

National Teaching School
designated by



National College for
Teaching & Leadership

Ringwood School Attendance Policy



RINGWOOD
— A NATIONAL TEACHING ACADEMY —

POLICY DETAILS

Policy Name	Attendance Policy
Policy Category	Statutory
Policy Number & Version	September 2017 V1
Replacing/Updating	Attendance Policy July 2015; July 2016
Author	Assistant Headteacher – Personal development, behaviour and welfare
Statutory, regulatory and/or contractual considerations	Statutory
Authorised By	Student welfare committee – Governing Body
Authorisation date	30 th October 2017
Implementation Date	September 2017
Next Review Date	October 2018
To be reviewed by	Assistant Headteacher – Personal development, behaviour and welfare

National guidance

This policy was drawn up in conjunction with guidance provided by Hampshire County Council. It is in line with the new statutory guidance that is being introduced across the whole of the Hampshire as of September 2015.

As National Guidance is updated throughout the academic year, Ringwood School will update the policy during the year to continue to be in line with local and national legislation updates.

Rationale / Statement of Intent:

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents/carers and students play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically.
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with.
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying.
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training.

2.1 Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular weekly work with tutors.
- Challenge students to have attendance over 95%.
- Report via student diaries to you on your child's attendance rate.
- Celebrate good attendance rates with a weekly praise point for 100% attendance and half termly points for attendance over 98%.
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions and termly certificates
- Set targets for students and for classes for attendance
- Work with parents/carers, students and staff so that together we can raise attendance levels across the school.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. (S)he will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Responsibilities of Students:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time and be in tutor for morning registration by 8.45am each morning.
- Go to all their lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Reception Desk if they are late (after 9.10am) or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

- Inform the school on the morning of the first day of absence.
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance.
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure that student's catch up work missed due to absence. It is a student's responsibility to approach staff in person or via email for the work that they need to catch up.

Responsibilities of School Staff:

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Promote and reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the Attendance Team on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

3.1. Recording Attendance:

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 8.45am with your form tutor and again for the afternoon session at the beginning of lesson 5 with your subject teacher at 1:40pm.

3.2. Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to all lessons. The starts of school/lessons are used to give out instructions or organise work. If your child is late they can miss work, time with their class teacher getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others and can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- **The school day begins at 8:45am and all students are expected to be in school in their tutor room at this time.**
- All lateness is recorded daily. Punctuality sanctions from the school will follow based on this information and it could also be used by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with Hampshire County Council and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and could be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents /carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support will be offered to reduce lateness.

3.3 What to do if my child is absent?

First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of their absence either by telephoning the school (01425 475000) or emailing absence@ringwood.hants.sch.uk.
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or e-mail you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you; *This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.*
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders or the Assistant Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90% without sufficient reason provided.

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a 'child missing in education procedure' as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents/carers and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family. Home visits may also be attempted without prior contact being established.

Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student 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'. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date contact number and email address.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

If your child misses 10% (4 weeks / 40 sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as persistent absentees. Where this absence is authorised the school will expect that all students take the responsibility to catch up on their missed studies, and parents/carers will continue to provide relevant correct absence certification to the school.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education.

If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and depending on the reasons for the absence will look to put intervention in place to support your child's attendance. This will form part of an agreed attendance plan, with responsibilities for attendance being agreed between all parties.

Should attendance continue to fall below 90%, without sufficient reason, then the school will continue to make efforts to help attendance, with more stringent guidelines agreed. One of the possible outcomes at this point could be the instigation of legal proceedings.

Request for Leave of Absence:

For national guidance refer to:

1. 'School attendance' 2015 located at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
2. National Association of Headteachers guidance document on 'Authorised Absence' 2014
<http://www.naht.org.uk/welcome/news-and-media/key-topics/parents-and-pupils/naht-issues-new-guidance-on-authorised-absence/>

For county advice and guidance refer to:

1. Guidance on recording absence <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>
2. Guidance on approval of 'Extended leave of absence' see county guidance
<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.** It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. **There are no rules on this** as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday **and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.** Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an 'Application for Leave of Absence Form' available from Ringwood School reception or website in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will **be unauthorised** and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Understanding types of absence – Authorised & Unauthorised:

Understanding types of absence:

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent/carer's request. This includes:
 - Parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

For national guidance refer to: '**Parental responsibility measures for behaviour and attendance**' which covers legal measures for non-attendance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parental-responsibility-measures-for-behaviour-and-attendance>

For county guidance refer to: 'Guidance for Schools on available support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance at school' May 2015

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

1. **The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance**
2. **The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for students of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a student has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued.

