

Richard Lander School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy Effective From: September 2024

Responsibility: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/ School based Education Welfare Officer/ Attendance officers/ Governing Body

Reviewed and monitored by: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/ School based Education Welfare Officer/ Attendance officers/ Governing Body

Review Date: September 2025

Rationale

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development. They help students fully access their education and wider opportunities offered by the school. Attendance and punctuality are also linked to students' well-being and safety.

Guiding Principles

We are committed to ensuring that all students benefit from the opportunities available at Richard Lander School. Our expectation is that students arrive on time and attend school regularly. Where this expectation is not met we will identify and seek to address the barriers that prevent this.

Responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their children attend school punctually and regularly so they can benefit from a valuable education.

The school has a legal responsibility for maintaining school registers and taking the register twice a day. The school also has a responsibility for reporting absence to the Local Authority.

The school also has a safeguarding responsibility and this links to good punctuality and attendance.

Tutors will share attendance information with students during designated tutor periods focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.

Pastoral Managers will promote high attendance and punctuality through individual meetings with students and parents, reinforcing the link between good attendance and attainment and well-being.

Assistant Headteachers (KS3 & 4) will promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies and again through meeting with students and communicating with parents/carers where appropriate.

The attendance team, including the school's Attendance Officers and the school based EWO will address attendance matters (either on-the-day absence or sustained absence) through meeting with students and wider communication with parents/carers.

The school will communicate attendance matters to parents via text, telephone, email, and letter as well as through the school website.

Absence from school

There are two categories of absence from school:

Authorised – approved

Unauthorised – not approved

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department of Education Guidance on School Attendance. These are the same codes the school uses on its SIMS registration system.

Authorised (approved) absence – types of authorised absence that may be approved:-

- Exceptional leave of absence – for bereavement, funeral, close family wedding.
- Medical absence for medical appointments. Non-urgent, routine check-up appointments should ideally be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, students are expected to be absent from school for the minimal amount of time and not be absent for a whole day.
- Illness.
- Religious observance.
- If a student is excluded from school for a behaviour related incident, this is recorded as an authorised absence.

Unauthorised (not approved) absence – types of absence that will not be approved:-

- Absence due to birthday, caring for a family member
- Holiday in term time (unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the School)
- Late arrival to school after the register has closed, without a valid reason

All absence – authorised and unauthorised – will be analysed and subject to challenge to ensure that any concern regarding frequency, pattern or validity is acted upon swiftly.

How our policy works in practice

Punctuality

Students are expected in tutor by 8.30am. This may require students being in school by 08.25 am to ensure their prompt attendance. Students who arrive late to school with a valid reason will be noted as late ('L'). Students without a valid reason will be recorded as an 'L' and spoken to by either the Attendance Officer (upon arrival to school) or their Tutor (if it is a repeated issue). Those pupils who are persistently late will be recorded as U (an unauthorised late arrival) and referred to the school based Education Welfare Officer and Attendance Officers.

Students who do not have a valid reason for missing a school session will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence ('O').

If a student is recorded as late to school four or more times in one term, they will be issued with an after school detention. Parents will receive a warning letter of the sanction after the third incidence of lateness to school. Furthermore, frequent late arrival will be challenged by the Attendance Team and letters sent to parents. Students may then be escalated to a further level of sanction (e.g. an after school detention for each further late mark). The Pastoral Manager may also arrange to meet with a parent whose child has persistent lateness, to consider strategies to improve this.

Richard Lander School operate a late arrivals desk at Student Reception. The Attendance Officers will challenge lateness to school, particularly if the reason is not a valid reason for lateness. The Attendance Officers (or Pastoral Manager) may also follow this up with a phone call to parents.

Medical appointments

We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinical appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a student having time out of school. Our expectation is that the minimum amount of school time is lost through clinical appointments. Any absence for medical reasons will be coded as 'M'. We will seek an explanation from students and parents where a whole day is missed for this reason.

