

<b>ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY</b>
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**Date of Annual Review:**                      **July 2019**

**Monitoring Procedures:**

The implementation and effectiveness of the policy will be subject to an ongoing regular review by SLT, Pastoral Committee, with appropriate reference to the School Governing Body and the LEA

<b>Governing Body Option:</b>	Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare
<b>Date:</b>	3 July 2019
<b>Signed: Chair of Governors</b>	
<b>Signed: Headteacher</b>	
<b>To be reviewed by:</b>	July 2022

# **Attendance Policy**

Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it the efforts of the best teachers and the best school will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. At Rainhill High School, pupils need to attend regularly to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. We believe that irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to disadvantages. All schools are instructed by the government to raise safeguarding concerns if a pupil has poor attendance.

The aim and objective of this policy is to:

1. Ensure the highest possible attendance of all students
2. Reduce the level of absence
3. Improve levels of punctuality
4. Ensure that poor attendance is challenged to ensure pupils are kept safe

## **PARENT AND CARERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

**LAW:** The Education Act 1996 (Section 7) states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any Special Educational Needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Any parent who fails to ensure their child attends school regularly is guilty of an offence under the Education Act 1996. A more serious offence has also existed since 2001, whereby a parent, knowing that their child is failing to attend school regularly, fails to take reasonable steps to make them attend (Education Act 1996, as amended by the Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000). This is a serious offence and can in rare cases lead to the imprisonment of the parent.

### **Parents and Carers should:**

- Ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, email, through the School Text System, by letter or in person.
- Not authorise their child's absence as only the school can do this on the explanation provided by the parents. Parents need to be aware that a letter containing a written explanation does not in itself authorise an absence. Should a parent fail to provide a satisfactory reason for absence, the school will record such absence as unauthorised.
- Wherever possible avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school by 8.50am every morning.
- Avoid booking family holidays during term-time. The school reserves the right to request that the Local Authority issue a fixed penalty notice in such case.

## **PUPILS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

**LAW:** If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, their parent/s are guilty of an offence (Section 444 of Education Act 1996). Regular attendance will help make the most of their opportunities here at Rainhill High School.

Repeated lateness at the beginning of a school session (or during) can amount to failure to attend regularly and could result in parents being found guilty of an offence (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

### **Pupils should:**

- Ensure that they attend school regularly
- Ensure that they attend school on time (arrive at school by 8.50am)
- Attend all lessons punctually
- Not leave the school without permission
- Have their attendance and punctuality acknowledged by the school

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that might prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their Form Tutor/Year Student Manager.

### **School's responsibilities**

**LAW:** Schools are required by law to take attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Registers are a legal document. Should the Local Authority under Section 444 of The Education Act 1996 prosecute a parent of a persistent non-attender, then the information, which the registers contain, will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. Further regulatory information can be found in Education (Pupil Registration Regulations 2006).

All the staff at Rainhill High School will provide an ethos that places a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality. They also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

### **School staff will:**

- Record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.
- Ensure that registers are called at the beginning of each lesson
- Complete registers in accordance with the guidance from the Government Classroom Teachers should only use the / **N or L** code when completing the registers.
- Respond to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care.
- Promote regular school attendance
- Acknowledge good or improved attendance of individual pupils, classes or tutor groups
- Follow up any absences from lessons to deal with truancy that might occur after morning or afternoon registration.

### **Responsibilities of the School Attendance Officer**

The school has a named Attendance Officer who has a very specific role to play in supporting a school to maintain high levels of attendance. The Attendance Officers' essential purposes are to support parents and carers to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support school to develop effective systems for managing attendance.

