

Richard Lander School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy



Policy Effective from: September 2024

Responsibility: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/ School based Education Welfare Officer/ Attendance officers/ Governing Body

Reviewed and monitored by: Head/Assistant Head/Deputy Head/ School based Education Welfare Officer (EWO)/ Peninsula education / Attendance officers/ Governing Body

Review Date: September 2025

Rationale

Regular attendance and excellent punctuality are the foundations for academic achievement and personal development. This helps students fully access their education and wider opportunities offered by the school. Attendance and punctuality are also linked to students' well-being and safety.

Guiding Principles

We are committed to ensuring that all students benefit from the opportunities available at Richard Lander School. Our expectation is that students arrive on time and attend school regularly. Where this expectation is not met, we will identify and seek to address those barriers.

Responsibilities

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility for ensuring that their children attend school punctually and regularly so they can benefit from a valuable education.

The school has a legal responsibility for maintaining school registers. These are undertaken twice daily. The school also has a responsibility for reporting absences to the Local Authority.

The school also has a safeguarding responsibility and this links to good punctuality and attendance.

Tutors will share attendance information with students during designated tutor periods focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.

Pastoral Managers will promote high attendance and punctuality through individual meetings with students and parents, reinforcing the link between good attendance and attainment and well-being.

Assistant Headteachers (KS3 & 4) will also promote high attendance and punctuality through assemblies and again, through meetings with students and communicating with parents/carers where appropriate.

The attendance team, including the school's Attendance Officers and the school based EWO may address attendance matters (either on-the-day absence or sustained absence) by means of meetings with students and/or wider communication with parents/carers. The school will communicate attendance matters to parents via one or more of the following mediums: text, telephone, email, letter, via SIMS in touch as well as through the school website.

Absence from school

There are two categories of absence from school **Authorised** (approved) or **Unauthorised** (not approved)

Absence will be recorded using the code recommended by the Department of Education. These are the same codes the school uses on its SIMS registration system.

Absence in term time

The school will not approve any term time absence except those of 'exceptional circumstances'.

To ensure that we comply with these regulations, parents requesting a leave of absence will need to detail the reason of exceptional circumstance. This will then be assessed and processed.

To make a request, use the 'Request Form for Term Time Absence', which Parents/carers can locate within the Absence/Medical section of the school website. Parents/carers should give at least 15 working days' notice, we understand some circumstances do not allow this i.e. funerals

The Headteacher and the Attendance team will then respond to the Parents/carers in writing, to inform them whether this absence is granted or not based solely on the individual merits of the request. This will be sent via email and post.

Punctuality

Richard Lander School operate a late arrivals desk at Student Reception. The Attendance Officers are based here and will challenge lateness to the school. The Attendance Officers (or Pastoral Manager) may also follow this up with a phone call to parents/carers.

Students are expected in tutor by 8.30am. This may require students being in school by 08.25 am to ensure their prompt attendance. Students who arrive late to school will be marked as an 'L' and spoken to by either the Attendance Officer (upon arrival to school) or their Tutor (if it is a repeated issue).

If a student is recorded as late to school on four or more occasions in one half term, they will be issued with an after-school detention. Parents/carers will receive a warning letter regarding the sanction after the third occurrence of lateness to school.

Furthermore, frequent late arrival will be challenged by the Attendance Team and letters sent to parents/carers. Persistent lateness may lead to a further level of sanction (e.g. after-school detention) for each further late mark. The Pastoral Manager may also arrange to meet with the parents/carers whose student is persistently late, to implement strategies for improvement.

Those pupils who are persistently late will be recorded as 'U' (an unauthorised late arrival) if they arrive after morning registration is closed at 9.15am, and referred to the school based EWO and Attendance Officers.

Absence/Illness

If a student is absent from school for a session (morning or afternoon), parents/carers need to inform the school of the reason for the absence. This must be done each day via the attendance phone line (01872 273772) or email attendance@richardlander.cornwall.sch.uk

When communicating the absence, parents need to give the nature of the illness e.g. sore throat, stomach bug, this will be coded as 'I'. Students who do not have a valid reason for missing a school session will be recorded as having an unauthorised absence 'O'.

