

Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

Rydal Penrhos is committed to providing a positive and supportive ethos within which all pupils feel valued and respected, and in the context of which they understand the importance of the fullest attendance. The School recognises that strong attendance and punctuality are key factors in ensuring that the pupils in its care reach their potential.

The most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes amongst our pupils towards School; to this end, every endeavour is made to make the School a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. It is hoped that the rich, engaging curriculum and the focus upon developing positive and respectful relationships alongside exceptional care within the community will encourage full attendance and a desire to participate fully in School life.

A high priority is accorded to promoting the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents / carers and pupils; the School recognises that parents / carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong and supportive home-School links as well as effective communication systems. Thus a partnership is established in support of individual pupils whenever there is concern about attendance, for it is essential to resolve any problems as quickly as possible.

STATUTORY DUTY OF PARENTS / CARERS

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, the parent / carer has a legal responsibility to ensure that his or her child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude, and that it caters for any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be by regular attendance at school, by means of alternative provision, or by elective home education as laid on by the parent / carer.

Parents / carers have a very significant role to play in supporting their children's education. Ultimately, all those with parental / carer responsibility are accountable for the regular and punctual attendance of the children in their care.

STATUTORY DUTY OF SCHOOLS

Schools are required under the Education (Pupil Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2010 to take an attendance register twice a day, namely at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session, and this register will indicate whether any absence was 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. The accuracy of the register is important in support of any statutory interventions that may be required.

Absence can be authorised by the School, but not by parents / carers. The School has to consider any absence as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for that absence has been received.

CATEGORISING ABSENCE

Authorised absence:

An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil is away from School for a legitimate reason and the School has received notification from a parent / carer; for example, if a child has been unwell, the parent / carer will write a note, send an email or telephone the School to explain the absence. In this instance, there may be occasions when the School requests written evidence that an appointment has been made and attended.

Absence will be authorised by the School if it is for the following reasons: sickness, unavoidable medical / dental appointments, days of religious observance, exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement, severe weather conditions preventing pupils from getting to School, etc..

Unauthorised absence:

An absence is noted as unauthorised when a child is absent without the permission of the School or without good reason; absence from School will not be authorised for reasons such as shopping, haircuts, missing the bus, sleeping late, etc..

Repeated or unexplained absence:

Any pupil whose attendance is continually low or unexplained will be monitored closely. Letters are sent out to parents / carers of pupils whose attendance is a cause for concern, or a meeting with a representative of the School may be requested. If the pupil's attendance does not subsequently improve, agencies such as the Education Welfare Officer and / or healthcare and safeguarding professionals may be involved so as to provide support.

Parents / carers may be asked to provide medical evidence in instances of repeated or long-term absences due to reported illness; this will usually be in the form of an appointment card, a prescription or a doctor's letter.

Long-term absence:

When a pupil has an illness that causes absence from school for more than five days, the School will do all it can to send material home so that he or she can keep up with his or her School work.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

Parents / carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw their child from School for any event which may take place during term time, including family holidays. However, it is understood that there are circumstances in which a parent / carer may legitimately require leave of absence for his or her child; in such instances, parents / carers should submit a written request to the Deputy Head at the Senior School, or to the Head of the Prep School. This request must be received at least for weeks in advance of departure unless exceptional circumstances prevent this (such as attendance at a funeral). Failure to submit a request will result in the absence being unauthorised, and this may ultimately result in legal action against the parent.

Authorisation of absence is ultimately at the discretion of the Head, but each case will be scrutinised individually and authorisation given based upon the following criteria:

- the pupil's attendance record to date;
- the pupil's punctuality record;
- the timing of the requested leave (e.g. it does not fall within the window of a national testing period);
- the length and purpose of the holiday;
- the duration of the holiday and its impact upon the continuity of the pupil's learning;
- the circumstances of the family and the wishes of parents / carers.

Welsh Assembly guidance states:

“In term-time, parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils for holidays and authorisation ultimately remains at the discretion of the Head, but this holiday must not exceed 10 days in any academic year.” Exceptional circumstances remain at the discretion of the Head (The Education [Pupil Registration] [Wales] Regulations 2010).

