



RIDGEWAY PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Governing Body of Ridgeway Primary School places a high priority on achieving high standards and feel that excellent pupil attendance and punctuality are essential for this. In order for children to achieve their potential, pupils must be highly motivated to learn and keen and eager to attend school. Regular, punctual attendance will establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives

To achieve this, the Governors and staff are committed to working in partnership with parents to ensure that the school achieves a **MINIMUM of 95%** attendance throughout the school.

The Government expects us to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (less than 90%);
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education, to which they are entitled; and,
- Act early to address patterns of absence.

Our Expectations

PARENTS will:

- ✓ Ensure that their children attend school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and ready to learn.
- ✓ Notify school on the first day of absence before 9.30am
- ✓ Not take their children out of school during term time for the purpose of family holidays,
- ✓ Provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility.
- ✓ Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep a child away from school

CLASS TEACHER will:

- ✓ Keep an accurate attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon session
- ✓ Praise pupils for punctuality and good attendance.
- ✓ Monitor pupil absence and inform the Headteacher when absence is impacting upon achievement.

LEARNING MENTOR will:

- ✓ Print off official reports for each calendar month for monitoring purposes
- ✓ Monitor alongside the Deputy Head Teacher, patterns of attendance and lateness
- ✓ Send letters to parents where attendance falls below required levels
- ✓ Ensure medical evidence is provided where necessary
- ✓ Support families to improve attendance

DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER will:

- ✓ Monitor official registers and take actions where concerns have been identified
- ✓ Report to Governors on attendance matters

GOVERNING BODY will:

- ✓ Monitor whole school attendance termly and take appropriate action should it affect standards
- ✓ Nominate a named Governor for Attendance

Late Procedures

We expect children to arrive at school between **8.45am and 8.55am**

The school uses the registration module in SIMS to take an electronic register. Each class teacher, or their nominated representative, is responsible for taking the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed promptly to avoid discrepancies between classes.

Morning Registration is between 8.55am and 9.05am

Afternoon Registration is between 1.15pm and 1.25pm for Reception; 1.30pm and 1.35 for Years 1 – Years 6

Children who arrive late (after the doors close at 8:55am) will enter through the main office entrance and must be signed in by their parent/carer or appropriate adult and a reason for the lateness is also requested. Children in Year 5 & 6 who walk to school on their own, may bring a note from home with an explanation for their lateness.

The office staff will update the MIS system with their late mark (L).

Any pupil arriving without reason for their lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised late (U).

Children who frequently arrive late will be monitored; parents will be contacted and a referral to the Education Welfare Officer considered.

Any child arriving after 9:30am for any reason other than medical will be marked late after registers closed mark (U). **This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.**

Any child who goes home during the lunch hour must be collected from the school office at the end of the morning session. They must return to school by the start of the afternoon registration period. Any children arriving after the afternoon registration period will be marked as late (L).

Children who have to leave for any reason throughout the day should be signed out at the main office by their parent/carer or appropriate adult. This is strongly discouraged. **Parents are requested to make dental or medical appointments outside of school hours.**

The Headteacher will write to parents/carers of pupils who are persistently late to remind them of the school policy and expectations. If lateness persists the Headteacher will invite parents/carers to a meeting with the Learning Mentor to discuss ways in which the school can support the family in getting the child to school on time.

Reporting Absences

If a child is absent from school, it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to contact the school on the first day of absence stating the reason for the absence.

If a child is not in school and we have not had a phone call by mid-morning one of our Office Staff will call parents/carers to find out why a child is not in school.

All absences are monitored by the Learning Mentor on a weekly basis. All children are monitored when attendance falls below 90%. Continued absence will mean that parents/carers will be called to discuss any issues around attendance. If this does not improve then a referral will be made to the schools Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school does not consider reasonable and for which “no leave” has been given. This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences for which no reason has been given to the school
- 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

Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments

If the school is satisfied that a child of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school because of illness, doctor/hospital or dentist appointments, then the absence will be treated as authorised.

Family Bereavements

The death of a family member can be a particularly traumatic event in any young person’s life. Schools have discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events and any request would be dealt with sympathetically.

Family Holidays

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off school time to go on holiday. Leave of absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where leave is granted the headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

Any period of leave taken without agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised.

We will not agree leave during term time under the following circumstances:

- During the first two weeks of a school year. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible
- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods – SATs for Year 2 and Year 6 and the Phonics screening in Year 1.

Any request for leave of absence must be made in writing to the Headteacher on the ‘Request for Leave’ proforma available from the school office (**Appendix 1**). **The Headteacher is the only person able to authorise leave of absence.**

Persistent Absence

When attendance becomes a concern

If a child is absent on a regular basis without adequate explanation, or is absent regularly on specific days, e.g. Monday or children are absent for prolonged periods of time, the school will contact parents/carers to discuss the problems and to seek a solution.

