



ATTENDANCE

INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the procedures at Riverside School concerning attendance, including lateness, and the reasons why attendance has such a high profile. We believe that regular attendance is essential for children to achieve their full potential. Frequent absences seriously affect pupil progress.

An electronic record of attendance is kept and is a legal responsibility for schools. Data is analysed regularly and information may be shared with the LA if requested (through EWAS), Social Services or as evidence for legal proceedings.

RATIONALE

Regular attendance at school is a legal responsibility shared amongst schools, parents/carers and the LA. The **Children Act 1989** highlights the need for schools to work in partnership with parents/carers and the LA to promote and maintain the regular attendance of all its pupils.

In recent years improving attendance and punctuality has been a major focus at Riverside. Standard procedures are in place to monitor attendance and punctuality and to initiate further action should it be needed. Teachers and parents/carers need to continue to support initiatives and work together to ensure the rate of attendance and punctuality increases even further.

Schools have a duty to report to the LA on "continuous pupil absences of two weeks or more and on those pupils who fail to attend regularly, except where such absences are covered by a medical certificate" (**Pupils Registration Regulations 1995**).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.1 The Class Teacher has the responsibility to record pupil absence and lateness at the start of each morning/afternoon session following the school's registration procedure. Class registers must be an accurate pupil record in case of emergency situations.

1.2 The Head of School and Senior Assistant Headteacher have the responsibility to monitor registration and initiate further action, including first-day contact.

1.3 The Head of School and Senior Assistant Headteacher have the responsibility of reporting concerns to EWAS (Education Welfare and Attendance Service), including formal referrals.

1.4 The Head of School and Senior Assistant Headteacher have responsibility for completing attendance data required by the LEA.

1.5 Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure their child(ren) attend school regularly and on time and travel to/from school safely.

1.6 Parents/carers have the responsibility for reporting reasons of absence/lateness to the Senior Assistant Headteacher.

1.7 The Head of School and Senior Assistant Headteacher have the responsibility for ensuring registers are accessible in emergency situations (e.g. in case of fire).

1.8 The Head of School and Senior Assistant Headteacher have responsibility for inputting attendance data onto the school's administrative system and maintaining records appropriately.

1.9 The School's Administration Officer has responsibility to ensure pupils are "signed out" and "signed in" in line with school procedures if leaving at any other time than the end of the school day.

See also Section 5.2-5.4 of this policy.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

2.1 All pupils need to know that their language, needs, experiences, racial backgrounds and cultures are acknowledged, valued and respected.

2.2 Riverside has established procedures that support and encourage parents and pupils.

2.3 The SLT, SMT and Teachers develop mutually supportive working relationships with parents and pupils.

2.4 An interpreter is organised whenever possible to support families who are new to English to ensure important information is communicated. Pupils do not act as interpreters in order to respect parents' rights to confidentiality unless this is requested by the parent.

2.5 Disabled parents have the option of an alternative venue for attendance meetings, including home visits.

PROCEDURE

Registers

3.1 Registers are marked at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions by a teacher. The register is regarded as closed thirty minutes after the start of the register period (i.e. 9.45am and 1.30/2.00pm).

3.2 Child Protection personnel are named on the inside cover of each register.

DESIGNATED LEAD:	Helen Baldry
DEPUTY DESIGNATED LEAD:	Jill Lewis, Sophie Alder, Jose Lewis
CHILD PROTECTION GOVERNOR:	Peter John

3.3 The Senior Assistant Headteacher inputs attendance data onto the administrative system at least weekly. Standardised codes are used at all times. A printed record is generated at least once a week for those pupils whose attendance falls below 90%.

3.4 The Senior Assistant Headteacher records appropriate information on weekly registers electronically (e.g. reasons for absence, lateness times).

