Attendance Policy

(In consultation with Robin Hood Infant School)

This policy was agreed by governors.

Agreed by Governors	Date:	Next Review Date:
FGB	Summer 2019	Summer 2022
Learning & Attainment /FGB	Summer 2022	Summer 2025
Learning & Attainment /FGB	Autumn 2024	Autumn 2027

Principles

Reviewed: Autumn 2024

Next review: Autumn 2027

Robin Hood Junior School wants every pupil to get the most they can from school life. We know that good attendance and punctuality supports their attainment, their social development and interactions and their wellbeing.

Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns and causes of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

The Attendance register is a legal document and is maintained by the School Office.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- It also refers to:
- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Practice

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required on the school's absence line, by phone or in writing.

Children are sometimes ill and parents and carers know their child best. There is guidance on our website and via the NHS website about judging whether or not a child is well enough for school. Preventing the spread of infection in school is important for the wellbeing of the whole community. Tummy aches, minor headaches, growing pains and similar minor childhood ailments are not usually reasons to keep a child off school. If they are unwell when they are here, we will always contact you.

Sometimes a child can be reluctant to attend school and parents should discuss this first with the Class Teacher and if a solution is not quickly found, with a member of the Leadership Team. Children will sometimes describe an emotional worry as a physical pain and this is quite normal in young children but we want to support you to resolve the concern.

As a school we encourage good attendance by providing children with a safe, stimulating and nurturing environment they want to belong to. We promote independence and responsibility at every level of learning and behaviour. We do not directly *reward* good attendance, as this is not in line with our ethos, although we may commend a pupil on an improvement in attendance.

Unplanned Absence What parents & carers should do if a child is too unwell for school:

- Call the school on the first day your child is ill before 9.30am – you can leave a message or complete the Absence reporting form online: https://forms.gle/BNram3rrcVx3vSmF9
- You can record the reason or the office staff will note the reason for absence and if necessary, call you back to clarify or give advice about quarantine periods e.g. for sickness & diarrhoea
- If your child is off for more than two days, please contact the Office to give an update
- If an absence lasts more than two days, Office staff will call again if they have not had an update from parents
- We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. (See below section on Persistent Absence)

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent or carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This can be an email to the office; a note in homework diary or speaking to someone on the gate.

However, we encourage parents & carers to make routine medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. If your child has had an operation or medical procedure, you may need to seek advice from a hospital or doctor about returning to school as we cannot give this advice.

The pupil's parents & carers must also notify school of other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

The school day is from 8.50am to 3.20pm. A pupil who arrives late should go via the Office and collect a late card. The Office staff always welcome them to school and ask about lunch choices. They are not reprimanded or asked to explain lateness. Their name and the time will be recorded. The register closes at 9.20a.

Arriving late is difficult for a child, who is often embarrassed or feels awkward joining a lesson that has begun. It gets them off to a poor start to the day. Each half term a 'minutes late' report is produced and parents may be invited to discuss this with the Senior Attendance Champion SAC. A few minutes per day can quickly add up.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or any other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'permission' is given. If repeated, this type of absence can lead to sanctions i.e. penalty notices and/or legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court. This would always be a last resort and the school seeks to work with parents before reaching the point where Penalty Notices could be issued.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Absences which are not explained
- Children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed by the school
- Parents or siblings feeling or being unwell
- Moving home

PERSISTENT ABSENCE (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason (authorised or unauthorised). All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any child that is seen to have reached the PA threshold, or is at risk of moving towards it is given priority and parents may be invited to discuss attendance.

The Senior Attendance Champion (SAC) (a member of SLT) and School Attendance Administrator meet every half term to review attendance. All attendance is reviewed and where there is a concern, pupils are contacted and invited to meet with the SAC to explore absence and offer support.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board. The school has a termly meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and individual cases may be discussed and support sought. The LA has a duty to monitor any child with 15 days absence in a year (this can be authorised/unauthorised and does not have to be continuous).

- Before the register has closed the child will be marked as late (L)
- After the register has closed the child will be marked as unauthorised late (U)

Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parents & carers to clarify the reason by phone,
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use
- Make efforts to contact the family and where necessary refer to Children Missing Education.

Approval for term-time absence

The Head Teacher can only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as **'rare, unavoidable and short'.**

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Important family ceremonies such as weddings or funerals (usually only the day of the ceremony is authorised)

We may ask for flight information, travel documents or other evidence to support us in making a consistent fair decision in line with this policy.

Reviewed: Autumn 2024
Next review: Autumn 2027

Reducing persistent absence

Attendance is reviewed every half term and the school reviews individual pupils and various groups. Letters are sent highlighting patterns; concerns; accumulated minutes late and percentages. Parents are offered support to improve attendance and the impact on the pupil is explained.

If the authenticity of reported illness is in doubt or there is an emerging pattern of illness, the school may ask the pupil's parents & carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, surgery stamp, prescription, appointment card, pharmacist's note, photograph of medication or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Individual plans may be drawn up to support children with attendance and the school is aware of the impact of Emotionally Based School Anxiety. The Leadership Team including the SAC; SENDCo and Class Teacher will work together to support the child and the family.

Legal sanctions

PENALTY NOTICES (Local Authority advice for parents and carers)

WHAT IS A PENALTY NOTICE?
Under existing legislation, parents and carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot, or has not given permission). Depending on circumstances, such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court, but which seeks to secure improvement in a pupil's attendance. Full payment of the Penalty Notice discharges parents and carers of any further liability for the period stated on the Notice.

WHEN ARE THEY ISSUED?
The London Borough of Sutton considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be issued in a range of situations, such as:

- Your child has unauthorised absences from school
- Your child is persistently late at school after the registers have closed
- Taking unauthorised leave of absence in term time (holiday)

WHO ARE THEY ISSUED TO?
A Penalty Notice can be issued to each parent in respect of each child not attending school when the threshold of 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence (together or separate occasions) is met within a 10 week school period.

'Parents' in Education law relates to a parent or carer of the child (ren).

First offences:

The first PN issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid withing 21 days.

Second offence (within 3 years)

The second PN issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days.

Any further offence (within 3 years)

No further PNs can be issued and alternative legal intervention will be taken, this may include cases being presented straight to a Magistrates Court.

Reporting to parents

RHJ reports on attendance to parents in the Autumn and Spring Parent consultation sheets and annually in the written end-of-year report.

We collect and store attendance data to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

Monitoring & Evaluation

The Senior Attendance Champion and Attendance Administrator meet half termly. Pupil Progress meetings (termly) and Designated Safeguarding Lead meetings (monthly) also discuss pupil attendance. Other agencies such as Children's Services are also involved where attendance becomes a safeguarding matter.

The Head Teacher reports to Governors on attendance via the Learning & Attainment Committee and to the FGB termly.

The DFE and Ofsted also monitor school attendance.