A fixed penalty notice fine for unauthorised holiday will only be issued a maximum of twice. On receipt of the third such instance, then other legal options could be considered.

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the student has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded *U*) after the register has closed
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance.

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's has unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in any 10 week school**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment of testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the 'Application for Leave of Absence form', or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one penalty notice for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at: <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels (ALP):

The Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel system is in place to support schools should the child's attendance fall below the Persistent Absence Rate. Schools will demonstrate they have made all reasonable efforts to engage parents/carers in supporting the child's attendance rate at school, yet the attendance still meets the required thresholds for referral (10 un-authorised sessions in the previous 100 sessions) and all other efforts have been explored. Parents / carers will be informed via letter that referrals have been sent to the ALP and this could result in a fixed penalty notice (FPN) or a criminal prosecution occurring should attendance not improve. The Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel follow the legal framework as laid down by statutory guidance of Hampshire County Council.

Steps to Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel

- Parent/carers, Student and School signature of Home School Agreement in the student diary.
- Weekly recording of attendance in the student diary will alert the parent / carer to falling attendance levels.
- Continued falling attendance triggers a meeting with the appropriate professional at school. This could include, for example, your child's Progress Leader, the attendance officer or our SENCO.
- Failure to improve attendance and/or punctuality in line with specific short term targets can result in a referral to Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel.

7.1 What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?

For Example:

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Please either telephone or use the student diary to contact your child's Tutor or Progress Leader immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

Your child will bring home their school diary each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

Help them to plan their time, encouraging them to effectively schedule any home learning, ensuring a balance between study, family and leisure time every evening. Maintaining a balance will help alleviate any unnecessary stress.

Contact the school early if you are having trouble getting your child to school, if there are genuine concerns, working in partnership is often a good way to overcome them.

7.2 Leavers

For Example: If your child is leaving our school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11) parents/carers are asked to:

1. Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
2. **When the confirmation of the child has been received from the new school stating they have enrolled in the new school, they will be removed from the school roll.**

If students leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.3 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Headteachers can authorise this absence.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.htm>

National Advice - <https://www.gov.uk/child-performance-licence-england-scotland-wales>

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C and authorised absence.

Ringwood School work in partnership with Forest Forge and support 1 week block placements with the theatre company.

7.4 Absence through

7.4a Competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions.

It is however, down to the Headteachers discretion through consultation with our Elite Sport mentor, whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Headteacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7.4b Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families.

For further advice and guidance on Attendance & GRT and Showman see County Guidance at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Please note pupils must have attended 200 sessions in a rolling 12month period to be able to request leave for work purposes.

Further support & Guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS Service

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school

If the child is on roll, over six years old, and has attended at least 200 sessions at School in each rolling 12 month period, then GRT families may take their children from school to travel. This does not automatically reduce the number of days that a GRT child is expected to attend school – where possible they should attend full time (380 sessions a year)¹. Parents/carers have to notify the school in advance of their intention to travel and confirm a return date. If the family travel annually, it would be effective practice for a school to record the dates of the travel patterns so as to inform the child's class teachers at the start of the year or term as appropriate. This would enable the teacher to adjust their planning for the child and may also support the school to make reasonable adjustments to calendared events, such as parents evening, open days and transition events, to enable the family to participate.

¹ The law makes no reference to a physical dwelling in defining GRT children, so the permission to be absent from school to travel would apply to a GRT family living in a house that travels in the course of their trade or business (such as Showmen). **Promoting pupil attendance and recording absence: Section 6**

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies *(if schools are not SIMS centrally hosted and do not have secure electronic server backup they must print hard copies of the official registers and bind into annual volumes)*

7.5 Teenage Pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and wherever possible her return to full time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Policies referenced and consulted for the production of our policy

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To his/her age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs s/he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>