3.5 A registration check is completed by EWAS each year. Verbal and written feedback is provided.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

4.1 Schools are required to collect and publish data on their rates of authorised and unauthorised absences.

4.2 All schools must distinguish in their attendance records between authorised and unauthorised absences of pupils of compulsory school age. **Unauthorised absence is regarded as truancy.**

4.3 An absence is authorised by the **school** if a valid reason for the absence has been received from a parent/carer. Authorisation is not automatically given on receipt of a letter or message – the reason must be appropriate and should show that every effort has been made by the parent/carer for the pupil to attend.

4.4 An absence must meet the following criteria for it to be authorised:

- the pupil is too ill (a letter/message is required or a medical certificate for long/persistent absences)
- the pupil has a medical appointment (verification is required)
- the parent/carer of the pupil is too ill to accompany the child and has no alternative adult to accompany the child to school (a telephone message before the start of school is required).
- a day of religious observance
- an annual holiday (to be taken during the month of July only) not exceeding ten school days. A request must be made prior to the absence on a school request form and confirmation of authorisation must be received by the parent/carer. Please note: authorisation will only be given if attendance prior to the request is at an acceptable level.
- exclusion from school (for a fixed/indefinite period)
- to attend an off-site educational activity (as agreed by the school) or interview at another school.

4.5 An absence is unauthorised when the reason for absence does not meet the criteria set out in 4.4 or no reason for absence is received.

4.6 An absence will be recorded as unauthorised if:

- the pupil is absent because a sister/brother is ill
- the pupil is absent because it is his/her birthday
- the pupil is absent to go shopping
- the pupil is absent to go on a trip (as a “treat”)
- it is the first/last day of term and this is the reason for absence (including not knowing the date of return)
- if the pupil is on holiday with no authorisation
- the reason for absence is oversleeping

- in the school's opinion the reason for absence is unacceptable or deemed to be untrue.

Action to be taken if a pupil is absent from school

5.1 Prompt action on non-attendance is an important area of child protection. Early identification and effective follow-up action rely on efficient communication both within the school and between the school, parents and support services.

5.2 It is the responsibility of the parent/carer of the absent pupil to:

- ensure that children of compulsory school age receive an efficient and suitable full-time education (**Section 7 Education Act 1996**)
- encourage and support regular attendance and punctuality
- make every effort for the pupil to attend and be punctual
- contact the school on the first day of absence and give a reason for absence (before the start of the school day)
- ensure that contact details are up to date – a member of staff will contact parents/carers should an absence occur
- send a letter to verify the reason for absence or lateness once a child returns to school
- obtain a medical certificate if the absence is prolonged
- ensure that annual holidays do not exceed ten school days in any one academic year and are taken in school holidays or in the month of July
- provide evidence of travel arrangements if travelling in term time (including changes to dates previously provided)
- know the term dates.

5.3 It is the responsibility of The Senior Assistant Headteacher to:

- check registers regularly
- make every effort to contact parents/carers of absent pupils on the first day of absence and no later than three days of the pupil's absence should a message not be received
- make every effort to contact parents/carers concerning unexplained absence within one week of the pupil's return to school and emphasise the need for verification
- maintain records of attendance
- distinguish on electronic records between authorised and unauthorised absence
- inform parents by letter and/or an individual meeting should there be cause for concern and any action that may be taken
- make a referral to EWAS as appropriate
- share information with EWAS and social services as required
- complete attendance data returns
- ensure the school's procedures follow good practice guidelines

5.4 It is the responsibility of admin. staff to:

- ensure messages are recorded and a copy sent to the Senior Assistant Headteacher
- maintain contact information and ensure accuracy
- take pupils off roll and record destination using the Common Transfer Form
- print out a daily register.

Off Roll

6.1 Pupils are taken off roll when they transfer to a different school. Once the receiving school has requested a pupil's records s/he is taken off roll and a Common Transfer Form is completed.

6.2 A pupil may be taken off roll if they are absent from school for an extended period with no authorisation. A referral will be made to EWAS prior to this action.

