



***Risby CEVC Primary School***

**Attendance Policy**

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**Introduction**

Risby CEVC Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises that this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. There is clear evidence of a link between attendance at school and high levels of attainment. Only by attending school every day the school is available and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

The whole school community – pupils, parents/carers, school staff and governors - have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance. There is an expectation that children will attend school every day the school is available

This policy is based on current government and Local Authority guidance/statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community know of the policy and have access to it.

We encourage all parents/ carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality and recognises that “parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly”

### **School’s roles and responsibilities**

All staff at Risby have a key role to play in supporting children and promoting excellent school attendance. Staff will work together to provide an environment in which all pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

The school recognises that there are clear links between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. The school recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence may potentially send a message that any reason for non-attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm

The school aims to create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

The Headteacher will lead the school’s work in promoting every day and improved attendance ensuring that the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Headteacher will ensure that support is put in place to deal with any attendance issues. The Headteacher will also meet with the Local Authority’s Education Welfare Officer and share information with them regarding any concerns about a pupil’s attendance. Information on attendance will be made readily available to staff, governors and parents/carers.

### **Parents’/ Carers’ responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring that children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents/carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child.) Parents/carers will be supported and encouraged Risby CEVC Primary School.

**Risby CEVC Primary School expects parents/carers:**

- To ensure that their child attends the school every day the school is available. If their child will be absent from school for any reason, they must notify Risby CEVC Primary School on every day of their child's absence on 01284 810367, or email admin@risbyprimary.com. This contact should be made by 9.10 am.
- To support their child's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- To understand that the school are unable to automatically agree requests for absence;
- To not condone unjustified absence from school.
- If requested, provide a note detailing the reason for absence and a medical note, if pertinent. This request will be at the school's discretion;
- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- Work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- Contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their child's lives. Risby CEVC Primary School will endeavour to support parents/carers to address their concerns.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

### **Pupils' Responsibilities**

- All pupils should be aware of the importance of school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher in the first instance.
- Pupils should attend all of their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents/carers to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late.

### **Governors' responsibilities**

- The governing body shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

### **Day to day procedures**

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Class teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers.

The register will be called promptly at **8.50am** and **1.00 pm**. The register will be called by the class teacher - or assigned responsible adult - and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

- The register will close at **9.10am** and **1.10pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will be marked LATE (code U) \* This absence will be categorised as an 'unauthorised absence' unless leave has been authorised by the school in advance or where a reason for absence is known and is accepted by the school as a legitimate reason for absence. Where a reason for absence is given to the school at a later stage, the register will be amended (if required) so that the original entry and the amendment/correction are distinguishable.
- The minutes of lateness will be logged on ARBOR.
- Children who are absent without a known reason will be raised with the office team via a phone call by 10.00 am.
- Any child signing out during the day must also do this via the main reception.
- The school recognises that, on rare occasions, buses/taxis may be delayed, and will adjust procedures accordingly.

*TIP: Please arrange routine medical appointment for your child out of school hours. Where this is not possible, we recommend requesting a mid-morning or mid- afternoon appointment, as this will not impact your child's attendance record*

### **Illness/Medical Absence:**

In addition to the above, parents/carers should be aware that:

- if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school is likely to request medical evidence for further absences.
- an automatic request for medical evidence may be instigated if the authenticity of an illness is in doubt; for example, in cases of any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.
- Failure to provide documentation on request will result in an unauthorised absence mark being recorded.

### **Absence for Holidays and Requests for Leave of Absence:**

- It is the expectation that parents/carers do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time to minimise the impact of missing education.
- The Headteacher cannot legally authorise any holiday during term time. Leave in term time will not be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional.
- Parents/carers requesting a holiday during term time must complete a Leave of Absence request form on the website/on paper (Appendix C, available in the school office) in advance of the intended trip.
- Leave of Absence Form will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher.
- If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without the school's authorisation, the child's absence will be marked as unauthorised; this may then impact upon overall attendance with further action being necessary (Appendix A).

