

Redfield Edge Primary School

'Striving to be the best version of ourselves'



Attendance Policy

Date reviewed	July 2023	Next review	July 2024
Policy type	Non-statutory	Review frequency	Annual
Responsibility	Full Governing Body		
Date approved by Committee: Not applicable			
Signed (Chair of FGB)	Name (Chair of FGB) David Taylor	Signed (Head Teacher) <i>L Robinson</i>	Name (Head Teacher) Lisa Robinson
Ratified by FGB	Signed (Chair of Governors) <i>D Taylor</i>	Name (Chair of Governor) David Taylor	

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Part 1: EIA Screening

Policies, Procedures or Practices		Date	
EIA CARRIED OUT BY:		EIA APPROVED BY:	

Groups that may be affected:

Are there any concerns that the policy could have a different impact on any of the following groups? (please tick the relevant boxes)	Existing or potential adverse impact	Existing or potential for positive impact
Age (young people, the elderly: issues surrounding protection and welfare, recruitment, training, pay, promotion)		x
Disability (physical and mental disability, learning difficulties; issues surrounding access to buildings, curriculum and communication).		x
Gender Reassignment (transsexual)		x
Marriage and civil partnership		x
Pregnancy and maternity		x
Racial Groups (consider: language, culture, ethnicity including gypsy/traveler groups and asylum seekers)		x
Religion or belief (practices of worship, religious or cultural observance, including non-belief)		x
Gender (male, female)		x
Sexual orientation (gay, lesbian, bisexual; actual or perceived)		x

Any adverse impacts are explored in a Full Impact Assessment.

The aim of this document is to explain the responsibilities for you as parents/carers to ensure your child attends school regularly and sets out in return what Redfield Edge Primary will do.

Vision Statement

In order to deliver our Vision Statement, Redfield Edge Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates of children who are well enough to come to school in order to ensure that all students are able to take full advantage of the learning and social experiences available to them.

Rationale

It is widely recognised that setting good attendance patterns from an early age will also help your child later on and into adult life; it is a worthy learning point on its own. Being punctual is also vital. Arriving late at school can be very disruptive for your child, the teacher and the other children in the class.

Encouraging regular attendance, high levels of punctuality and reducing persistent absence is an integral part of our drive to:

- Promote all children's welfare
- Ensure that every child has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Ensure that children maximise their full potential
- Equip children with the skills and knowledge needed, enabling them to have access to the widest possible range of opportunities

Rights and Responsibilities

Improving attendance at Redfield Edge Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – pupils, parents, staff and Governors. We all follow what is asked of us by the Government and this can be accessed here:

Pupils

Pupils should attend school every day unless prevented from doing so due to circumstances which the school would normally authorise. This is classed as regular attendance. To be clear, regular attendance is that of statutory attendance, where pupils of school age are expected to attend school daily unless they are prevented from doing so in ways described in more detail in the Authorised / Unauthorised section. Pupils must arrive at school punctually; 9.00 a.m. This is the latest time we would expect a child to arrive for registration. We open the school gates at 8.45 a.m. and most children join their class at this time.

Parents/Carers

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. Children who are over tired, feeling ill or have very recently experienced vomiting, diarrhoea etc. are unlikely to concentrate fully in the classroom or be a danger to others. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, or is late, parents are required to notify the

school as soon as possible – by phone call or in writing (via email). A pupil's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is provided by the parent. Parents will be informed the same day of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance – often this is via email or phone call. The Headteacher will investigate if a child's attendance is a cause for concern. **Parents should avoid making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours and no holidays should be taken during term times.**

- If a child is unwell, a telephone message should be left on **01454 867165 as early as possible and no later than 9.30 a.m.** on the first day of absence stating the reason the child cannot attend school.
- Absence which remains unauthorised will be reported to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority.
- Parents and carers should, where ever possible, make all medical appointments outside of school hours. Notification of absence for unavoidable medical appointments must be made in advance of the appointment by telephone or email.
- Parents or carers must, when requested, provide proof, such as an appointment letter/card when absences require further justification.
- Parents or carers should be aware that a letter or phone call does not in itself authorise the absence. Only the school's acceptance of the explanation will authorise the absence.
- Parents or carers must take all reasonable steps to ensure that their child arrives punctually to school every day. If punctuality problems are of a persistent nature, parents or carers are encouraged to work in partnership with the school to improve the situation.