Collection of Pupils

7.1 It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that pupils are collected promptly at the designated end of the school day (usually 3.15pm) by a responsible adult that is known by the class teacher and the pupil.

7.2 Unless written consent from a parent/carer has been received by the Head of School or Senior Assistant Headteacher no pupil will have permission to travel home alone or with a brother/sister of school age. Written permission may be given by parents of pupils in Year 6 to escort their younger siblings to/from school but at the sole discretion and responsibility of parents.

7.3 School gates are open at 3pm every day so that parents/carers are able to wait in the playground. Teachers bring classes to the playground and keep pupils with them until they are collected. Parents should not go to classes to collect pupils.

7.4 It is especially important to younger pupils that they are collected promptly – pupils are often distressed if they do not see their parent/carer as soon as they come into the playground.

7.5 Pupils who have not been collected on time will be escorted to Play Centre. **This will incur a charge.** There is no provision for other members of staff to look after pupils who have not be collected at the end of the school day.

7.6 Parents who are frequently late are asked to complete a "late collection" report. These reports may be used as evidence should a referral be necessary to any support agencies.

7.7 If parents/carers are unable to collect pupils at the end of the school day there are after school club facilities on the school site. Pupils must be registered.

7.8 There are often after school clubs and lessons available in school. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure collection arrangements are made. Late collection at these times is unacceptable.

Early collection of pupils

8.1 Collecting pupils early from school should only occur if there is an emergency situation, if a medical appointment is necessary or if the pupil is ill.

8.2 Parents/carers have a responsibility to notify the Senior Assistant Headteacher in the morning should a pupil have a medical appointment and provide verification. It is also the responsibility of the parent/carer to keep such appointments

to a minimum in school time and must make every effort to book appointments after school wherever possible.

8.3 Early collection of pupils for any other reason will not be authorised by the school. Reasons such as because a brother/sister is ill will not be considered valid and are therefore unauthorised. EWAS may contact parents/carers should such incidents occur.

8.4 If a pupil must be taken out of school early it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to sign the pupil out following school procedure. A diary is kept outside the Office and maintained by admin. staff.

8.5 Pupils are not allowed to leave the school premises unaccompanied for any reason during the school day.

Punctuality

9.1 It is the legal responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure pupils are on time for school. The beginning of the day is an important part of the school day – it is the time when teachers discuss the day's work and often introduce new ideas to the class. It is therefore crucial that all pupils are present and ready to work. **Being late seriously affects pupil progress.**

9.2 The school gates are open from 8.45am each day. Parents and pupils are allowed in the playground from this time. Pupils remain the responsibility of the parent/carer until 9.15am.

9.3 While there are often members of staff at the school gate and in the playground, the responsibility for pupils remains with parents until the bell is rung.

9.4 Pupils in Year 6 are allowed to travel to and from school without an adult if written permission is received by the school from a parent. This decision and responsibility is solely with parents.

9.5 At 9.15am pupils line up in the playground where a teacher collects the class.

9.6 Pupils who are not present in the line are marked late and the time of arrival is recorded.

9.7 Late pupils must report to the Head of School. Parents/carers of pupils who are consistently late are notified by letter. This information is monitored and reviewed regularly.

9.8 Registers are closed at 9.45am. Pupils who arrive after the registers are closed are recorded as "unauthorised late".

9.9 It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the school if a pupil will be late for a specific reason (e.g. dental appointment). Oversleeping and not being ready in time are not acceptable reasons for being late to school.

9.10 A Breakfast Club is available each day. Breakfast Club starts at 8am and provides a positive, healthy start to the school day and ensures pupils are punctual each morning.

Should you require any further details concerning this policy please contact the Head of School.

**Children's and Adults' Services
Early Help Service**

Penalty Notice Protocol (April 2014)

1. Legal Basis

1.1 Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, which created a new section 444A Education Act 1996, empowers designated LA officers, Head Teachers (& Deputy and Assistant Head Teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 came into force on 1 September 2007. A PN can also be issued in relation to the offence of an excluded pupil being in a public place during school hours during the first 5 days of an exclusion. This protocol describes the circumstances and procedures under which Notices will be issued by the London Borough of Southwark.

