



Attendance Policy 2020-21

Publication Date: September 2020
Next Review due: September 2021

Policy Aim

The aims of this policy are:

- to promote attendance
- to outline the procedures that the school uses in relation to attendance.

All young people between the ages of 11-16 are required to be in full-time education. All young people between 16 and 18 are required to be either in full-time education or in training or in employment with training attached to it.

Attendance Facts

- Half a day a week missed in Year 10 and 11 can mean the loss of one grade for every GCSE taken
- One day a week absence is the equivalent, over a school career, of nearly two and a half years of education
- Ten days holiday leave is the equivalent of two terms of education missed, over a school career
- Fifteen minutes of lateness a day equals a year of education missed
- 90% attendance is the equivalent of a student missing one half day of school every week.

Parents' Duty

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. There are only three reasons why a child may be absent from school:

- ill health
- religious holidays
- where school transport should be provided by the local authority but is unavailable

Unavoidable Absence

The Headteacher has the discretion to authorise other unavoidable absences including those for the following reasons:

- medical/dental appointments
- interviews for employment/further or higher education
- agreed attainment tests e.g. music grades, driving test etc.
- compassionate grounds e.g. bereavement
- participation in elite sporting competitions or training

Only the headteacher or her nominated representative can authorise absence. Parents do not have this legal authority. Requests may be made in writing or may be emailed to: attendance@rugbyhighschool.co.uk. Requests must be made in advance if they are to be authorised. The only exception to this is when the request is made on compassionate grounds.

Notifying Absences

The school operates a first-day call system. Parents/carers are required to telephone the school before 9.30 am on any day when their daughter is absent. If the absence is expected to last more than one day, the parent/carer should indicate the date of return. Parents will be contacted if they fail to do this as the school needs to be certain that the student is safe. Alternatively, parents can email: attendance@rugbyhighschool.co.uk or use Parentmail.

Medical Appointments

Parents are asked to make all but emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. If this is not possible, please give as much notice as possible of the intended appointment. If you need to collect your daughter from school for an appointment, she must sign out of the building and back in again when she returns. If your daughter must attend a series of appointments during the school day, please ensure, where possible, that times and days are varied so that the same lesson is not always missed.

Punctuality

Students should arrive in school by 8.50 – registration time. Registers are closed at 9.20 am. Authorised lates are recorded up to 9.20 and lates after 9.20 will be unauthorised lates. If persistently late, detentions will be issued.

Term-Time Holidays

Parents are not legally entitled to take their child on holiday during term time. In exceptional circumstances the headteacher may be able to grant leave of absence. Application forms are available from reception; alternatively parents can email their request to attendance@rugbyhighschool.co.uk. You must provide a letter explaining the nature of the exceptional circumstances. Failure to make an application in advance, or the refusal by the headteacher of an application for leave of absence which is made in advance, will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against each parent by Fixed Penalty Notice. The law does not permit the headteacher to authorise term-time holidays or extensions to holidays which then run into term-time retrospectively. Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

Monitoring

The school monitors attendance on a regular basis across Years 7 - 13. If a student's attendance falls below 95%, it is a cause for concern. Depending on the reasons for the non-attendance, parents may be sent a letter alerting them to the issue and inviting them into school to discuss the matter with a view to seeing how we can work in partnership to improve the situation. In cases where a student's attendance falls below 90%, more formal measures may be required. These may include a parental contract (see below). Where attendance does not improve and is still below 90%, where a student is habitually late, or in circumstances of unauthorised absence, the school may refer the case to the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Team. This may result in legal proceedings being initiated including the issuing of a fixed penalty notice or an attendance order.

Persistent Absence

Persistent absence, as classed by the DfE, is 90% and below. If absence is due to persistent or recurring illness parents may be asked to provide medical evidence (eg appointment cards, doctors' letters, medicine information) to verify absences. If not supplied, absences may be unauthorised

Celebration

Annual prizes are awarded to students with an exceptional attendance record.

