**Ribchester St. Wilfrid’s C of E Primary School**

**WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

**Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child’s regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

**Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody’s responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

* Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
* Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
* Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
* Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;
* Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.
* Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

**Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

This includes:

* Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
* truancy before or during the school day
* absences which have never been properly explained
* 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
* days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school will request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school it is better to speak to school to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

**Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 15% or more of their schooling across the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be given priority consideration, and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes, parenting contracts and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

All Persistent Absenteeism cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority School Attendance Team.

**Absence Procedures:**

**If your child is absent you must:**

* Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception

**If your child is absent we will:**

* Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
* Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher if absences persist;
* Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Attendance Team where appropriate as per Local Authority protocol.

**Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don’t then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

**Roles and Responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:**

**Parents:**

* Ensure children attend regularly and punctually
* Contact school on 1st day of absence
* Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using form
* Attendance at meetings in school
* Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

**Pupils:**

* Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime
* Attend school/registration punctually
* Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance
* Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

**Headteacher:**

* Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school
* Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters
* Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities
* Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school confirms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance
* Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision
* Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision making process
* Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance, following Absence Flowcharts 1, 2 and 3 (see appendix), and using Parenting Contracts where appropriate

**Designated Staff:**

* First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided
* Input and update the attendance registers
* Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups
* Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents – termly

**All School Staff:**

* Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment
* Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum
* Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns
* To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
* To see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff
* Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

**Governors**

* Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly
* Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy
* Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures
* Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

**In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance / Punctuality:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

* Meetings in school between parents, pupils, staff and the Headteacher;
* Parenting contracts;
* Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority School Attendance Team)
* Attendance panels
* Penalty notices

**The Local Authority School Attendance Team:**

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST). They will try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child’s attendance have failed, and unauthorised absences persist the case may be referred to the Court Officers, who can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

**Leave in Term Time:**

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.

**There is NO automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time.**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, head teachers no longer have the discretion to authorise leave in term time to allow pupils to go on holiday.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

* a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
* the head teacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Full details of our policy and procedures are available from the school, but it is important that you understand that 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**.

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

**Additional Factors for Consideration:**

In considering the request we will also look at various factors such as:

* Where a pupil’s attendance rate is already below 95% or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave.
* The timing of the request:
	+ Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
* When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
	+ - Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
* Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs, or any other public examinations/screenings.
* When a pupil’s attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
	+ - Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
* Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year
	+ - Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
		- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
		- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

A Penalty Notice will be applied if attendance is below 95% and any of the other factors above is encountered.

In certain circumstances, parents risk losing their child's place on the school roll if the pupil does not return to school on the agreed return date. Readmission cannot be guaranteed.
The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013)

**Religious Absence:**

The school will authorise one day 'leave' (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance.

**Penalty Notices:**

Penalty notices can be used for unauthorised absence; including unauthorised holidays. The government has increased the amount payable for penalty notices, per parent, per child and reduced the time given to pay a penalty notice:

From 1 September 2013, the timescales for payment of penalty notices will be:

£60 payable within 21 days

£120 payable within 28 days

**Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence.

 Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

**How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at **9:00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

**Registration:**

Morning Registration is between 9:00am and 9.05am

Afternoon Registration is between 1.00pm and 1.05pm

Each class teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed promptly to avoid discrepancies between classes. The class teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office by 9.05am / 1.05pm.

The school office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register and for inputting absence codes on a weekly basis.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

**Late Registration:**

School gates are locked at 9.00am and re-opened for parents for 3.15pm. Pupils requiring admittance to the school after locking up time must go to the front door and request entry via the school office.

The school office is responsible for maintaining a signing in/out book. This must contain details of name, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/absence and name of supervising adult (for signing out). After 9.00am / 1.00pm an entry must be placed in the signing in book before a late pupil is admitted.

**Signing Out:**

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted leave during the school day.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete and sign the school signing out book

**Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning:**

The Governors have determined that the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the Local Authority and DfE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The School Attendance Lead (Headteacher) will review the attendance records at least half termly to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern and that codes are being applied consistently. In addition, the Headteacher will also address specific concerns as they arise.

The Headteacher is required to review this Whole School Attendance Policy and Procedure Framework annually and to report on attendance matters to the Governors termly. The Governors will also review the Attendance Policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the school circumstances.

If there is a trend of worsening attendance in a particular group of pupils, discussions should be held with the School Attendance Lead to identify Action Plans to reverse the trend. It should also be reported to the Governors at the next full Governor’s meeting.

**Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site:**

When pupils are **dual registered,** their registration status will be altered to acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend our school the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the Main School we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful.

**School Targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 97**%** attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child’s attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the area.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

**Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure:**

It is important that the School’s Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

* The Attendance Policy will be placed on the School Website together with a summary of the procedure for requesting absence and signing in and out of school.
* Details of the Policy and the procedure for requesting absence in term time, and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package, talks to new parents.
* Reference to the School Attendance Policy regarding leave during term time is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year.
* Summary of Responsibilities under the Attendance Policy will be contained in the Home/School Agreement.
* Staff responsibilities will be contained in the Staff Handbook
* The Headteacher will ensure that staff receive training regarding their responsibilities in relation to the Attendance Policy and Procedures.
* The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern at least annually to the Governors.
* Attendance and punctuality will be included in newsletters on a regular basis.
* Attendance will be reported to parents termly via attendance traffic light letters and annually via the end of year report which will include a certificate of attendance, where applicable.

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Date of Policy: 4th July 2013