1.2 A Penalty Notice imposes a financial penalty of up to £120 which, if paid, discharges liability for conviction for the offence to which the penalty relates (s444 (1) Education Act).

1.3 The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform with all requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Equality Act 2010. Each LA must draw up and consult on a code of conduct under which the issue of Penalty Notices will operate.

1.4 The LA has the prime responsibility for developing the Protocol within which all partners identified through the legislation will operate. Penalty Notices issued without, or outside the terms of a Local Code of Conduct are unlawful.

2. Code of Conduct

2.1 The code of conduct relating to the issue of penalty notices in Southwark is agreed between:-

- Southwark Council (Children's and Adults' Services)
- Governing Bodies and Head Teachers of Southwark Schools
- The Southwark Division of the Metropolitan Police Service
- Elected Members

and in producing this Code of Conduct regard has been made to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

2.2 The purpose of the code is to ensure that the powers are applied consistently, fairly and transparently across the local authority area and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme in compliance with the regulations of the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007.

2.3 The regulations specify that, in order to achieve consistency and fairness across the authority, the following must be included in the local code, including:-

- The means of avoiding the issue of duplicate Notices.
- Measures to ensure that a Notice is not issued when proceedings for an offence of non-attendance at school under Sec. 444 of the Education Act 1996 are contemplated or have been commenced by the Local Authority.
- The circumstances under which it will be appropriate to issue a Penalty Notice for an offence.
- A maximum number of Penalty Notices that may be issued to one parent in any twelve-month period.
- Arrangements for co-ordination between the Local Authority, neighbouring Local Authorities where appropriate, the police and authorised officers.

3. Rationale

3.1 Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement, essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities through continuity of learning, and a pre-requisite for school improvement.

3.2 *Under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school. Penalty Notices supplement the existing sanctions currently available under Sec 444(1), Education Act 1996 or Sec 36, of the Children Act 1989 to enforce attendance at school, as appropriate.*

3.3 The Early Help Service delivers this LA responsibility in Southwark. The Early Help Attendance Strategy is the LA's strategic framework for the promotion of improved school attendance and punctuality and for the reduction of levels of unauthorised absence and post-registration truancy. Enforcement of attendance through sanctions of any nature are used only where parental co-operation is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

3.4 Sanctions are never used as a punishment, but as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement through engagement with parents.

4. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

4.1 The LA can only issue Penalty Notices in respect of pupils registered at school's in the LA's area; children in respect of whom alternative education is being provided and children who are not registered pupils at any school but who are resident in Southwark.

4.2 A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of parentally-condoned unauthorised absence, where the parent is judged capable

of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so.

- 4.3 Use of Penalty Notices will be restricted to one per family per academic year. Repeat breaches of term-time leave guidance may result in direct prosecution and not further issue of Penalty Notices.
- 4.4 Where families contain more than one child for whom poor attendance is an issue, multiple issue may occur but this will be the subject of careful consideration and co-ordination.
- 4.5 There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of the possible issue of a Penalty Notice. Early Help Service link EWOs will advise schools on the issue of warning letters.
- 4.6 The issuing of a Penalty Notice may be considered appropriate in the following circumstances:
 - Unauthorised term-time leave including the deliberate taking of a holiday in term time without school permission (where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not/would not be given) and/or deliberately delaying the return from an extended holiday without prior school agreement
 - When a parent/carer has made it clear that they are unwilling to co-operate or work with the Early Help Service or school staff to improve a child's non-attendance.
 - When a student who has been excluded is stopped on the streets during the first five days of their exclusion period.
 - When a student has been stopped on more than one occasion by a truancy patrol.
 - When a young person who is out of school is also known to be involved in offending behaviours or anti-social behaviour.
 - For a Year 11 student during the Spring/Summer terms, as an intervention when it is felt that the issuing of a PN would re-engage a family, and/or re-focus them upon matters of the student's education.