### **The School Attendance Officer will:**

- Contact the parents by telephone or text on the first day of the absence.
- Amend the register - the Attendance Officer, or the lead member of SLT will only amend Official Registers.
- Differentiate appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence - only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence);
- Meet with Year Student Managers regularly to discuss the attendance of pupils.
- Promote partnership between pupils, parents and school over attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor and review registers for individuals causing concerns.
- Work with the school and parents to improve the attendance of identified pupils.
- Explain the consequences of poor attendance or punctuality to pupils, parents and carers.
- Take the necessary steps with individuals with poor attendance (meeting, attendance panels or pursue prosecution)
- Maintain appropriate records regarding pupil absence.
- Contact staff who have not taken their registers and follow this up with the lead member of SLT if this becomes a regular concern.
- Mark in those pupils who arrive at school after 8.50am and before 9.30am as Late **(L)**. **Those arriving after 9.30am will be marked (U) for the AM session.**

### **MONITORING PROCEDURES**

Accurate registers are important as they support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, form/year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence. In addition it also helps in identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees; facilitate and encourage early intervention; and to identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc)

- Attendance registers are analysed weekly by Year Student Managers, the Attendance Officer, and the lead member of SLT.
- Attendance data is updated weekly and all staff can access this.
- Attendance and Punctuality is reported to parents regularly.
- Any pupil whose attendance falls below 95% will become a cause for concern.
- Any Pupil that falls below 90% will be classed as a Persistent Absentee (PA).
- Parents of any pupil who accumulates 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten-week period will be considered for a Penalty Notice.
- Parents of any pupil who accumulates 10 sessions of unauthorised absence caused by arriving at school after the register has closed will be considered for a Penalty Notice.

## **EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

The school has a named Education Welfare Officer (EWO). They have a very specific role to play in supporting a school to maintain high levels of attendance. The EWO's essential purposes are to support parents and carers to meet their responsibilities for ensuring that their children regularly attend the school at which they are registered and to support schools to develop effective systems for managing attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer acts in partnership with the school, supporting and reinforcing the schools own efforts.

### **The EWO will:**

- Meet with Assistant Headteacher, Year Student Managers and the Attendance Officer regularly to discuss the attendance of pupils at Rainhill High school
- Promote partnership between pupils, parents and school over attendance and punctuality
- Monitor and review registers for individuals causing concerns
- To work collaboratively with the school and parents attempts to improve the attendance of identified pupils
- Liaise with Year Student Managers, The Attendance Officer and the lead member of SLT about referrals to court of long term absentees
- Explain the consequences of poor attendance or punctuality to pupils, parents and carers.
- Refer pupils to other agencies where appropriate being jointly agreed.
- Make home visits and feedback relevant information to the school as required
- To take the necessary steps with individuals referred for poor attendance (attendance meetings or pursue prosecution)
- Annually inspect the schools registers to ensure that it adheres to the code of practice outlined in the "Absence and Attendance Codes. Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities" DCSF 2006 and the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006.

## **FIXED PENALTY NOTICES**

***Please be aware that Rainhill High school have adopted the use of Penalty Notices in line with The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, regarding the issuing of Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school.***

**In some cases, the Head teacher will request the Local Authority to issue a fixed penalty notice.**

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 and/or deliberately delaying the return from an extended holiday without prior school agreement.
- When a pupil who has been excluded is stopped on the streets during the first five days of their exclusion period.
- When a pupil has been stopped by a truancy patrol.
- When a parent condones a pupils absence from school.

- When a young person who is out of school is also known to be involved in offending behaviours or anti-social behaviour.
- When a pupils is persistently late for school.

#### **Payment of a penalty notice**

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the liability of the parent or carer for the period in question and they cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice.

Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after 21 days but within 28 days is £120 (amended 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013).

#### **Non-payment of Penalty Notices**

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the notice and may trigger the Fast-Track Prosecution process under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

### **A GUIDE FOR PARENTS/CARERS**

#### **When do pupils need to be at school?**

Pupils should arrive at school by 8.50am. The morning register will be called promptly at 8.55am and the afternoon register at 1.05pm at the start of period 4.

#### **What happens if pupils are late?**

Rainhill High School opens to pupils at 8am every morning. All pupils should be inside the school by 8.50am. Morning registration takes place at 8.55am in tutor rooms or in assembly.

