

Red Hill C of E primary School

Attendance Policy January 2023



Amendment history

Date	Issue	Status	Reason for Amendment	Person responsible
Spring Term 2023	1		New policy needed in line with zone boards	

RED HILL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Red Hill C of E Primary School, we look to Jesus as our example in our aspirations for excellence and enjoyment in all that we do. We believe that everyone is unique and everything is celebrated. **God created you to be amazing** (Ephesians 2:10)

Excellence & Enjoyment, Everyone & Everything

At Red Hill CE Primary School we believe in promoting excellent attendance and punctuality for everyone in order for them to make the most of the opportunities (enjoyment) that school has to offer (everything). We believe that regular attendance is vitally important in promoting successful learning, as well as developing key life skills which are essential for success in the world beyond school. It has been proven that attainment can be closely linked to attendance and in order to achieve their full potential children should aim for the highest levels of attendance and punctuality.

“The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school” (Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022).

We rely on our partnership with parents and recognise that it is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school in a regular and committed manner. In support of this, the following information outlines our commitments in ensuring that attendance at Red Hill CE Primary continues to be of the highest priority.

AIMS

- To ensure excellent levels of pupil attendance and punctuality, aiming for 100%.
- To establish an ethos of 'school attendance matters' through proactive strategies to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To work closely with parents/carers to fulfil our obligations to the children by placing high priority on the regular attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- To ensure procedures within the school identify and follow up all absences and patterns of absence at the earliest opportunity.
- To have a clear and consistently applied escalation process.
- To continuously develop the school's celebration of good attendance and punctuality.
- To provide a school that has a “calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn” (*Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022*).

TARGET

We recognise that it “is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment” (*Working together to improve school attendance – May 2022*).

Therefore, we expect all pupils to strive for 100% attendance and to arrive punctually by **8.50am** to start the school day promptly.

Whilst there is no longer a statutory requirement for schools to set whole school attendance targets, it remains good practice for schools to have a target in line with national averages and Ofsted guidance. A target is set by the Senior Leadership Team and agreed and monitored by the Attendance Lead/Deputy Head Teacher and Governors each academic year. This year the attendance target has been set at 97%.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PUPILS

- Pupils should strive to attend school every day and be on time.
- Pupils should have a clear understanding of the importance of attending school as well as acceptable and unacceptable reasons for absence.
- Pupils should tell their parents/carers or class teacher of any reason that prevents them attending/wanting to attend school.
- In instances of lateness, pupils should report to the school office upon arrival where a note will be made on scholar pack outlining the number of 'minutes late' a pupil has arrived.

PARENTS/CARERS

- Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day and arrives on time.
- Parents/carers should have a clear understanding of the importance of attending school, acceptable and unacceptable reasons for absence, and the fact that an absence will remain unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation has been given.
- Parents/carers should work closely with the school and inform the office on the first day of their child's absence and where necessary all other days thereafter.
- In circumstances where a parent/carer is having difficulty getting the child to attend please seek the support of the school as quickly as possible through a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This can be done by phoning the school office.

The Headteacher is the named senior member of staff with the lead responsibility for attendance and punctuality alongside the named Attendance Lead in school. Governors have a responsibility for monitoring attendance targets. The Receptionist is the attendance administrative support.

Members of school staff; the Senior Leadership Team, Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff all have responsibility for attendance and punctuality in school. "Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families (Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022).

Attendance matters are reviewed by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Attendance Lead. Attendance monitoring is reported termly to the Governing body. The school will consult with any other relevant agencies such as the School Nurse, Early Help Team, Educational Psychologist, Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Children's Services, Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and others to seek to support individual cases as appropriate.

ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

- Parents/carers are asked to inform the school by telephone if a pupil is absent, because of illness, on the first day of absence **no later than 9.30am** providing the reason and where necessary on each subsequent day of absence.
- If school has **not** been contacted by the parents/carers, the office will make contact by telephone. This will be recorded on the school ScholarPack system with the reason for absence.
- Where a pupil returns to school following an absence and school has not received a written or verbal explanation parents/carers will receive a letter home requesting the reason for absence.
- After 2 days' absence, where there has been no contact from parents/carers the pupil's name will be referred to the Headteacher and Attendance Lead who will try to make contact with the parents/carers or any of the named contacts. If no contact is made the above staff will conduct a 'safe and well' home visit with another member of staff