If a child’s attendance falls below 95% at any time within the school year, the Headteacher will write to parents/carers to inform them that their child’s attendance has fallen below 95%. Parents/carers will be reminded of their legal duty and of the school’s policy and expectations. If attendance does not improve the Headteacher will invite

parents/carers to a meeting with the school's Learning Mentor to discuss ways in which the school can support the family in getting the child to school every day.

When an individual pupil's attendance level falls below 88% in any term without good reason, school will not be able to authorise any further absence for illness without medical evidence to confirm the illness. In order to authorise continued illness related non-attendance parents/carers will need to provide the school with, for example:

- a. **A doctor's note or medical certificate**
- b. **A copy of the dated prescription**
- c. **Copy of labels from medicine bottles**

Otherwise the absences will be recorded as unauthorised (O).

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Penalty Notices for Absence from School

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Where parents fail to comply with this they could be issued with a penalty notice fine.

Parents/carers must pay up to £60 if they pay within 21 days; or up to £120 if they pay within 28 days.

Penalty Notices and other legal sanctions will only be used where parental cooperation with this process is either absent or deemed to be insufficient to resolve the problem.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive 	<p>As part of this process the parent(s) will first be issued with a 20 day notice period, clearly advising that if unauthorised absence / lateness occurs in this 20 day period, a Penalty Notice may be issued. This is to allow the parents a further period to address their child's irregular attendance by working with the school or other agencies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent unauthorised absence. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any absence for holiday purposes not authorised by the head teacher, or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher. 	<p>The formal warning letter and 20 day improvement period will not apply to absences taken for holiday purposes.</p>

People responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- The Headteacher, **Mrs Joanne Jelves**, has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate.
- First Day Contact: A member of the school office team will record the reason for absence or ring home if no reason for the absence has been received.
- Request for leave of absence can only be authorised by the Headteacher, **Mrs Joanne Jelves**.
- The Learning Mentor; **Mrs Deb Derry** and the Deputy Headteacher; **Miss Laura Gray**, will monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils in school where attendance falls below 95%.
- Class teachers or the SENCO can be contacted regarding children being reluctant to come to school.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote good attendance.

Parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

Attendance Policy: Updated January 2020

Joanne Jelves
Head Teacher

Document History

May 10	Adopted at Governing Body meeting 29 th June 2010
June 11	Updated and adopted at Full Governors Meeting 28 th June 2011
March 12	Updated and adopted at Full Governors Meeting 26 th June 2011
January 14	Adopted at Personnel Committee 6 th February 2014
March 2015	Updated following changes to the LA Code of Conduct for Attendance and the criteria for issuing penalty notices presented to Behaviour & Attendance Committee 11 th March 2015 for adoption.
January 2018	Updated following changes to how Penalty Notices are issued. presented to Resources Committee 13 th February 2018 for adoption
January 2019	Reviewed with no changes presented to Resources Committee 26 th February 2019 for adoption
January 2020	Reviewed with changes to % for persistent absentee and unauthorised absence code presented to Resources Committee 27 th February 2020 for adoption

Request for leave during term time (TEMPLATE LETTER)

To: The head teacher: of: Date.....

I request consideration for of leave of absence from school during term time for:

My child(ren):

.....
.....

for the period from (date) to (date)

The **exceptional** circumstances and reason for this request are: -

.....
.....
.....

I have another child(ren) in another school(s) as follows:

Child full name(s)

Schools attended

Child full name(s)

Schools attended

Signature of 1st parent/carer(s).....

Print Name.....

Signature of 2nd parent/carer(s).....

Print Name.....

Please return completed form to the school office. The school will write to you and inform you of the decision on whether the request is authorised or not.

For Office Use Only

Current Attendance:% Last Year's Attendance:%

Number of school sessions taken as leave this academic year

Agreed/Not Agreed

Request for leave is agreed/is not agreed for the above student to take leave during term time between the above dates.

Rationale to decline request:

.....

Signed: Headteacher Date:

Notification of decision letter sent to parent/carer.....(date)

Appendix 2

School Letter Leave Agreed (TEMPLATE LETTER)

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance. **Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.**

Our key priority is to ensure that your child(ren) are as successful as possible and are able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would therefore ask that you support your child in catching up on the time they will miss in school.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Head teacher

(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. **Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that **you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if you proceed and your child's absence from school is recorded as unauthorised.** This is in line with Staffordshire County Council Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be :-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) are as successful as possible, are able to reach his/her full potential and gains maximum benefits from his/her educational experience.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

(Name)

Head teacher