If pupils arrive at the school after 8.50am and before 9.30 am for the morning session, they will be marked **Late (L)** by the attendance officer and have a late mark on their attendance record. Pupils who arrive late should report to reception and sign in on the school Inventory System indicating time of arrival the time they arrive in school is noted and this will be used when generating reports to discuss pupils who are persistently late and in meetings with parents. If pupils arrive any time after 9.30am, they must report to reception and will be **marked U (late after the close of registration)**. This indicates that they have missed the morning session, **and will count as a half-day absence.**

**Pupils who arrive late for school will be placed on detention for 30 minutes at the end of the school day.**

#### **Afternoon registration**

At the end of lunch pupils are expected to make their way quickly and quietly to their lesson. Afternoon registrations is taken at 1:05pm. If a pupil registers with their period 4 teacher after 1.05pm, he/she will be marked **late** for the afternoon session. If a pupil does not register with his/her period 4 teachers then an absent mark will be recorded for the afternoon session. All lessons start promptly and registers are taken at the start of each lesson. Subject teachers will deal with lateness to lessons, will contact parents/carers and will sanction pupils for lateness to their lessons.

#### **Does the school need a phone call on each day of absence?**

We expect a parent/carers to telephone the school on the first day of absence preferably by 9am. If you do not telephone us, the attendance officer will send a text message asking for the reasons for absence and in some cases will aim to telephone you. If we are unable to reach you, or leave a message, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the

explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence, and this will be kept on the pupil's record. **Parents are expected to call the school on each day of absence.**

### **What does an unauthorised absence mean?**

Unauthorised absence is when no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

### **What reasons will the school accept for absences?**

- Illness - In cases of recurring absences, a medical certificate from the family G.P. or medical specialist will be required. For long-term issues a letter from a hospital consultant will be required and this needs to be updated at least every 6 months.
- Emergency dental/medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays). An appointment card or letter from the G.P. / medical professional explaining the date and time of the appointment should be provided in order for this to be authorised. Please ask your G.P. or dentist to provide this for you so that it can be given to our Attendance Officer
- Day of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement
- Attending an interview for job, a new school or university (6th form only)

### **What is unacceptable?**

Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- No explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- The explanation offered is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, minding the house, etc);
- Family holidays (which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed by the school);
- Lateness: when the pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation. Persistent lateness of this type can result in a Penalty Notice being considered.
- If a pupil is feeling unwell, they must report to the Year Student Manager who will assess them and make a decision if the pupil needs to go home. **Pupils must not contact parents via their mobile phones and arrange for them to come and collect them without the knowledge of their Year Student Manager. Should this happen absences will be recorded as unauthorised absence.** It is the schools responsibility to contact parents should a pupil become unwell.

In addition, persistent illness will not be authorised unless a medical certificate or consultant letter is provided. In instances where the school has concerns, a referral to our EWO or Children's Services (Safeguarding) may be required.

### **What Medical evidence should I provide?**

At times, it is necessary for us to request medical evidence from parents to allow us to authorise their children's absence from school. Below is a guide to what we will accept as Medical Evidence.

1. GP/Dental appointment card with date of appointment attended.
2. Medical appointment letter.
3. Empty prescribed medication packet with dispensing label attached.
4. Copy of prescription.
5. White return page of prescription. (Repeat prescription request)
6. Medical letter from GP or medical professional advising student is unfit to attend school.
7. Medical certificate
8. Compliment slip from a Nurse at student's medical practice confirming they are unfit and are not able to attend school

### **What is persistent absence?**

A pupil is deemed a Persistent Absentee if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

### **Will the school contact me if the pupil is absent?**

The school operates a first day response to absences. We aim to text or telephone you if we have not heard from you. This is because we believe it is our responsibility to ensure pupil's safety as well as their regular school attendance.

If we are concerned about aspects of the pupil's attendance or punctuality, we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

### **Can we take family holidays during term-time?**

At Rainhill High school, we actively discourage Parents from taking their children out of school during term time for family holidays. The Legislation for authorising absence in term time states that holiday's will not be authorised 'except in exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher will consider your request and respond. You must write to inform us at least three weeks in advance, stating the reason why the holiday is to be taken in term time.

### **The Head teacher has been instructed by the government to only authorise family holidays in exceptional circumstances.**

In cases of unauthorised absence. Concerning such holidays, the school reserves the right to request that the Local Authority issue a fixed penalty notice.

