FIVE RIVERS

CHILD CARE LTD

Attendance Policy & Procedure

'Five Rivers is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment'

Policy Owner	Head Teacher
Authoriser	Head of Education
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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils

- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance

- 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

- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996

- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002

- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- It also refers to:

- School census guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Directors and Head of Education

The Board of Directors and Head of Education are responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

- o Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority

- o Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources

- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs

- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most

- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge

- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance

- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:

  - o The importance of good attendance

  - o That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

  - o The school's legal requirements for keeping registers

  - o The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data

- Holding the Head of Education and Headteachers to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Head Of Education

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Working with the parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers

- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents and carers through all available channels

3.3 The school's leadership team

The school's leadership team are responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis

- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance

- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff

- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed

- Building close and productive relationships with parents and carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the Head of Education

- Working with LAs to tackle persistent absence

3.4 The school's Business Administrator

The school's Business Administrator is responsible for:

Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1),

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

- Transfer calls from parents/carers where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.5 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not

- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person

- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

- Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every timetabled session on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before their start time on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with 2 emergency contact numbers for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

- to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority

- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school and being allocated a specific member of staff

3.6 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session, on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, using Arbor and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, 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

- The amended entry

- The reason for the amendment

- The date on which the amendment was made

- The name and 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, where 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.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence before the school day starts or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, 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 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 notifies the school in advance of the appointment via email.

However, we encourage parents 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 must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police to carry out a welfare check.

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not

- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent

- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's LA

- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance

- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, their school placement will be reviewed.

4.6 Reporting to parents

The school will inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels via school reports.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad

- Attending an interview

- Study leave

- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable

- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least a week before the absence. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Parent(s) 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

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school

- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)

- Attending provision arranged by the local authority

- Attending work experience

- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Our schools will include attendance within their behaviour and reward system, if we feel like this is needed.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance, mental or physical ill health or SEND

All our pupils have SEND as we are an Independent Special School. We do everything we can to support families and pupils with complex barriers to attendance. Our school strength is supporting pupils back to education. We will provide a bespoke package around the child and work on an appropriate transition plan. This will be monitored and reviewed regularly. Each week, we hold a safeguarding meeting and long term absence is discussed when appropriate and necessary.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or we become aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, we will inform the local authority.

7.2 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

We will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
  - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
  - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
  - Explain the help that is available
  - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
  - Review any existing actions or interventions

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant

- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring and analysing attendance

The school will monitor and analyse attendance and absence data (including punctuality) monthly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.

Data will be collected each month and reported to the Head of Education.

The school will:

- Identify and record pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence

9. Use of Part-Time Timetables

9.1 Working Together to Improve School Attendance, August 2024:

It is important to highlight that there is no statutory basis upon which to establish a reduced timetable. Ofsted have made it clear that this must be in the interests of the child and not the school.

The Department for Education guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' states:

"*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 school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time, and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.''*

"*A part-time timetable should:*

- *Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.*

- *Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.*

- *Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.*

- *Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a parttime timetable for a prolonged period.*"

In addition, it is recognised that reintegration following a prolonged period of absence is an appropriate reason for a part-time timetable.

The risks for pupils associated with reduced attendance at school for whatever reason, including a temporarily reduced timetable, are well researched. These include the risk of sexual or other exploitation, or other safeguarding risks as well as the risk of lower educational attainment.

When considering a part-time timetable, schools must consider the safety and wellbeing of the pupil in terms of whether a reduced educational offer would increase their vulnerability and place them more at risk of potential harm.

We consider this but are aware that our pupils have often not been attending at all so historically have been placed at the greatest risk. By starting education, even on a part time

basis, we are consequently reducing that risk. It is important to note that our schools are consistently working with pupils in 'exceptional circumstances'.

Our pupils often arrive at school with a history of significant non-attendance and emotionally based school avoidance. Many of them will have experienced multiple placement breakdowns in their education placements as well as their home. School has no longer become a safe space for them, but rather leads to feelings of shame and failure. It is our role to rebuild trusting relationships with pupils through creating an environment of 'High Structure /High Nurture'. We take the view that the best way to build their attendance can be to grow their timetable gradually ensuring confidence at each step of their journey.

Our pupils have a varied and bespoke timetable and are not always on school site, however they are always supervised by our staff on these regular timetabled activities, therefore we would use the present code. If they are at an Alternative Provider without our staff, we would use the B code. There will also be narrative on the register as to where they are being educated.

Where a part time timetable is to be used, we agree this at point of admission with the Local Authority and the parent. If there is a need for a part-time timetable post admission this would again be done in consultation and agreement with the parent/carer and the Local Authority.

If there is agreement that a part-time timetable is appropriate, the following must be in place:

1. A timetable showing
   - when the pupil should be in school.
   - where the pupil should be when not in school and who is responsible for their supervision at this time.

2. The planned duration of the reduction in the timetable and the dates at which it will be reviewed.

3. Clearly stated intended outcomes/benefits/what will be different as a result

These will be recorded on the Part Time tracking and monitoring document.

Agreement from the Parents / Carers and the Local Authority will be sought and recorded.

9.1 Responsibility for children when not attending school, including Safeguarding role:

When a pupil is placed on a part-time timetable the parents/carers are responsible for supervision of the pupil during the hours when not attending school. However, we recognise that schools have a safeguarding responsibility for all pupils on their roll and therefore must be aware that even with parental agreement to any arrangement they make, they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils off-site during school hours.

We support this through close communication with parents and carers and welfare calls on days when the child is not due to attend.

In addition to children placed on the roll of our schools, we also work with children on an Alternative Provision (AP) basis. This can be face to face, virtually or Hybrid (a combination of the two). AP placements are normally commissioned directly by the Local Authority (or sometimes a school). These will be for a specified number of hours per week and are always of a part-time nature. The same principles regarding agreement of a part time timetable will be followed.

In this instance we only hold safeguarding responsibility for the hours of their specified programme.

10. Attendance Champions

All our schools have an Attendance Champion on the School's Leadership Team, they are also part of the Safeguarding team. The Attendance Champion will meet with the School's Business Support once a month to review pupil's individual attendance and whole school attendance. The Attendance Champions responsibilities are:

- To set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate progress and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.
- Review attendance data half termly, termly and full year to identify patterns and trends relating to attendance.
- Arrange and hold Target Support meetings with the Local Authority on a termly basis.
- Liaise with Business Support to raise any actions relating to low attendance in line with our school attendance policy. Eg, send out low attendance letter to parents/carers.

The attendance Champion will also be the main point of contact for parents/carers to discuss any barriers their child faces in relation to attending school and any support they may require.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated annually.

12. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study

		for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly	Every pupil absent as the school is closed

	closed	unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
**Absent – unauthorised absence**	
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
**Administrative codes**	
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Registration times & Attendance Champion

Pupils must arrive in school by 09:30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 09:30am and will be kept open until 10:00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00pm and will be kept open until 13:30pm.

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