The school will advise parents to make routine, non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours or during the school holidays.

Illness

Students may experience bouts of illness from time to time. Some students may be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they can access school based learning as much as they are able.

When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting may be convened with parents to discuss this. In the first instance, this is likely to be with the Pastoral Manager but it may be with the Attendance Officer or school based EWO. Should medical absence become persistent, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence of

hospital/specialist appointments or wider reasons for medical absence moving forwards (otherwise such absence may be recorded as unauthorised absence 'O').

Absence in term time

The school will not approve term time absence (including holiday requests) except in exceptional circumstances. Exceptional leave requests should be made in writing to the school. A 'planned absence' form should be completed to this effect; which parents can locate in the Absence/Medical section of the school website. The Assistant Headteacher (KS3 & 4) will then respond to the parent in writing, to inform them whether this absence is granted.

Children missing education

The school has a duty to inform the Local Authority of any student who is on the school's roll, not in attendance and whose whereabouts has not been established. This particularly applies to students who move to another authority or country but are not yet in education.

Home education

Richard Lander School believes that a school based education is beneficial to students educationally, socially and emotionally. Whilst parents have a right to educate their children at home, school staff will engage with parents and seek to find a way to best support their children in a school based environment.

If a parent still wishes to withdraw their child from school, this decision must be put in writing to the Headteacher. The school will then notify the Local Authority of this, as per the procedure for schools.

Procedure

Concerns about absence from school and the likely impact on students' progress will be communicated to students and parents through our attendance procedures. (Please see Appendix 1.)

Daily

- The Attendance Officers will collate messages left by parents/carers regarding absence and enter the correct code in the school register, adding notes onto the SIMS register
- The Attendance Officers will issue an electronic truancy call to parents of absent students who have no valid reason for this
- The Attendance Officers will register students who are late to school (after 8.40am)
- The Tutor will accurately complete the morning and afternoon attendance register
- Class teachers will complete a register at the start of every lesson.

Weekly

- The Tutor will discuss attendance issues with students during tutor time, particularly those students whose attendance is below 95%.
- Pastoral Managers will monitor the attendance for their year groups. They will have a particular focus on those students below 95%, those students who have a high number of broken weeks and students who are identified as being part of a vulnerable group. Where appropriate they will meet with students as well as communicate or meet with their parents/carers
- The Attendance team (Attendance Officers / school based EWO will support Pastoral managers in providing data analysis and identifying students to focus attention on
- The Attendance Officers to be updated (by Pastoral Managers or the school's Medical Officer) with the current list of students needing medical evidence when reporting absence through illness.

Fortnightly

- Meetings will take place for each year group involving the Pastoral Managers, Attendance and Welfare Liaison Officer and Assistant Headteacher (KS3 & 4) regarding proposed interventions for students below 95% attendance, with a high number of broken weeks and particular groups of students where no improvement is shown. Actions arising out of these meetings may include: meeting with relevant students, parents/carers, written communications home or the engagement of support mechanisms within school or with multi agency partners.

Termly (after Christmas term and half termly thereafter)

- Standard letters to parents of students with below 90, and 95% (and repeated letters should attendance remain in these thresholds)
- Congratulation letters to be sent to parents of students with above average attendance or students whose attendance has improved
- Communication by email with parents of students with persistent late arrival to school
- School attendance meetings with parents as agreed.

School Attendance Meetings with parents follow a staged process with the aim of establishing the reasons for low level of attendance and to look at what is needed to secure and sustain an improvement. Formal procedures are implemented when this intervention does not bring about change. (See Appendix 1)

Formal guidance informing this policy

- Education Act 1996 which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.
- Pupil Regulations 2006 amended April 2013
- Working Together to Safeguard Children DFE 2023 – (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/parental-responsibility-measures>)
- Educating Children with Health Needs DFE 2024 – Ensuring children with health needs do not miss out (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions – 2017 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>)
- Children Missing Education – 2016 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>)
- Parental Responsibility Measure – November 2023 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/parental-responsibility-measures>)

APPENDIX 1

School Attendance Communication and Meetings

In the first half term of the academic year, phone calls/letters to be sent to parents whose children have been persistently absent (or whose absence at the start of an academic year reflects a historical level of absence).