### **Absence for Other Reasons:**

It is the parent's/carer's responsibility: -

- To inform the Headteacher in writing of the need for leave for circumstances which are known in advance; - To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden or unforeseen circumstances occur which prevent a child from attending school in order

that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register, and suitable support offered if needed.

#### **Unexplained Absence:**

- When a child is repeatedly absent with no satisfactory reason provided, or a child's attendance drops below 95%, contact will be made by the Headteacher.

#### **Unauthorised Absence:**

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence is shown on reports and ultimately school references.

The Governors have agreed to adopt the Government initiative of imposing Penalty Notices in cases of persistent unauthorised absence and lateness to registration:

- An immediate fixed penalty notice fine may be issued when ten or more unauthorised absence sessions have been recorded (amounting to 5 whole days in total) within any rolling 10-week period (see Appendix H);
- Penalty Notices are issued, on behalf of the School by Suffolk County Council, to the family home. The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.
- The Second time a Penalty Notice is issued for unauthorised absence the amount will be: £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.
- In circumstances where a Penalty Notice has been served with no impact or attendance patterns show exceptionally poor attendance the school may request a prosecution through Section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act. This will result in prosecution through the courts if there is no improvement in attendance. Prosecution can result in Criminal records and fines of up to £2,500. Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court may show on the parent's future DBS certificate due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'. (see Appendix H)

#### **Persistent Absenteeism and Severe Absenteeism**

- A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% (<90%) or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and further action will be necessary. This includes parents/carers attending a meeting with the Headteacher and anyone directly involved with their child to discuss forms of support, possible referrals and potential EWO involvement. We need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.
- A child who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as 'severely absent'. Children within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support

#### **School Strategy**

- The aim of the school's Attendance Strategy is to encourage good attendance. By intervening at an early stage, the school aims to avoid the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer and potential legal proceedings.

- The school implements a graduated response when addressing attendance. This is outlined in the school's Attendance Strategy document (Appendix A). The attendance team will meet regularly to monitor attendance, using ARBOR to aid analysis, and parents will receive notification when attendance has dropped through a significant threshold.
- Where students are struggling to improve attendance, the Headteacher aims to work closely with parents and children to support access to full time education. This includes looking at addressing any in-school barriers, and signposting/supporting access to any required services or outside agencies. Such agencies could include the Education Welfare Service, the School Nurse, GP, Children and Young People's Services.
- A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer if attendance does not improve. In this case, parents will be invited to a meeting by letter.

### **Appendices - in separate file 'Appendices for Attendance Policy'**

APPENDIX A – School offer

APPENDIX B – Request for leave form

APPENDIX C – Template of reply from Headteacher

APPENDIX D – EWO Fast Track Flow Chart

APPENDIX E – Attendance codes and definitions

APPENDIX F – Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)  
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

APPENDIX G - Suffolk County Council: Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance

Risby CEVC Primary School

### **Attendance: A guide for Parents/Carers**

#### **When does my child need to be in school?**

Your child should arrive at school in good time for registration. The morning register is called promptly at 8.50am and the afternoon register is taken at 1.10pm. Children may come into their designated door from 8.40am onwards. If your child arrives after 8.50am they **must** enter school via the main entrance and follow the procedure below.

#### **What happens if my child is late?**

- If your child arrives between 8.50am and 9.10am he/she will be marked late.
- If your child arrives after 9.10am he/she will be marked as absent (unauthorised) unless an acceptable reason is given.
- Pupils who arrive after the start of registration should report to the school office and parents/carers should provide a reason for their lateness. Where a child is late on more than one occasion in any 4 week period the Local Authority (Suffolk County Council) requires the school to write to the parents/carers of the child regarding their child's punctuality. If a pupil is consistently late a meeting will be arranged to discuss reasons/ difficulties for lateness.

#### **What should I do if my child cannot come to school?**

We would expect a parent/carer to telephone the school on the first day of absence and on every day of absence that follows. A message can be left on our telephone 01284 810367. If you do not contact us, we will try to telephone you. We may require a written explanation of your child's absence or a doctor's note on your child's return to school. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we may not authorise the absence and this will be shown on your child's end of year report. School staff, the Senior Leadership Team, School Governors and the Education Welfare Officer all monitor absence.