School

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will promptly investigate all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents and the Education Welfare Service (EWS). Staff will respond to all absenteeism swiftly and consistently.

The Governing body receive regular statistics regarding authorised, unauthorised attendance and will report accordingly to parents. Governors fully support the school in its efforts to minimise absenteeism.

Regular attendance at school is essential for continuity in learning, enabling each child to reach his/her potential.

Statutory Framework – the law

The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised (see 'Authorised/Unauthorised Absence'). All absences are tracked by the school and the Local Authority and once

unauthorised absences go above a certain limit the process of legal intervention begins, which is why it is important that the school is notified of an absence as soon as possible and with a valid reason.

Registration

Attendance Registers will be called at 9.10 a.m. and by 1.20 p.m. and will be marked on our computerised system known as SIMs. Registers will be officially closed in the office at 9.30 a.m., anyone arriving after this time will be classified as late after the register has closed.

The school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will inspect registers on each visit. The Headteacher will inspect all registers each half term in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed; totals are being calculated and entered, and so on, and the registers will be monitored weekly by the attendance team.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The final decision and authorisation of absence rests with the Headteacher with the backing of and on behalf of the Governors. The Education Welfare Officer will be consulted when a doubt arises.

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- The pupil was ill 'or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause'
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for major religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs
- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA
- The pupil is the child of traveller parents and are subject to specific special circumstances linked to this, which have been discussed with the school
- There is a family bereavement
- The pupil is attending an interview for a place at another school
- The pupil is participating in an approved public performance
- Circumstances when the school is declared closed by the Governing body

Pupils away from school for the following reasons can be regarded as present for statistical purposes.

- The pupil is attending an approved off site educational activity or is receiving special off site tuition,
- The pupil is attending a Pupil Referral Unit.

Absence will be **unauthorised** if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The pupil is shopping with a parent/relative during school hours
- The pupil is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions (eg, a birthday)
- The pupil is visiting relatives
- The pupil is away from school due to a parent or sibling illness

- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday

Holidays

The Department of Education's guidance strongly encourages schools to take a much firmer stance on absence authorised in term times. OFSTED also judge a school in part on its level of absence, authorised and unauthorised alike. **Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday.**

Redfield Edge Primary School always shares terms dates in advance of the term, we publish them on our website and remind you of them in the school newsletters. Advance dates for school terms are always published on the South Gloucestershire website but these will not show any additional training days (INSET days), and this information is shared again in the above ways. <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/> It is important that parents and carers book holidays during the stated holiday period.

Procedures for Following up Absence

- If a pupil is absent without explanation school will attempt to contact the parents on the same day by telephone or letter, whenever possible,
- If a pupil is persistently (or intermittently) absent without adequate explanation, the Headteacher will write to the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school,
- If a pupil returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by note is unsatisfactory, the Headteacher will write to the parents,
- If a pupil is persistently absent or late and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, a Common Assessment Form CAF will be completed and monitored within a defined, usually 6 week period.
- If the situation still does not improve, the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer or it may be picked up by said officer on their visits,

Penalty notices

Penalty Notices were introduced under Section 23 (1) of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to address unauthorised absence from school. It is a fine issued by South Gloucestershire Council to parents/carers of a child who has failed to attend school regularly and whose absence is unauthorised. It does not require the parent to attend court but is an alternative to prosecution in the magistrate's court. Parents/carers who pay the fine in full within the time limit cannot later be prosecuted for the offence to which the Penalty Notice relates (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

Why have Penalty Notices been introduced?

Reducing absence from school is a key priority of the Government and Local Authority because missing school may limit a pupil's attainment, disrupt school routines and the learning of others, and can leave a pupil vulnerable to anti social behaviour and youth crime.

When might a Penalty Notice be issued?

A Penalty Notice may be issued to a parent in one or more of the following circumstances where more than 10 sessions of absence are recorded in 7 school weeks (ie 70 sessions). There are 2 sessions per day, 1 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon:

1. Where unauthorised absences are recorded
2. Where more than 10 sessions of unauthorised holiday are recorded and;
 - a) The parents has not informed the school; or
 - b) The leave was not authorised; or
 - c) The child did not return on the agreed date
3. Where the child is persistently late arriving at school after registers have closed
4. Where a combination of more than 10 sessions of (a) to (c) above have been recorded.