Some students may be managing chronic or more serious medical conditions that impact on their attendance. We will support students in these circumstances to ensure they can access school based learning as much as they are able to.

When a student is identified as having frequent absence for reasons of minor illness, a meeting may be convened with parents/carers to discuss this. In the first instance, this is likely to be with the Pastoral Manager but it may be with the Attendance Officer or school based EWO. Should medical absences become persistent, the school may ask parents/carers to provide 'medical evidence' This could be GP or hospital appointment cards, a copy of a prescription or a letter for a health care professional, a screenshot of a text message confirming an appointment which displays the date and time. This is not an exclusive list (otherwise such absence may be recorded as unauthorised absence 'O'). School may carry out welfare checks by doing a home visit when a student has been absence from school or when a parent/carer has failed to communicate the reason for the

absence with the school on a daily basis. This is determined on a case by case basis and attendance history.

Medical appointments

We acknowledge that hospital and specialist clinical appointments, including orthodontic and on-going dental treatment may require a student having time out of school. Our expectation is that this is kept to a minimum. Any absence for medical reasons will be coded as 'M' you may be required to provide proof of the appointment. This could be a hospital letter or a screen shot of a text message detailing the appointment time and date. We will seek an explanation from parents/carers where a whole day is missed for this reason.

The school urges parents/carers to make routine, non-urgent medical appointments outside of school hours or during the school holidays wherever possible.

Children Missing from Education

The school has a duty to inform the Local Authority of any student who is on the school's roll but not in attendance and whose whereabouts has not been established. This particularly applies to students who move to another authority or but are not yet in education.

Home education

Richard Lander School believes that a school based education is beneficial to students educationally, socially and emotionally. Whilst parents/carers have a right to educate their children at home, school staff will engage with parents/carers and seek to find a way to best support their children in a school based environment.

If the parent/carer still wishes to withdraw their child from school, this decision must be put in writing to the Headteacher. The school will then notify the Local Authority of this, as per the procedure for schools.

Procedure

Concerns about absence from school and the likely impact on students' progress will be communicated to students and parents through our attendance procedures. (Please see Appendix 1.)

Daily

- The Attendance Officers will collate messages left by parents/carers regarding absence and enter the correct code in the school register, adding notes onto the SIMS register

- The Attendance Officers will issue an electronic truancy call to parents of absent students who have no valid reason for this
- The Attendance Officers will register students who are late to school
- The Tutor will accurately complete the morning and afternoon attendance register
- Class teachers will complete a register at the start of every lesson.

Weekly

- The Tutor will discuss attendance issues with students during tutor time, particularly those students whose attendance is not regular.
- From Autumn half term, a fortnightly email is sent home to state a student's current percentage attendance
- Pastoral Managers will monitor the attendance for their year groups. They will have a particular focus on those students at risk of persistent absence, those students who have a high number of broken weeks and students who are identified as being part of a vulnerable group. Where appropriate they will meet with students as well as communicate or meet with their parents/carers
- The Attendance team (Attendance Officers / school based EWO) will support Pastoral managers in providing data analysis and identifying students on which to focus
- The Attendance Officers to be updated (by Pastoral Managers or the school's Medical Officer) with the current list of students needing medical evidence when reporting absence through illness.

Fortnightly

- Meetings will take place for each year group involving the Pastoral Managers, Attendance and School based Educational Welfare Officer and Assistant Headteacher (KS3 & 4) regarding proposed interventions for students below 95% attendance, with a high number of broken weeks and particular groups of students where no improvement is shown. Actions arising out of these meetings may include: meeting with relevant students, parents/carers, written communications home or the engagement of support mechanisms within school or with multi agency partners.