### **Why should I not take my child on holiday during term time?**

Many parents and carers think it is okay to go on holiday during term time, yet this has a negative effect on their child's learning and ability to achieve. If your child goes on holiday during term time, this equates to the following.

- 10 days absence = 95% attendance
- 19 days absence = 90% attendance
- 29 days absence = 85% attendance
- 38 days absence = 80% attendance
- 47 days absence = 75% attendance

**Children with over 90 percent attendance are more likely to gain five or more A-C GCSEs (A\*-C) or equivalent qualifications.**

### **Levels of Attendance**

90% attendance = **Persistent Absentee (PA)** pupils are identified as persistent absentees if they miss 10% or more of their own possible sessions.

90% - 92% = **At Risk of becoming a Persistent Absentee (PA)** pupil. If your child's attendance reaches this level, you will have been made aware of this fact. You may have received home visits or letters from the school regarding this low level of attendance.

92% - 94% = **Needs Improvement** If your child's attendance reaches this level you need to engage with the school to introduce strategies to improve your child's attendance and to prevent further absences.

94% - 95% = **Satisfactory** 95% - 96% = **Good Attendance**. It is expected that most children should reach this level of attendance.



### **My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?**

It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. Contact your child's Year Student Manager immediately and discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems or family difficulties. A collaborative and supporting approach could make the difference.

## **A GUIDE FOR STAFF**

### **Responsibilities of the Form Tutor**

As the first point of contact with pupils, tutors are vital in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

#### **Form Tutors should:**

- Have a formal routine for registers being taken **accurately** each morning.
- Form tutors should only use the **/ or N** codes when doing the registers in the morning.
- Acquire explanations of absences required from pupils on their return from school.
- Make enquires about unexplained absences and follow up with pupil to ensure that an explanation has been formally given to the school.
- Look out for trends or patterns in a pupil's attendance and inform the Year Leader of any specific concerns.
- Inform the attendance Officer of any known future absences for pupils.
- Discuss lateness with pupils and parents (where possible) and the importance of punctuality emphasised.
- Acknowledge and encourage pupils on their return after holidays to catch up on the worked missed.

### **Responsibilities of Classroom Teachers**

The main duties of all classroom teachers are to ensure that registers are called at the start in their lesson so that pupil's attendance can be logged and tracked. Staff should welcome and value the presence of all pupils who attend their lesson.

#### **Classroom teachers should:**

- Have a formal routine for registers being taken **accurately at the start of each lesson**.
- Classroom Teachers should only use the **/ N or L** code.
- Set an example of punctuality by arriving for lessons on time.
- Follow up any absences or suspected truanting from their respective lessons.
- Deal with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly.
- Sanction pupils who arrive late to any lesson. If a pupil is more than 5 minutes for the start of any lesson, this must be recorded as late.
- Liaison with the Form Tutor and Year Student Manager regarding pupils whose attendance to their respective lessons is unsatisfactory.
- Maintain an accurate record of pupil's attendance to their respective lessons.

## Responsibilities of Year Student Manager

### Year Student Managers should:

- Make attendance a high profile issue regularly by visiting tutor groups.
- Monitor the attendance of the Year group (individual and target groups)
- Meet weekly with the School Attendance Officer to discuss individuals whose attendance is of concern.
- Investigate the cause of absence and plan strategies with tutors, parents or carers, EWO and other agencies
- Contact parents or carers regarding truanting
- Congratulate and reward pupils on good or improved attendance and punctuality as appropriate
- Arrange meetings with parents or carers regarding pupil's attendance
- Effectively liaise with other senior staff on attendance related matters
- Consult, when appropriate, with other agencies - Social Services, Child and Family
- Refer pupils to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer) if after support and strategies absences continue
- Co-ordinate and plan for return of long-term absences or truants, liaising with pupils, parents or carers, teachers, Attendance Officer, SENCO, EWO.

“The Government expects schools to promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents are expected to perform their **legal duty** by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly and arrive to school on time”.