- If no contact can be made a letter will be delivered by hand to the home address and where there are concerns the police may be asked to do a 'welfare check.' This will be reported to Children's Services.
- Should there be frequent absence due to illness, Headteacher and Attendance Lead alongside the EWO, will ask to meet parents and may ask for 'supporting' evidence, such as prescription/prescribed medication /appointment letter/letter from GP or consultant. If these are not provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a pupil is going to be absent from school for a long period of time due to illness or other authorised extenuating circumstances, school will liaise with an Education Welfare Officer in order to best support the pupil.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or Safeguarding Team should be informed.
- **"Schools must record absence as authorised when it falls on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the parents' religious body (not the parents)"** (*Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022*). Parents are requested to complete a Leave of Absence Request form for this from the school office. School will not authorise holidays during term time.
- After 10 consecutive days' absence, we are required to report this on the Worcestershire Children's Services Portal. In line with the Education Regulation Act (1996) if a child is absent from school for longer than 20 days with no authorised reason the child's name could be taken off roll.

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. In the majority of cases a parent/carer note explaining that their child was ill, for example, can be accepted without question or concern. In exceptional circumstances further evidence of a child's absence may be requested. However, schools can challenge parents' statements or seek additional evidence if they have any concerns regarding a child's attendance.

APPOINTMENTS

- We encourage parents/carers to make appointments outside of school hours. Many GP surgeries, dentists and hospitals offer before and after school appointments.
- We accept occasionally there will be the need for emergency appointments, however these will be rare. Parents/carers are requested to provide written or verbal confirmation of these appointments.
- Pupils must be signed in and out at the office and these absences will be recorded as appropriate.
- We do not expect pupils to be absent all day for a medical appointment, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

PLANNED ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

- Government legislation states that no planned absence from school will be authorised, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Parents must notify school of any planned absence from school in writing using the 'Leave of Absence Request Form' available at the office. This must be made prior to the absence taking place. **Absence requests for exceptional circumstances will only be accepted by the Headteacher when completed on this form.**
- If necessary, school may liaise with an Education Welfare Officer in addressing unauthorised absence linked to planned absence from school.
- "Only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence... it has been applied for in advance by the parent who the pupil normally lives with and the headteacher believes the circumstances to be exceptional. Schools must consider each application for a leave of absence individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion" (*Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022*).

PUNCTUALITY

- Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8.50 a.m., arriving between 8.50 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. will be considered as late. This will be marked on ScholarPack.
- Pupils arriving after 8.50 a.m. must report to the School Office so that their attendance and 'minutes late' can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.30 a.m. will receive an unauthorised late mark unless a satisfactory reason is given. This results in the pupil being absent on the attendance report for the morning session.
- Action to address lateness will be the responsibility of the Attendance Lead. Class registers MUST reflect the correct late code ('L' to be used prior to 9.30am, 'U' to be used after 9.30am and 'M' to be used if a medical appointment has resulted in the late arrival of a pupil).
- Valid reasons for lateness could include medical appointments, which have been agreed with school prior to the appointment.

REPORTING TO PARENTS/CARERS

A child's overall attendance will be reported to the parents/carers at the end of the academic year distributed within the end of year school report. A weekly class attendance overview will be reported on the newsletter.

REWARDS

We have a number of attendance rewards in order to promote the importance of attendance and punctuality and our ethos that 'school attendance matters.'

- All staff reward good attendance and punctuality on a daily basis through praise and encouragement.
- Weekly assemblies promote attendance through two 'Attendance Classes of the Week' recognition. These are awarded to the classes in KS1 and KS2 with the highest attendance for the week.
- Each week, the top 2 classes in each key stage are awarded Gold and Silver leaves to place on the 'Attendance Tree' in the main school.
- The weekly overall school attendance figure is displayed on the weekly newsletter with the school target.
- At the end of each term, the class from each key stage who have been awarded the weekly 'Attendance Class of the Week' most frequently will be rewarded with a class prize eg. a film afternoon. These rewards will be decided by the Pupil Leadership Team in collaboration with the pupils across the school.
- Pupils who have previously had poor attendance/punctuality and make significant improvement following intervention will be issued with a praise letter or postcard acknowledging their improvements. This will be actioned by the Attendance Lead.

PROCEDURES

Registers

An accurate and consistent registration system is crucial both to provide a solid foundation for analysis of absence and to support any statutory interventions. If completed incorrectly this can constitute a risk in the event of an emergency evacuation. The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately.

Attendance registers will be kept in accordance with legal requirements, local authority guidelines and school regulations. Red Hill CE Primary School use electronic registration (ScholarPack) to keep registers.