In the second half term of the academic year, phone calls/letters to be sent home to parents/carers whose children's attendance is:

- Below 95%
- Below 90%

Letters will be sent by the Pastoral Manager, who will have an understanding of the specific reasons for absence of specific children and who can make judgements about which parents/carers should receive these. The Pastoral Manager may also convene an 'attendance clinic' meeting to support this process.

From the start of the spring term, Pastoral Managers to convene meetings with parents/carers, should absence remain between 90-95%.

The attendance officers to convene meetings with parents/carers of children whose absence is under 90%.

Situation resolved – Attendance increased. 'Well done' letters to be sent.



Situation not resolved – little change in attendance/attendance has further declined. Pastoral Managers to send letters home to parents/carers whose children's attendance is between 90-95%. The school based EWO to send letters home to parents of children whose attendance is under 90%.

A further meeting to be convened (as appropriate).

For further absence, the school may request medical evidence to support absence due to illness. In the absence of medical evidence being provided the school may not authorise any further absence relating to illness



Further unauthorised absence from school will result in a **First Warning** being issued. This is the first stage in a prosecution under the Education Act 1996.



If unauthorised absence continues then an **Education Planning Meeting** will be called, where a decision will be made on whether legal action will be taken if unauthorised absence continues. A **Final Warning** may be issued at this stage.



If it has been decided at the Education Planning Meeting that legal action will be taken and unauthorised absence has continued, the case will be **sent to Court for prosecution under the Education Act 1996.**

APPENDIX 2

Penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence from school.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and is essential if pupils are to maximise their educational opportunities.

Parents/carers can commit an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Although current sanctions to enforce regular school attendance exist under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, the introduction of Penalty Notices is aimed at offering a swift intervention which may be used to address cases of unauthorised absence before the problem becomes too entrenched.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that these powers are applied consistently and fairly across the area of Cornwall Council and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

Authorised Persons are Headteachers or their designated Deputies/Assistant Headteachers. Authorised Persons are not obliged to issue Penalty Notices. Designated officers of Cornwall Council's Children, Families and Adults Directorate will automatically consider the use of Penalty Notices in all cases of unauthorised absence at the level defined below.

Schools are already required to provide attendance data via census returns. This requirement continues to apply notwithstanding this code of conduct.

The Police can also refer concerns about a pupil's absence from school to the Children, Families and Adults Directorate without having to recommend a Penalty Notice.

When can Penalty Notices be issued?

When a pupil has had 10 or more half day sessions i.e. the equivalent of 5 school days, of unauthorised absence during a period of 100 sessions (10 school weeks) and the parent has been previously warned. This includes term time holidays where the parent has been informed that a Penalty Notice may result from such unauthorised absences. In this regard, a parent must be warned by the school if a request for absence is not being authorised.

When the circumstances of the pupil's absence meets the requirement and criteria in the Code of Conduct; and

When the issuing of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place, or other sanctions already being processed.

Payment of Penalty Notices

Arrangements for the payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Cornwall Council.

If paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, the penalty is £60. If not paid within 21 days the Penalty automatically increases to £120 if paid within 28 days. Any revenue resulting from payment of Penalties will be retained by the Council to help cover the costs of issuing and enforcing Penalty Notices and the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Payment of a Penalty discharges a parent's liability for the period in question and means that they cannot subsequently be prosecuted for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

The maximum number of incidents where Penalty Notices can be issued to any one parent during a 12 month period is two, per child.

Non –payment of Penalty Notices

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in legal action. Absence not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court.

For full details please see the Cornwall Council Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices in Respect of Unauthorised Absence from School.