Exceptional circumstances ultimately remain at the discretion of the Head and may involve the following:

- families of serving armed forces personnel;
- the parents of a child experiencing a life-limiting illness;
- a family that has suffered acute trauma;
- attendance at a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family;
- any other circumstance that is viewed as being exceptional.

Rydal Penrhos acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside School holiday periods or weekends, and this may necessitate the consideration of authorised absence or special leave for reasons of religious observance.

Should the Head’s decision be not to agree to the request, then the holiday will be recorded in the register as an unauthorised absence.

PUNCTUALITY & LATENESS

Whilst the School realises that there many exceptional factors which may cause lateness, regular or persistent lateness to School is not acceptable. If pupils miss the start of the school day, they can miss out on important contact time with their form tutor and tutor group during which vital information and news for the day is disseminated. They may also arrive once lesson introductions have taken place, and these provide an important context to the rest of the lesson. Pupils arriving late to class can also disturb the flow of lessons and furthermore the individual may find it embarrassing, this in turn encouraging further absence.

Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help the School’s pupils as they progress through their life at Rydal Penrhos and move on into the wider world.

Pupils who are consistently late will also be monitored closely and the same procedures followed as for those whose attendance is a concern. It must be emphasised that late arrival to School has to be considered an unauthorised absence unless good reasons have been provided to the contrary.

RIGHTS, ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The School will:

- promote a culture which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;
- actively promote and encourage full attendance on the part of all pupils;
- ensure that staff are aware of the registration procedures and their responsibilities in relation to registering attendance accurately (and raising any concerns about a pupil’s attendance or punctuality);
- address with parents / carers the importance of contacting the School early on the first day of any absence;
- where there is any cause for concern, consult with pupils and their parents / carers on individual attendance issues as well as attendance targets;
- endeavour to make the best provision it can for those children who, for whatever legitimate reason, are prevented from coming to School;
- support pupils in returning to School after an extended period of absence;
- ensure that an annual evaluation of the attendance policy and procedures takes place by the Senior Leadership Team and School Governors.

Form Tutors will:

- be responsible for monitoring the attendance of pupils in their form groups;
- follow up absences in the appropriate way, by checking that the absence has been reported by parents / carers;
- notify the relevant Head of School or Key Stage (Years 7-9 KS3; Y10 & 11 KS4; Year 12 & 13 KS5), Deputy Head – Pupils in the Senior School, or Head of Prep School, when a pupil's absence rate gives rise for concern.

Governors will:

- monitor attendance and the School's policy and procedures in relation to this document;
- support the School with intervention and action plans if required;
- receive termly reports on attendance and review this policy annually;
- examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that the School's attendance figures are as high as they should be.

Parents / carers should:

- familiarise themselves with the School's Attendance Policy;
- ensure their child attends School regularly and punctually;
- contact the School on the first day of their child's absence and give the reason for that absence – 'unwell / not well' does not constitute adequate explanation;
- maintain contact with the School during any continued absence;
- provide a note or medical documentation as requested if their child has been absent (even if a telephone call has been made), a process which can be carried out via email;
- contact the School at an early stage if problems with their child's attendance are emerging;
- support the School in intervention and action plans, including attending meetings when requested;
- not book holidays or plan other leisure activities on School days unless this is exceptional, and permission from the Deputy Head of the Senior School or the Head of the Prep School (as appropriate) has been sought at least four weeks in advance and has been authorised accordingly.

Pupils must:

- attend school regularly and punctually;
- try to achieve 100% attendance;
- participate fully when action plans to improve their attendance are put into place;
- *report to Reception to sign in / out if arriving or leaving at any time during the School day which falls outside the School's morning registration period. (See footnote for Covid-19 amendments to procedures.)

REGISTRATION & ABSENCE PROCEDURES

These procedures operate as follows:

- the School day begins at 8.30am for all classes with registration;
 - *pupils arriving after 8.30am should be signed in at the Reception Desk (in person for Senior Pupils or by their parents for Prep School pupils) in order that the School can ensure that the electronic registration system is completed accurately; (*See footnote for Covid-19 amendments to procedures for senior pupils.*)
 - if pupils arrive after the close of registration at 8.45am, their attendance will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the session unless a legitimate reason for lateness has been provided;
- *pupils leaving during the School day must pass through School Reception and be signed out in the book available (by their parent / carer, if in the Prep School). This is essential both for security and for health and safety reasons; (*See footnote for Covid-19 amendments to procedures for senior pupils.*)
- on the first day and each subsequent day of absence from School, parents / carers must telephone or email the School Reception Office (prep@rydalpenrhos.com for the Prep School, or info@rydalpenrhos.com for Senior School pupils) by 9.30am, and report the reason for the absence. This is extremely important as concerns may be raised about a pupil's whereabouts if the School has not been informed. A member of the office staff will record the absence and the reason for it on the School's electronic registration system;
- if notification of absence has not been received by 9.30am, the School will contact parents / carers to check on the child's whereabouts and safety;
- attendance will be analysed weekly by the members of staff responsible for pastoral care in the different sections of the School;
- if an absence remains unexplained after three days, a letter will be sent home to invite parents / carers into School to assess the problem and to develop an action plan, such as curriculum modification, ALN investigations, bullying issues, referral to other agencies or professionals;
- after ten days of unexplained absence, a referral will be made to the local Education Welfare Officer (EWO);
- for regular or longer-term absence greater than two weeks, an individual pupil re-integration plan will be adopted to support the pupil;
- upon return to School after any period of absence, parents / carers should send a letter or an email to the School to confirm the reason for their child's absence. This is essential information for the School registers and is a legal requirement;
- requests to attend dental or hospital appointments which cannot be made out of School hours should be sent by email to the Reception Office, for the attention of the child's Form Tutor, to prep@rydalpenrhos.com (for the Prep School) or info@rydalpenrhos.com (for Senior School pupils);
- permission for absence for reasons other than illness must be requested in writing to the Deputy Head of Senior School, Mrs Alison Hind (AHind@rydalpenrhos.com) or to the Head of Prep School, Mrs Lucy Davies (LDavies@rydalpenrhos.com). Parents / carers are asked to exercise restraint when requesting such leave, as continuity of attendance is important for their child's academic progress and social development;
- if there is any doubt as to the whereabouts of a pupil, the Form Tutor (or any member of staff who notes the absence) must take immediate action by notifying Reception. The School will then make contact straight away with the parent / carer in order to check on the safety of the child. If an unregistered absence is noted at any other point during the School day, the procedures for a 'Missing Pupil' will be followed.

FURTHER SUPPORT

Further support services are available, namely:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services;
- Conwy Children and Families Services (Social Services);
- the local Education Welfare Officer.

MONITORING, REVIEW & CIRCULATION

Registration guidance will be given to all regular and supply staff working in the School.

Families will be informed of the Attendance Policy and procedures via the School website, the School induction documents, and by means of newsletters.

The School will keep attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

This policy is subject to review on an annual basis by the Senior Leadership Team and the Designated Safeguarding Governors, and it will also be discussed with staff. However, it may require earlier revision in the light of any regulatory change which may come into force in the interim.

Last reviewed by ARH & LD:	December 2020
Approved by Safeguarding Governors (AWA, DMC):	
Approved by Principal (JWA) & Chair of Governors (JBA):	
Next review:	December 2021

FOOTNOTE: REVISIONS MADE IN SEPTEMBER 2020 IN RESPECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ATTENDANCE & LOGGING

With effect from the official start of term in September 2020, all pupils are expected to attend School unless they are:

- unable to return to Wales due to travel restrictions;
- quarantining on government guidance upon their return from abroad;
- self-isolating due to Covid-19 symptoms, waiting for a test result, or have received of a positive blood test (pertaining to the pupil or to another other member of the household);
- too unwell to attend school for other reasons.

All absence is logged by the School, and under the Welsh Government's guidance and the 'Test, Trace, Protect' strategy, all absence on the basis of the final point above is additionally logged separately so as to inform any investigation into contact tracing, should that be required.

***LATE ARRIVAL (SENIOR SCHOOL PUPILS ONLY)**

Whilst operating in bubbles due to Covid-19, pupils arriving late should report directly to their Form Tutor (using their designated entrance to the School) or to the teacher of their timetabled session on arrival. They should ask their teacher to register them and to alert Reception as to their presence.)

***EARLY DEPARTURE (SENIOR SCHOOL PUPILS ONLY)**

Pupils must register their departure with the member of staff who is responsible for them at the time of leaving, and must depart via their designated exit. The School should have been notified in advance as to the request to leave early.