



RICARDS LODGE HIGH SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Enabling maximum student attendance through valuing and promoting the importance of high attendance and punctuality rates.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence and punctuality
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Recognising the external factors which influence students' attendance and punctuality and work in partnership with families, the Educational Welfare Services and other agencies to address difficulties.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Acts 1996 and 2002](#)
- [The Children Act 1989](#)
- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)

- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [The Education \(Information about Individual Pupils\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933](#) and [1963](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school”.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school’s policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Approving or disapproving Leave of absence (LOA) requests (see appendix 1)

3.3 The designated senior attendance champion

The designated senior attendance champion is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Support with attendance contracts where appropriate
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

3.4 Local Authority

The Local Authority is responsible for:

- Supporting and guiding the school by providing regular meetings with an Education Welfare Officer
- The documentation and proformas for relevant procedures

- The legal costs for any representation in court. The LA provides representation for court action however the awarding of costs is at the gift of the court and the LA is not responsible for any costs incurred by witnesses who may be called to attend from the school.

3.5 The attendance support staff

The school attendance support staff is responsible:

- school attendance administration
- Supporting the vision of the Senior attendance champion
- Maintaining accurate records of attendance
- Assisting with the recording, tracking and communication of punctuality data
- Contact with parents of monitored students in the case of unexplained absences
- Ensure that parents/carers are informed of any child's absence from school daily
- Providing attendance and punctuality data as requested
- Process LOA requests
- Completing DfE returns as requested
- Where applicable, report unexplained absences to the pupil's youth offending team worker
- Liaising with outside agencies and partners.

3.6 School administration staff

School administration staff are responsible for:

- Support with processing of lates
- Send out late messages
- Support with covering attendance staff absence

3.7 Heads of Year

Heads of Years are responsible for:

- Supporting the vision of the Senior attendance champion

- Setting and maintaining high expectations for attendance
- Having a clear overview of attendance and punctuality issues within the Year group
- Monitoring and take responsibility for attendance issues below 95% and any student whose attendance has fallen for three consecutive weeks
- Setting in place attendance contracts
- Attendance features on the agenda for all year team meetings where individual attendance concerns and whole year concerns are addressed
- Update the attendance tracking on a weekly basis
- attend any meetings with the Education Welfare Office where appropriate
- Focussing and improving Persistently absent students (under 90%) and severely absent (under 50%)
- Presenting the 100% attendance awards in achievement assemblies
- Referring to the importance of attendance and punctuality in routine contacts with parents and students
- Monitoring the work of the tutor team in fulfilling responsibilities for attendance
- Assisting in the processing and leave of absence requests when required
- Concerns regarding unauthorised absence and truancy
- Regular contact with the Attendance Officer/RR6 administrator to discuss specific attendance issues and complete all relevant paperwork
- Discuss attendance concerns across the Year Group with their SLT link, DHOY and raising at panel with DSL
- Implementing interventions as required
- Informing attendance of any fixed term suspensions
- Monitor the setting of work for any students who are absence for fixed term suspensions

3.8 SLT link

SLT links are responsible for:

- Supporting the vision of the Senior attendance champion

- Supporting the head of year with complex attendance cases
- Leading attendance contract meeting
- Overview of intervention to support persistent and severely absent students

3.9 Tutors

Tutors are responsible for:

- Regularly remind their tutor group what the school means by excellent and good attendance
- Keep attendance and punctuality high profile throughout the year, and award achievement points each week to those students who attended every day and have not been late
- Remind their tutor group that: The Government has an expectation that school will set appropriate targets for attendance and the Local Authority supports the school in their expectation that students will have an attendance level of 95% or above as a minimum.
- Provide accurate and timely registration data
- Use the automated attendance tracker weekly to monitor all students whose attendance drops. This includes students who are not PAs
- Complete targeted weekly tutor attendance conversations during 'tutor check in' recording intervention on attendance tracker
- Inform Head of Year and/or Attendance Officer/CPOMS of any concerns.