Half termly

- Congratulation letters to be sent to parents/carers of students with above average attendance or students whose attendance has improved
- Communication by email with parents/carers of students with persistent late arrival to school
- School attendance meetings with parents/carers as agreed.
- Whole school warning letter for unauthorised leave of absence to be sent out

Termly

- Standard letters to be sent in second half term to parents/carers of students with below 70%, 90% (and repeated letters should attendance remain in these thresholds)
- Standard letters to be sent in the third half term to parents/carers of students with below 95% (and repeated letters should attendance remain in these thresholds)

School Attendance Meetings with parents follow a staged process with the aim of establishing the reasons for low levels of attendance and to look at what is needed to secure and sustain an improvement. Formal procedures are implemented when this intervention does not bring about change. (See Appendix 1)

Formal guidance informing this policy

- Education Act 1996, which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent is guilty of an offence
- Pupil Regulations 2006 amended April 2013
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/parental-responsibility-measures>)
- Educating Children with Health Needs, Ensuring children with health needs do not miss out (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school>)
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3>)
- Children Missing Education
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-missing-education>)
- Parental Responsibility Measure
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/parental-responsibility-measures>)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education-2>)

APPENDIX 1

School Attendance Communication and Meetings

In the first half term of the academic year, communication will be made to parents/carers whose children have been persistently absent (or whose absence at the start of an academic year reflects a historical level of absence).

In the second half term of the academic year, communication to be sent home to parents/carers whose children's attendance is below 90% and lower. In the third half term of the academic year, communication to be sent home to parents/carers whose children's attendance is below 95% and lower

Letters will be sent by the Pastoral Manager, who will have an understanding of the specific reasons for the absence of a specific student and who can make judgements about which parents/carers should receive these.

The Pastoral Manager, with the support of the Attendance Officer, may also convene an 'Attendance Clinic' meeting for any student whose attendance is nearing or under 90% in order to support the student to have better access to school.



Situation resolved – Attendance increased. 'Well done' letters to be sent.

Situation not resolved – The school based EWO to send letters home to parents of any student whose attendance is under 90% and hasn't improved following an 'Attendance Clinic' for a 'Attendances Review' meeting.

For further absence, the school may request medical evidence to support absence due to illness. In the absence of medical evidence being provided the school may not authorise any further absence relating to illness



Further unauthorised absence from school will result in a **First Warning** being issued. This is the first stage in a prosecution under the Education Act 1996.



If unauthorised absence continues then an **Education Planning Meeting** will be called, where a decision will be made on whether legal action will be taken if unauthorised absence continues. A **Final Warning** may be issued at this stage.



If it has been decided at the Education Planning Meeting that legal action will be taken and unauthorised absence has continued, the case will be **sent to Court for prosecution under the Education Act 1996.**

APPENDIX 2

Penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence from school.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and is essential if pupils are to maximise their educational opportunities.

Parents/carers can commit an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Although current sanctions to enforce regular school attendance exist under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989, the introduction of Penalty Notices is aimed at offering a swift intervention which may be used to address cases of unauthorised absence before the problem becomes too entrenched.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that these powers are applied consistently and fairly across the area of Cornwall Council and that suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of the scheme.

Authorised Persons are Headteachers or their designated Deputies/Assistant Headteachers. Authorised Persons are not obliged to issue Penalty Notices. Designated officers of Cornwall Council's Children, Families and Adults Directorate will automatically consider the use of Penalty Notices in all cases of unauthorised absence at the level defined below.

Schools are already required to provide attendance data via census returns. This requirement continues to apply notwithstanding this code of conduct.

The Police can also refer concerns about a pupil's absence from school to the Children, Families and Adults Directorate without having to recommend a Penalty Notice.

When can Penalty Notices be issued?

When a pupil has had 10 or more half day sessions i.e. the equivalent of 5 school days, of unauthorised absence during a period of 100 sessions (10 school weeks) and the parent has been previously warned. This includes term time holidays where the parent has been informed that a Penalty Notice may result from such unauthorised absences. In this regard, a parent must be warned by the school if a request for absence is not being authorised.

When the circumstances of the pupil's absence meet the requirement and criteria in the Code of Conduct; and when the issuing of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place, or other sanctions already being processed.

Arrangements for the payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Cornwall Council.

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days.

If your child is further absent from school without authorisation within any 3-year period, you will be committing a further offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices for a second offence are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £160, payable within 28 days.

Importantly, fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may also result in legal action. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Absence not authorised by the school may also result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Again, Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Money raised from fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government.

'Parent' as set out in Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, defines parent to include: natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person or body who has parental responsibility for a child (as defined by the Children Act 1989) and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child. Having care of a child means a person with whom a child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with said child.