Leave of Absence' is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. 'Leave of Absence' is granted entirely at the Head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DfE guidance, if an application for 'Leave of Absence' is not made prior to the time required 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 statutory or internal assessments.

3) Promoting Positive Attendance and Punctuality

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

All families are encouraged to come into school to take part in activities and events with their children. Parents identified as struggling with these events can be supported by the Inclusion Team (and other Academy staff) to encourage participation and help to build positive relationships.

We believe that incentives should always be part of creating an; 'Academy-wide culture of positive attendance' and accompanied by a commitment to ensuring pupils are fully engaged in learning.

Pupils at Ribbon Academy are rewarded for improved attendance (in addition to 97%+ attendance).

At the end of each half term, rewards are shared with children who have 97%+ attendance.

The sense of competition between classes can be a powerful motivator; this can encourage pupils to feel accountable to each other for excellent attendance. A class trophy is awarded each week for, **Best Attendance**. This award is not necessarily for the class with the highest attendance, it could be for making significant improvement or making extra effort to attend. To encourage punctuality in academy we have '**On Time Ted**' who, is awarded each week to the class with the best punctuality.

Annual Awards

A special reward is given to pupils who manage to get 100% attendance across the academic year. They are also given a badge and certificate to acknowledge their attendance.

Achievements are shared during Celebration Assembly and through social media (to keep parents/carers informed).

4) Children Missing from Education

If parents/carers move from the area and their whereabouts are unknown, the Academy can legally remove children from school roll (after 20 academy days of unauthorised absence). It is **essential that parents/carers keep school informed of any change of details**. Your child may be at risk of losing their place at school if their whereabouts is not known. It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if parents/carers leave the area, new contact details are provided. If parents/carers fail to supply contact details, this would be treated as a **safeguarding issue**.

Please see Children Missing from Education Policy for further details.

5) The Law

Parents/carers must ensure their child attends Ribbon Academy regularly and on time. It is the duty (in law) of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis, by ignoring this duty they **break the law**. Ribbon Academy and Local Authority **want to help families if they are experiencing any problems**. If poor attendance does not improve or parents/carers do not accept help and support offered, the LA may issue a warning notice, penalty notice or ask parents/carers to attend an interview to determine whether the law has been broken. If parents/carers attend 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 offence is more serious. **In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.**

6) Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Trustees:

As part of our Academy-wide approach to maintaining high attendance, the Board of Trustees will:

- Ensure the importance of positive attendance is transparent by promoting the relevant Academy policies and guidance (directed to parents/carers and staff).
- Annually review the Academy's Attendance Policy to ensure that all provisions are in place to allow Academy staff, parents, and pupils to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure 'attendance' is addressed in regular sub-committees (Curriculum & Standards).
- Take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies.
- Will review and discuss attendance issues (at Board Meetings) that have arisen to be fully aware and supportive of expected annual attendance targets.
- Ensure that the Academy is implementing effective means of recording attendance and representing that data, including pupils who are educated off site.

Senior Leadership Team:

As part of our Academy approach to maintaining high attendance, the Senior Leadership Team will:

- Be active in leading/championing the Academy's approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents/carers.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the Board of Trustees to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Academy's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation is complied with and that the Senior Leadership Team are aware of any legislation changes and how to implement in policy > procedure.
- Nominate or appoint a Senior Leader to take responsibility for coordinating attendance provision (Mrs A Sheridan – HT).
- Report to the Curriculum & Standards 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 Academy approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents/carers;
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the Senior Leader (Mrs A Sheridan - HT) is responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to pupils that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents/carers, pupils, and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each session (morning and afternoon).

Parents/Carers:

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

- Engage fully with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Positively promote the value of education and the importance of regular academy attendance.
- 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 possibly can to prevent unnecessary academy absences.
- Keep the Academy 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 positive attendance at 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.**
- Communicate with staff if they have any concerns or require support.
- Work in true partnership with school to ensure '**Attendance Matters**'.

7) Attendance Register

The school uses SIMS to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the school
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

Pupils who are absent from school but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.