How much is the fine?

The fine is £60 (per parent, per child) if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice; rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

For example a 2 parent family taking 2 children out of school for an unauthorised holiday would be liable for a total of £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 between 21 and 28 days.

The payment must be made in full – part payments will not be accepted. Details of how to pay are printed on the Penalty Notice. The school does not benefit from this fine, the funds go to the Local Authority. If you do not pay the fine after 28 days you may be prosecuted for your child's absence from school.

School attendance meetings

For children whose attendance and lateness consistently falls below a satisfactory level and that do not fall within the remit of the penalty notices, parents or carers and children will be invited to attend a school attendance meeting where, if appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer will also attend. These meetings provide a useful opportunity to review the reasons for absence and lateness and agree actions that will support the children in making the necessary improvements. These plans set specific targets for attendance and may include the school requesting evidence in support of a child's high level of absence, such as, appointment cards as well as parents or carers providing written permission for the school to contact professions in the Health Service by signing a medical consent form. The school may decide to not authorise any absences unless proof of illness or medical consent is provided. A formal referral to the school's Education Welfare Officer may be made at this stage.

School attendance panels

For any child whose attendance continues to fall below a satisfactory level with no good reason, or for a serious infringement of the guidance outlined above, a meeting will be held in school. This is a more formal meeting which consists of school members of staff, Governors and possibly the EWO. The aim is to set out the parent's or carer's

responsibilities in ensuring regular attendance to avoid the possibility of legal action. This is the first stage of formal legal proceedings for unsatisfactory attendance at school.

External agencies

If the outlined steps have been taken and attendance has not improved, the school has the right to request parents and school enter into a CAF, which is a significant and formal document, detailed and far reaching, submitted to the Local Authority via First Point, and strictly monitored within a short time frame.

When support has failed to improve attendance, the parent/carer can be deemed to have committed an offence and this is when external agencies become more heavily involved. These powers range from supporting the pupil back into school following prolonged, intermittent or sustained absence, issuing Penalty Notices and the power to prosecute. The term prosecution covers a gradient of measures, ranging from a fine up to £1000 under Section 444 (1) and up to £2,500 under section 444 (1A) per child, and per parent, a deferred sentence and a range of community sentences. In serious cases under Section 444(1A) a custodial sentence could be imposed on the parent/carer. The court may impose a Parenting Order. Such action is considered to be very much a 'last resort' when all attempts to increase attendance have been unsuccessful.

Redfield Edge Primary would like to stress that we aim to positively maintain a pupil's attendance and will work with parents and carers to achieve this. As with all aspects of school, this is a two way process and Redfield Edge Primary actively seek out an open dialogue with parents and carers where attendance issues may arise and strive to resolve them quickly and satisfactorily for all parties.

Penalty notices may be requested by the Headteacher and issued to both parents and carers regarding each of their children if more than 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accumulates within a 7 week period (excluding school holidays). A session is a morning or afternoon.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- As a school, we value and promote attendance, with classes celebrating good attendance as well as high attendance being celebrated in a whole school setting.
- Redfield Edge Primary's ethos shows that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.
- Attendance data will be regularly collected and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement and support and inform policy/practice.
- The attendance of 'looked after' pupils and pupils on the Child Protection Register are monitored in a specific way in alignment with statutory requirements.

- Pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern will be set targets for improvement in consultation with parents.
- The Headteacher will, when appropriate liaise with other agencies, Education Psychology Service, Social Services, CAMHs etc. – when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- The Headteacher will have regular meetings with the school's Education Welfare Officer in order to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing attendance difficulties.

We always encourage parents or carers to work in partnership with the school at all times and not to collude with their child's absence from school. If a child is experiencing problems attending, it is much better for the school to know straightaway so that we can offer our support to you and them.

Whenever the school is unable to contact a parent/carer because of inaccurate/out dated contact details the parent/carer will be informed and new contact details requested. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to keep the school informed of all changes to contact details.