Support

The school offers a variety of different support to students and their families where attendance is an issue. This may include support from a form teacher, a mentor, the school's counsellor, the pastoral team, the SENCO and senior staff. The student and her family may be offered an Early Help Assessment as a means of identifying other sources of relevant support. In some circumstances an Educational Social Worker will be attached to the case to work with the family and the school to improve attendance.

The school also works with a variety of external agencies to support students who are absent from school and their families. These include:

- The Flexible Learning Team (the Warwickshire home tutoring service for children who are unable to attend school for an extended period of time because of illness)
- the school nurse
- CAMHS (the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- the parenting development team.

Parenting Contracts

Parenting contracts may be used in cases of irregular attendance at school. A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and the governing body of the school and contains:

- a statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and

- a statement by governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting contracts are voluntary but any non-compliance will be recorded by the school and may be used as evidence in court if an application is made for a behaviour parenting order.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The circumstances in which the school can issue a fixed penalty notice are determined by the local authority. Full details of Warwickshire's scheme can be found at:

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>.

Up to two fixed penalty notices may be issued per child per academic year. Notices will be issued by the ACE (Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement) team when input from the ACE service has failed to affect a return to school and in the following specific circumstances:

- where at least 10 sessions (5 school days) are lost due to unauthorised absence in 100 sessions (50 school day) period;
- Parentally condoned absence;
- Unauthorised holidays in term-time;
- Unauthorised delayed return from extended holidays;
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed) equivalent to 10 sessions in any five week period.

The fixed penalty is £60 if payment is made within 21 days but this rises to £120 if the payment is made within 28 days. Failure to pay a fixed penalty notice will result in fast track prosecution under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Prosecution

The parents of a student who fails to attend regularly may be issued with an attendance order and may be prosecuted by the local authority if they fail to comply with it. Depending on the nature of the offence, fines can range up to £2,500.

Parenting Orders

Parenting orders are imposed by the court and the parents' agreement is not required before an order is made. Parenting orders are available as an 'ancillary order' following a successful prosecution by the local authority for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

Parenting orders consist of 2 elements:

- a requirement for parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions (e.g. parenting education or parenting support classes) where they will receive help and support to enable them to improve their child's behaviour. This is the core of the parenting order and lasts for up to 3 months; and,
- a requirement for parents to comply with such requirements as are specified in the order. This element can last up to 12 months.

Failure to comply with a parenting order can result in a fine of up to £1,000.

For further legal guidance please see the WCC website: www.warwickshire.gov.uk and the Warwickshire County Council Attendance Policy extract below.

Attendance Policy Extract

Leave of Absence

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

- Head teachers **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent. i.e the parent with whom the child normally resides.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being recorded as “unauthorised”. This may result in legal action against the parent, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service of Warwickshire County Council.
- The Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service have the authority to consider issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for Leave of Absence in line with the Warwickshire County Council’s Non-School Attendance and Penalty Notices Code of Conduct. (A copy of which can be found at <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/pupilnonattendance>).
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council’s Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME

UPDATED INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

The Supreme Court recently reached a decision in the case of *Platt v Isle of Wight Council* which has clarified the law on unauthorised leave, including holidays, during term time. The parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they attend school on a regular basis. The Supreme Court has made clear that attending school 'regularly' means that the children must attend school on every day that they are required to do so. As such, the parents of any child who is absent from school without authorisation for any length of time are likely to be considered as committing an offence under s444 of the Education Act 1996.

Head Teachers retain the ability to authorise leave in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. When considering such requests for a leave of absence, the school are obliged to act within the law. Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. If the leave is granted, head teachers are able to determine the number of school days a child can be absent for.

It is for the Head Teacher to decide what is 'exceptional' and it is at their discretion if the circumstances warrant the leave to be granted. The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent.

Each application for a leave of absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s), by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s).

All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service of Warwickshire County Council.

It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 invoices in the amount of £120 each, totalling £240 for both children, this is reduced to £60 per child if paid within 21 days).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal proceedings under S444 Education Act 1996.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Warwickshire County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices.

Your child's progress academically as well as socially is our shared priority

September 2020