3.10 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Taking the lesson register within the first ten minutes of each lesson using Sims. If this is not possible a paper register should be used and passed to the Attendance Officer or RR6 attendance administrator
- Reporting suspicious absences to the attendance officer or RR6 attendance administrator immediately
- Recording a student as late on Sims if they arrive after the start of the lesson. The number of minutes a student is late should be recorded and departmental consequence implemented if appropriate

- **Students removed from timetabled lessons:** All staff who are working with students outside of their normal lessons must ensure that they are registered on SIMS either directly themselves or by informing attendance asap.

3.11 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Message on Reach more parents to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return)
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

3.12 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day
- Remain on the school site at all times. The only exception is RR6 students travelling between sites
- Sign out at the **Lodge main reception** when authorised to leave the site at any time before their timetable ends
- Catch up with any work missed due to lateness or absence.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 School Attendance register

Admissions will update the whole school attendance register, and place all pupils enrolled onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of each session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry code
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The amended entry
- The initial and the initials of their position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.35am on each school day, the register for the first session will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 2pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer should notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.55am or as soon as practically possible by sending a message via the Reach more parents app.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness or repeated illness which is having an impact on a student's attendance.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a print out from their child's records between the specific dates, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Requests for leave of absence should be recorded on our relevant form. The form can be accessed via a Google form on our school website or a paper copy can be provided from the school office.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please refer to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Exceptional leave policy

The Governors of Ricards Lodge High School believe that leave of absence during term time should be avoided as it can have a damaging effect on a student's education and overall achievement. However, it is recognised that on occasions there may be extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify such leave.

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

With regard to the regulation outlined above the school policy is as follows:

1. Parents must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
2. The request should be made in writing using the leave of absence form. Available on request (see appendix 2). Verbal requests will be recorded in writing.
3. This must include the reason why you feel that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to you within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised is very likely to result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160 per parent, per child.

4.5 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (8.35-9.05am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (9.05am) will be marked as an unauthorised absence, using the appropriate code (U)

Persistent lateness: We believe that a pupil arriving late will not receive the best outcomes. Arriving late can be unsettling for the pupil and may cause classroom disruption. Parents who bring children to school persistently late will be invited to attend a School Attendance meeting.

4.6 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- If a student is missing from day 1 to day 3 the family will be contacted and every effort will be made to locate the student (ask friends, home visit by EWO and/or School's Safety Officer).

- If a child has been missing for 5 days and no contact with home can be made, then a letter needs to be sent home requesting the child's return to school. The EWO referral form is completed to support a home visit at the next possible opportunity.

4.7 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels every year.

5. *Authorised and unauthorised absence*

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form. The form can be accessed via a Google form or a paper copy can be provided from the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. A response to the application for Leave of Absence in Term Time will be sent to the parent/carer within 7 days.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – the headteacher will use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees

(occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence
- Wedding of an immediate family member
- Attendance at secondary school tests, open days and induction days.

5.2 Legal sanctions

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Notice to Improve. A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent/carers to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. Penalty Notices are issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160, per parent, per child.

5.3 Suspension from school

With effect from the 1st September 2022, any pupil who has been suspended from school, and provision arranged, if the student does not attend the provision this shall be recorded as an unauthorised absence. This may result in further action taken by the school, please see also the penalty notice section.

5.4 Part-time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. ([Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)).

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision.

There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C, which is an authorised absence.

6. *Strategies for promoting attendance*

- One to one conversations with tutors and heads of year
- Support from wellbeing and inclusion
- Students on report
- Assemblies and tutor time activities

7. Attendance monitoring

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, weekly, half termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data monthly (from mid-October) to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide weekly attendance reports to tutors heads of year and senior leaders to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor, implement and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- The headteacher, DSL and senior attendance champion will meet twice a month to monitor, implement and evaluate intervention
- After October half term if a child's attendance has fallen below 95% and there is no clear, valid explanation for the low attendance (e.g. single illness) we will write a letter to the parents & carers explaining that attendance has fallen below the school's expected threshold of 95%, offer support and inform parents that attendance will be monitored more closely over the next month.
- If the child's attendance does not improve & falls below 93% with no clear reason, then parents & carers will be written to to make them aware that their child's attendance has fallen below 93%. They will be alerted to the fact that if attendance falls below 90%, the Local Authority will be alerted. Parents/carers may be asked to meet with the head of year to discuss the support that can be offered and what the next steps are in ensuring the attendance improves. An attendance contract meeting will be considered
- If this is unsuccessful in addressing attendance issues, we will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer for additional support.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services (Early Help, My Futures, SWIS, CFS) to remove the barriers to attendance