**Parent/ carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's attendance at school. You should be aware that the only defences to non-school attendance are:-**

- i) That the absences were with leave (this means that the school had agreed to them);
- ii) That your child was unable to attend because of sickness (you would have to be able to prove that

he/she had been medically unfit for school) or unavoidable cause;

iii) That the absences fell on days of religious observance in the religion to which you belong;

iv) That the nearest school for your child's age is more than 2 or 3 miles from your home and the Local Education Authority has failed to make transport available for him/her.

Except in the case of illness, permission for your child to miss school should be requested well in advance, giving full details of the proposed absence. By giving sufficient advance notice you will ensure that there is time available for the school to make any necessary further enquiries and for written notification of whether the absence will be authorised/unauthorised to be sent. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate or other medical evidence or to provide details of medical personnel to enable the school to make direct contact.

### **Can we take leave of absence during term-time?**

In line with government legislation, the school policy and Local Education Authority policy, all family holidays should be taken in school closure periods. A 'Leave of Absence' from school may be granted in exceptional circumstances where an application has been made by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides on the relevant form. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence if they consider there to be exceptional reasons for absence from school during term time. Applications must always be made in advance and evidence may be requested to support any application. Where an absence has been unauthorised by the school and the time off school is taken, the school has a duty to notify the Local Authority's Education Attendance Service.

### **What is a Penalty Notice and when would one be issued?**

The law says that parents/carers are committing an offence where their children (of compulsory school age) are absent from school without good reason.

From August 2024, the Department for Education (DfE) strengthened attendance regulations, which continue to apply. It is important that all parents and carers understand how attendance is managed and supported.

### **Requesting Time Away from School**

- Parents must **request permission in advance** for any planned absence, including holidays.
- Absence may only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances**, agreed by the Headteacher.
- **Holidays, leisure activities, or family celebrations during term time are not considered exceptional.**
- The previous '**H**' (**authorised holiday**) code no longer exists.
- Any absence without permission will be recorded as **unauthorised** and **may result in a Penalty Notice (fine)**.

### **Penalty Notices: National Framework**

- Schools are required to consider whether a Penalty Notice is appropriate when a pupil has **10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days)** within a **rolling 10-week period**.
- Each school day is made up of **two sessions** (morning and afternoon).

- The total may include **any unauthorised absence**, not only holidays, and can span terms or school years.

**Penalty Notice amounts:**

- £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days
- £160 per parent, per child if paid between 22–28 days
- A second notice within three years is £160 per parent
- A third offence within three years may result in court proceedings
- Failure to pay may lead to legal action

Further guidance can be found here:

**Working Together to Improve School Attendance**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

**What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?**

Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped for the school day. Show your child that you value his/her learning by asking them about their school day. Follow your home-school agreement and attend Parents Evenings and other information sessions at school to enable you to support your child’s learning and progress.

**My child is trying to avoid coming to school, what should I do?**

Contact your child’s teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, friendship problems, bullying or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child’s reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem looking at all appropriate support available. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child’s difficulties with an Education Welfare Officer. The Service is based at: West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. IP33 3YU.

**What will happen if my child’s attendance level falls?**

The school monitors the attendance rate of all children as requested by the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council. Where a child’s attendance rate is considered too low the Local Authority, Suffolk County Council, requires the school to take intervention action. The following actions will therefore be taken in accordance with Local Authority guidelines.

1. A letter may be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that their child’s attendance level requires improvement and the child’s attendance will continue to be closely monitored;
2. A letter may be sent home from the school to inform the parent(s)/carer(s) that the school are unable to authorise any further absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to the school;
3. A meeting may be arranged with the parent(s)/carer(s) at the school to discuss attendance and support that the school can offer;

4. Where attendance does not improve the Educational Welfare Officer will be contacted by the school.