5 Southwark Procedures for the issue of Penalty Notices

- 5.1 The LA will issue Penalty Notices in Southwark where there are grounds to believe that this will either effect a speedy return to education or act as a deterrent to further unauthorised absence. This will ensure coordinated, consistent and equitable delivery and avoid compromising school-home relationships and other enforcement sanctions (for example, by ensuring that a PN is not issued when proceedings for an offence under section 444 are being contemplated or have been commenced and that duplicate PNs can be avoided).

5.2 Penalty Notices will only be issued by first class post and never as an on the spot action. This is to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety obligations towards LA staff.

5.3 The LA may also receive requests to issue Penalty Notices from schools (Head Teachers), Southwark Police and neighbouring LAs. These requests will be actioned provided that:

- all relevant information is supplied on the specified Penalty Notice referral form (to be supplied to schools/agencies)
- the circumstances of the pupil's absence meet all the requirements of this Protocol
- the issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being contemplated or progressed
- the referring school or agency are available to give evidence in Court in the event that, if the penalty is not paid, the LA commences a prosecution under section 444 for the original offence of non-attendance

Schools must consider every aspect of a pupil's circumstances before considering whether a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, including discussion and agreement with the school Link Education Welfare Officer.

5.4 Requests from schools for the LA to issue a Penalty Notice will be considered within 10 working days from the receipt of the request by a small panel made up of LA officers and a Southwark Head Teacher. If the panel agrees that the issue of a Penalty Notice is appropriate and that all criteria has been met the LA will issue a Penalty Notice through the post.

5.5 In the rare circumstances where the panel agrees that there are insufficient grounds and/or insufficient evidence to proceed a discussion will take place with the school to either seek more evidence or to agree not to proceed at this time.

5.6 If a school were to ignore the LA advice and the Head Teacher were to proceed to issue the Penalty Notice independently of the LA, schools should bear in mind that the LA may not proceed with a prosecution of the original offence if the LA's view was that there were insufficient grounds or evidence to proceed and this position remained unchanged. If a penalty is not paid and the LA does not commence prosecution, the 2007 Regulations require the LA to withdraw the Penalty Notice (see 8.1 below).

6. **Procedures for withdrawing Penalty Notices**

A Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- *that proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person*

- *where the Penalty Notice ought not to have been issued i.e. where it has been issued outside of the terms of the local code of conduct or where no offence has been committed*
- *where there are material errors with the notice in relation to the local code of conduct*

6.1 Right of Appeal

There is no right of appeal against the issue of a Penalty Notice.

7. Payment of Penalty Notices

- 7.1 Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.
- 7.2 Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent/carer liability for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.
- 7.3 Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days of receipt is £60 and payment after this time, but within 28 days of receipt is £120. A Notice served by post is deemed to have been received on the second day after posting it by first class post.
- 7.4 The LA retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecution in the event of non-payment).

8. Non-payment of Penalty Notices

- 8.1 If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the LA must either prosecute for the offence for which the Notice applies or withdraw the Notice, in circumstances specified in section 5.

9. Policy & Publicity

- 9.1 Deployment of Penalty Notices as a sanction will be included in the Early Help Attendance Strategy.
- 9.2 All schools will be encouraged to include information on the deployment of Penalty Notices in their whole school attendance policies and bring this to the attention of all parents.
- 9.3 The LA will include information on the use of Penalty Notices and other attendance enforcement sanctions in promotional/ public information material.

10. Reporting & Review

- 10.1 The Early Help Service will report at regular intervals to SLT on the deployment and outcomes of Penalty Notices.

10.2 The Early Help Service will review Penalty Notice use and the enforcement strategy, on an annual basis.

Reference

'Parental responsibility measures for school attendance and behaviour – Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, local authorities and the police' - Department for Education, November 2013