



# ***Raysfield Schools***

## ***Joint Attendance Policy***

### **Rationale**

Pupils' learning is at the heart of everything we do at Raysfield but children cannot learn if they are absent. We therefore aim to ensure that our children take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of pupils. We have therefore adopted the following policy and procedures in consultation with parents, children, staff and governors.

### **Objectives**

- To improve attendance and punctuality across the whole school
- To reduce the percentage of unauthorised absence and increase the percentage of complete weeks
- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm
- Demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school
- Maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school

### **The Education Act 1966**

The Education Act states that parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

It is the responsibility of the LA to ensure that parents meet these responsibilities. Attendance enforcement is usually carried out by a Local Education Officer from the FISS (Family Intervention Support Services) team who provide an important link between schools and families.

The school is required to inform the LA if a pupil fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of 15 days and the absence is treated as unauthorised. Heads can, of course, notify the LA earlier if there are areas of concern.

### **Pupil Registration**

The school is required to maintain two registers:

- An admission register (known as the school roll)
- An attendance register

The admission register shall contain a list of all pupils at the school. The school ensures that an attendance register for all pupils is taken twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present, engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site or absent. If a pupil is absent, the register must say whether or not the absence has been authorised by the school.

**Authorised or Unauthorised Absence?**

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised.

## **Responsibilities of Parents**

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that registered pupils of school age attend school regularly. If attendance continues to be a problem the school can contact the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) to resolve the problem. The law (from the Education Act of 1996) states that parents found guilty of school attendance offences could be subject to a penalty of up to £2500 and /or a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months, or alternatively the LA could recommend that a parenting order be enforced.

At Raysfield we encourage a good working relationship with parents by regularly publishing the arrangements for notifying absence and the school's policy towards authorised absence in the school Information Pack and through newsletters.

## **School Procedures**

Any child who is absent from school must have their absence recorded as being authorised or unauthorised. Only the head teacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise requested absence.

### **Lateness**

Morning registration will take place at the start of the school day - 9.00am. Morning registers will close at 9.10am. Afternoon registration will take place between 1pm and 1.10pm. Any pupil arriving after the closure of registration will be recorded as late and the parents will be asked to sign in a late book giving an explanation for the lateness. In the case of the Juniors, should a parent not bring their child into school to sign the late book, a text will be sent home informing parents that the child has arrived to school late.

If a pupil arrives after 9.10am the session will be recorded as unauthorised absence. If your child is late due to a medical appointment this will be marked accordingly. Where children are regularly late i.e. after 9.10am or 1.10pm, the school will write to the parents informing them of the schools concerns and offering support to help rectify the situation. If lateness is consistent and parents have not responded to support from the school then a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer. A penalty notice can be issued for unauthorised lateness

### **First Day Absence**

Parents are expected to contact the school by 9.30am on the first day of absence. Where this does not happen, the school will make first day absence telephone contact. The Junior School text parents in the first instance by 9.30am if no message has been received. Class teachers are initially responsible for ensuring that the office is made aware when children are absent. The school office will then call the family and check on reasons for absence. This information will then be recorded and where necessary passed on to the relevant professional.

### **Ten Days Absence**

Any pupil who is absent, without an explanation, for 10 consecutive days, will be referred to South Gloucestershire's Education Welfare Service. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of action they have taken.

### **Frequent Absence**

It is the responsibility of everyone in the school community to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the family. If this is unsuccessful, the school will refer to the school nurse, if the problem appears to be medical, the Education Welfare Officer or other agencies.

### **Frequent medical Absence**

The school will discuss with the School Nurse those pupils who frequently miss days for medical reasons. Where necessary a medical note may be asked for to evaluate the child's health and educational needs and an individual Health Care

Plan may be required. Parents could be asked to provide evidence from their doctor regarding regular illness.

### **Attendance Monitoring**

The school monitors the attendance of all pupils on a termly basis. Where the school have identified that a child's attendance has fallen below the level of 80% in any termlet and/or below the level of 90% with 3+ broken weeks, a standard letter will be issued to the family. This will make them aware of our concerns and the importance of consistent and regular attendance at school. If there is no subsequent improvement in a child's attendance a request will be made for a meeting with the parents and, where necessary, the Education Welfare Officer. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss expectations and try to ensure that their child's attendance improves. Support and advice will be offered where necessary. If a child's attendance continues to cause concern a letter of referral will be sent to the Education Welfare Officer. The school will endeavour to work with and support all children and families wherever possible.

### **Holidays in term time.**

Regulation 7 of the 2006 Regulations is amended to prohibit the proprietor of a maintained school from granting leave of absence to a pupil except where an application has been made in advance and the proprietor considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

"The local authority strongly urges parents not to take their children out of school for family holidays. Under the new regulations a Headteacher can agree to a holiday in term time ONLY where there are 'exceptional circumstances'. No holiday should be agreed unless the Headteacher is satisfied that there are such exceptional circumstances." (LA Guidance notes 2013)

### **Authorised / Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will only be authorised for:

- Bereavement
- Bad weather (where it would be a safety risk to attempt to come to school)
- Illness

It should be noted that this list does not include annual family holidays.

The headteacher, on behalf of the Governors, will consider requests for absence, outside the above categories, only in exceptional circumstances. Examples might be once in a lifetime events or restrictions put in place by an employer about when holidays can be taken (evidence may be requested).

Parents should complete an 'Application for permission for a child to be absent from school' form and return it, accompanied with a detailed letter addressed to the headteacher explaining the exceptional circumstances for the request. A discussion with the headteacher would be helpful before a request for absence in exceptional circumstances is made. If absence is requested outside these exceptional criteria it would not be authorised.

When a holiday is taken and the school has not authorised the absence, the school may request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice if more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accumulate in a rolling seven week period. There are two sessions per day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. For example a two parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 between 21 and 28 days.

If a parent/carer has not paid the Penalty Notice in full before the 28 days allowed, the local authority is required to commence legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of failing to ensure a child attends school.

If found guilty under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, the parent/carer could receive a fine of up to £1,000 or other sentencing options available to the court.

#### **Junior school/Infant School liaison**

Both schools will communicate decisions to authorise absence to ensure consistency and promote good communication and community cohesion.

#### **Attendance Targets**

##### **Raysfield Infants'**

This year our target is 97%

##### **Raysfield Juniors**

This year our target is 97%.

*We take opportunities to maximize positive impacts for sexuality, disabled and non-disabled people, people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, girls, boys, men and women.*

Ratified

November 2016

Review November 2017