8. Ten days' unauthorised absence and fifteen days attributed to illness

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents are asked to help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

9. Children Missing from Education (CME)

If a family wishes to remove their child from the school roll for reasons including moving house, attending a new school etc then they must share in writing the name of the new school, the start date, their new address (if moving house) and a contact number. If a family would like to request for elective home education they will be contacted by the schools EWO and be advised to write a formal letter outlining why and the date this will commence. This will then be referred to the EWS.

If the above does not happen then the child will be placed on the CME register and referred to the EWS.

10. Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

The relevant school staff will work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons. Please see Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy for further information.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour for learning policy

Registration Code	Description	Physical meaning
Code / \	Present in attendance	Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
Code B	Attending any other approved educational activity	
Code D	Dual Registered	This code will be used if a pupil is registered at two schools.
Code G	Holiday not granted by the school	The school has not granted a leave of absence and the pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday. A school cannot grant a leave of absence retrospectively. <i>If the parent did not apply in advance, leave of absence should not be granted.</i>
Code K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	
Code L	Late arrival before the register is closed	
Code N	Reason for absence not yet provided	
Code O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	
Code P	Approved sporting activity	This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. — training sessions, trials and sporting events.
Code U	Arrived late to school after the register closed. <i>(This is 9.05am for Ricards Lodge High School)</i>	
Code V	Educational visits and trips	
Code W	Work Experience	
Code Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	
Code Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	
Code Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	
Code Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	
Code Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	
Code Y7		
Code Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	
Code #	Planned whole school closure	
Authorised Absences		
Code C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. — family funeral. Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
Code C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	
Code C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	
Code E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	
Code I	Illness	Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.
Code J1	Interview	This code will be used when it has been agreed that the pupil can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam
Code M	Medical or dental appointments	Parents/Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.

Code R	Religious Observation	This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.
Code S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	
Code X	Not required to be in school (not compulsory school age)	

DfE guidance states the following codes are to be used on the register. Further information relating to the application of codes can be found here: [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

Appendix 2: Leave of Absence Form

Ricards Lodge High School Leave of Absence Form

COPY OF GOOGLE FORM LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON 2024/25

Request for Leave of Absence for exceptional circumstances during Term Time

It is not advisable to take your child/ren on a leave of absence during term time as this causes disruption to their education. Schools must follow the law in this regard and may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances if certain criteria are fulfilled.

School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024

- **Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances is authorised at the discretion of the Head teacher.** (This is **not an automatic right** of parents/guardians)
- You should not normally take your child(ren) on a leave of absence during the school term.
- **Please do not book your leave of absence until authority is given.**
- Each request for leave of absence will be considered individually, taking into account the circumstances of the request and any supporting evidence provided.
- If the absence is approved by the Head Teacher you will be advised as to how many days the Head teacher has approved for your child's absence.
- If the school does not agree to the absence and you take the leave without permission or your child is absent for more than the agreed number of days the absence will be unauthorised.
- Leave of absence taken without the authorisation of the school may lead to your child(ren) being referred to the Education Welfare Service and the possibility of statutory action and a fine/prosecution.

Information: In order for your application for absence to be considered, please complete below:

Leave of Absence Form

Name(s) of Child(ren):

Form/Year Group:

Home address:

.....

Number of school days missed:

Dates of absence: From..... To:.....

Reason for request (**additional evidence may be required**)/Who is travelling?

.....

Signed: Parent/Guardian

Email address:..... Mobile phone number:.....

Date form submitted:.....

The above request for leave of absence in term time for
 has/has not been authorised.

If authorised, your child/ren should return to school on:.....

Signed..... Headteacher.....

School Data Checklist:

For School Office Use Only

Pupil's name	
Previous leave of absence requested/taken (last 2 years)	
Nature of exceptional circumstances and evidence provided	
No of days granted (if any)	

