



Attendance Policy

Date for renewal/updates/review	October 2024
Named person responsible for monitoring	Assistant Headteacher, Attendance
Agreed by Governing Body	October 2021

Linked Policies: Safeguarding; Behaviour for Learning

Linked Guidance: DfE School attendance 2020 and its Covid-19 Addendums

Aims and Purpose

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential.

Sir William Ramsay School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Sir William Ramsay School values all students. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Sir William Ramsay School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and curriculum. This policy also considers the Equalities Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parent/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age 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.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parent/carers secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the student was:

- present
- absent
- present at an approved educational activity
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will follow up absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether absence is authorised or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

Categorising Absence

Where students of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parent/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received.

Parent/carers should advise the school by telephone, text or email on each day of absence and provide the school with the reason and expected date of return.

Absence will be categorised as follows: -

Illness: Parent/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parent/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, students should attend school for part of the day. Parent/carers should show the appointment card to the school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: Parents/carers who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Head. Retrospective requests will not be considered. Only in exceptional circumstances does the Head have authority to authorise absence during term time. Examples of this include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent/carer or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
3. The death or terminal illness of a close relative to the family.
4. To attend a funeral of a close relative.
5. Sitting an exam in a musical instrument, dance or other activity.
6. Taking part in an approved and supervised sporting activity.
7. Taking part in approved and supervised Cadet Camps.

8. Religious observance if recognised by the parent/carer's religious body. No more than one day for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than two days in total in any academic year.

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The Support and Intervention Team will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8.35 am. Students arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late. The register will close at 9.15 am. Students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as absent. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, students must immediately report to the Attendance Officer to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the student has arrived late after the registers close without justifiable and exceptional cause.

Unauthorised Absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parent/carers have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A student's/family member's birthday
- Caring for siblings
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- 'School Refusing'
- 'Couldn't get up'
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken in term time without the authorisation of school
- Funerals of non-close relatives or friends.

Leave of Absence and Holidays in Term Time: Parent/Carers do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parent/carers should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days, they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parent/Carers wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request, before arrangements are made and at least 4 weeks before the leave is due to commence, stating the exceptional reasons. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. Each request will be considered individually.

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response by email. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the student is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**.

In such cases the school may refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice.

Leave of absence for holiday will not be agreed for more than five consecutive school days and if on more than one occasion in the school year. It will be agreed if it means that a student will miss an external exam or an assessment which is part of the final grade of an external qualification.

Study Leave: Study leave may be granted for Year 11 students approaching GCSE examinations. School will offer in-school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels. Parent/carers will be advised of the dates and conditions as this is variable each academic year.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parent/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parent/carers of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Sir William Ramsay School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the student must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the student's school place at Sir William Ramsay School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Sir William Ramsay School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parent/carers must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen;
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Sir William Ramsay School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered students at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other student.

Deletions from the Register

In accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, students will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The Student has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred, and procedures have been completed
- Death of a student
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent/carer informs the school in writing that the student is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the student
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before the ending of compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed, and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the student
- A student has left the school, but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the student

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Sir William Ramsay School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children *Missing Education Protocol* when a student's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities

Sir William Ramsay School believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parent/carers, students and the wider school community.

School staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parent/carers
- Form positive relationships with students and parent/carers

- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all students to attend and to achieve
- Reward excellent attendance
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support students and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the Local Authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

Expectations that parent/carers will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations.
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties.
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bedtimes, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before.
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family.
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time.

Using Attendance Data

All students' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with other agencies if a student's attendance is a cause for concern.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Sir William Ramsay School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the GDPR requirements.

Support Systems

Sir William Ramsay School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parent/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation or the student being a child carer. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Sir William Ramsay School also recognise that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee students and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parent/carers and students
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parent/carers and students.

Legal Sanctions

Where attendance is irregular Sir William Ramsay School will notify the child's parent/carers and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

If attendance remains irregular Sir William Ramsay School will invite parent/carers to attend a Parent/Carer Contract Meeting (PCM).

Sir William Ramsay School will notify the Buckinghamshire Council of the irregular attendance, who may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parent/Carer Contracts: (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parent/carers contract is a voluntary agreement between the school, the parent/carers and child, it can also be extended to include any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The Contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The Contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices: (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- Parent/Carers are not engaging with the school to improve their child's attendance.
- A student has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent/carer the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carer/carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parent/carers realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.