Every half a day of absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the Headteacher has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences, including persistent lateness, must be treated as unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by a person designated to do so by the Headteacher. At Red Hill CE Primary School the Headteacher/Attendance lead has been designated to authorise

absence [see The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI No. 2006/1751) – reg 7(1)].

If the school is forced to close due to circumstances beyond our control this does not affect pupils' attendance.

Attendance registers may be kept manually or electronically. School complies with and uses the DfE compulsory national attendance codes

POOR ATTENDANCE

School attendance of 95% or less is below average and below our school target of 97% and therefore, children whose attendance falls below 95% will be closely monitored by the Headteacher and Family Support Worker and further action considered. School will challenge the attitude of those pupils and parents/carers who give a low priority to attendance.

Schools will analyse individual pupil data to identify quickly patterns of absence which cause concern and parents will be informed by the school where their child's attendance causes concern.

School has a clear and escalating approach to intervention where there are concerns regarding school attendance including letters home, phone calls, regular meetings with parents/carers and home visits.

After school has attempted to address attendance issues with the parents/carers and there is no improvement, external agencies may be involved including the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM

Pupils with persistent absenteeism will be identified (pupils with more than 10% absence rate) and a 'Plan of Action and Support' will be put in place through a formal Attendance Meeting to address the underlying reasons for the absence level. Where the child's attendance remains a concern following supportive strategies further referrals may be made to an EWO and may result in penalty action.

ATTENDANCE MEETING

Parents/Carers of pupils whose attendance gives cause for concern may be invited to attend an Attendance Meeting. An Attendance Meeting is a formal meeting to discuss the child's school attendance, identify barriers and agree a formal Plan of Action and Support with clear actions, in order to improve school attendance.

POOR PUNCTUALITY

A child who is 10 minutes late for school every day effectively misses out on 6 full days of their education over a year, having an impact on their achievement.

Persistent lateness is a form of absence and requires the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/Attendance Lead to speak with parents/carers to try and understand and support reasons for lateness. It is important that parents/carers are aware that persistent lateness can make a significant difference to their child's achievement. Persistent lateness is monitored by the Headteacher and Attendance Lead. Lateness concern letters will be issued by the Attendance Lead if there is an issue. If lateness persists the parents/carers will be invited in for a formal meeting to discuss it further. In some cases, where persistent lateness does not improve a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service and could lead to penalty action.

EWO

For those families where poor attendance continues, processes will be followed regarding issuing Fixed Penalty Notices, which are fines issued to parents where a child has an amount of unauthorised absences over a certain period of time. In some cases, the same procedure will be followed for those families taking unauthorised holiday. In certain circumstances, extremely low attendance with unexplained absences may also result in prosecution of parents for not ensuring their child's attendance at school.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Fixed penalty notices are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends school. Fixed

penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and will only be used where a fixed penalty notice is deemed likely to change parental behaviour. As stated in 'Working together to improve school attendance' (May 2022), fixed penalty notices could be issued for the following reasons;

- Where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

REINTEGRATION

We recognise that reintegration for children that have had a long term absence (such as a prolonged stay in hospital) or for those that have shared provision could be challenging. We also recognise that there may be other groups of children that may need support in the school environment. These may include pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), medical needs, Children Looked After (CLA), and vulnerable and safeguarded pupils. In accordance with our Equal Opportunities policy all of these cases will be supported by the school; individual needs will be assessed in order to seek support from relevant agencies as deemed appropriate.

PART TIME TABLES

For some cases, it may be necessary for pupils to be placed on a part-time table to support regular attendance. Part-time tables are to be monitored and reviewed on a weekly basis with the parent/carer and should (in most cases) result in return to full time school attendance within 6 weeks. Where attendance is expected within a part-time timetable but the pupil does not attend, this will be marked as unauthorised absence. The EWO may also be involved in this process. Where a pupil is not attending due to ill health/health reasons, school will request 'supporting evidence' to authorise any absence.

CONCLUSION

This policy highlights the importance of attendance and punctuality of all our pupils at Red Hill CE Primary School. Our school is committed to working towards our attendance targets as a milestone in striving towards the goal of 100% attendance for all. We consistently use a whole school approach to support and encourage parents/carers and pupils to attend school every day. We operate an open door policy and will always address individual needs to the best of our ability. In return, we expect the support of both parents/carers and children in achieving the best possible levels of attendance.

