

# Rodings Primary School Attendance Policy

## **School Attendance and the Law.**

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, parents and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local authority which could result in substantial fines.

The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, take a register at the start of morning session and again during the afternoon. Since September 2006 schools have been required to use statutory registration codes.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, then the absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences are also those that the school does not consider reasonable. This includes; keeping children off school for trivial reasons; truancy, absences which have never been properly explained and children who arrive at school too late to get a mark before registers close. Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not "unavoidable". Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as shopping, or a treat day out.

If a good reason for absence, i.e. illness or other unavoidable cause, is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence, which will be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.

Time off for a family holiday is not a legal right and from September 2013 the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been changed. Headteachers are no longer permitted to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are very exceptional circumstances, such as a family needing to spend time together due to bereavement of immediate family member or other traumatic event in the family.

When a child is identified as missing from education, school staff will follow the guidance in the 'Missing Education – Missing Out' Essex County Council Manual, to ensure the child is returned to education in a speedy and efficient manner.

During Spring 2016 the DfE consulted on Improving Information in Identifying Children Missing Education, which set out to improve communication and co-ordination between schools, including independent schools, and Local Authorities.

The outcome of the consultation lead to amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 being made on 22nd July 2016 which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016. The amendments can be viewed on Essex Info link. Regulations 5 and 12 are of particular significance.

Under Regulation 12 schools are now legally required to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register and every deletion from the school register. Notifications must be received by the Local Authority **within five days**.

To enable schools to fulfil this new statutory duty, an online form has been devised for completion. This can be accessed via Essex Info Link (Statutory Notification of Admission/Deletion to/from Essex School Roll). The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 provide the original regulations, including regulation 8 which stipulates the grounds under which a school may remove a pupil from roll.

## **Principles**

### **Your child should come to school every day**

Some children need encouragement to attend regularly. Any problems are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. It is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful.

If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Missing Education and Child Employment Service (MECES) from the local education authority. He or she will also try to resolve the difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

Parents may wish to contact the MECES themselves to ask their advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

## Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

**Registration System Used** – Manual registers are called in each class at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. At the end of each week all register marks are transferred onto the school's computerised management information system and allocated an appropriate national registration code. This information forms part of a termly school census return to the Local Education Authority.

**Lateness** – Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. Arriving more than 15 minutes after the start of the session without good reason is counted as unauthorised absence. This means that registers will be closed from 9am. If a pupil arrives at school late he/she should report to the school office where they will be entered into the appropriate class register. (This is very important as the registers are used to account for pupils in cases of emergency evacuation as well as end of school bus registers).

**First Day of Absence Contact** – If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the *first* day, in person, by phone or email (parents@rodings.essex.sch.uk), by 9.30am. If this is not done the office staff will attempt to contact the parent concerned to verify that the child is legitimately absent.

**Illness and Other Legitimate Reasons** – When a child returns to school following an absence the parent should notify the office in writing to confirm the period of, and reason for, absence. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Where at all possible medical appointments for pupils should be made for out of school hours. If the pupil is off school due to illness the school may require medical certification, such as a copy of a doctor's appointment card, prescribed medicine packaging or copy of prescription.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

The Missing Education and Child Employment Service work within locally based teams with schools and families to promote good attendance. They carry out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Education Authority to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal requirements in relation to school attendance.

MECES undertakes register reviews and discusses any attendance issues with the school. The school may refer a pupil to MECES where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. MECES will work with schools and families to address issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers. From September 2013 (The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) 2007 has been amended and timescales for paying fines have been reduced. Fines will be £60 per parent, per child. If this is not paid within 21 days the fine will increase to £120 per parent, per child. Failing to meet these deadlines could lead to court proceedings and prosecutions.

## Attendance Targets

Each school has an annual attendance target set by governors. It is expected that the whole school community will work together to achieve this target. Attainment is strongly linked to attendance, and research has shown that if pupils are to achieve their full potential, they must attend school regularly. Our target for Sept 16 – July 17 is a minimum of 97% attendance.

## Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. You will receive information in your child's end of year report.

The school has a duty to make your child’s time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## Attendance Protocol



