



# SIR THOMAS RICH'S Attendance Policy

This Policy was produced in accordance with the 1996 Education Act, the Education (Pupil Registration) regulations as amended 2016, the DfE statutory guidance School attendance parental responsibility measures, January 2015, and the DfE non-statutory guidance: Working together to improve school attendance May 2022.

**Date reviewed:** July 2023

**Status:** **Good Practice**

**Responsibility:** The Senior Management Team (SMT) will review this policy regularly. The Trustees' Personnel Committee has responsibility for approving the policy and monitoring its implementation.

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## **1. Aims**

Sir Thomas Rich's School aims to create a stimulating and nurturing educational environment where the pupils themselves are motivated to attend to the highest levels. The School aims to maximise the educational attainment and social development of all pupils by promoting the importance of attendance and punctuality. The attendance policy is designed to enable the School to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the high attendance of all our pupils. We expect pupils to attend every day that the school is open to them. Sir Thomas Rich's School has a whole school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents/carers, pupils and all staff members to ensure that children are attending School. The School endeavours to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the appropriate support.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our policies on Child Protection and Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs, Staff Capability, and the Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

## **2. Legal Framework**

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, it is the law that parents/carers must ensure that their child (children) of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. This can be by regular attendance at School, at an alternative provision or otherwise, for example, the parent/carer can choose, to educate their child/children at home. A child continues to be of compulsory School age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach 16. From September 2015, all 16 years olds are required to continue in education/training until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. If a child/children attend school parents/carers must ensure that they attend school regularly and punctually.

Allowing unauthorised absence from school is an offence and parents/carers may be reported to the Local Authority if their child's (children's) absence from school is a significant cause for concern. Local Authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order or fail to ensure their child's/children's regular attendance at school.

### **3. Role and Responsibilities**

#### **Trustees**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the trustees will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff.
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children and staff.
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site.
- Regularly review attendance data at board meetings

#### **Senior Management Team**

The Headmaster has designated Peter Daniell, a member of the senior management team, as having overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance. The designated member of the senior management team will ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively. They will also develop and engage with multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend. Heads of Year/Heads of Key Stage will receive a weekly attendance and punctuality report for the year to date, they will document any intervention/explanation for any pupil below 90% attendance.

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the Senior Management team will:

- ensure all staff are active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- ensure that all staff are kept up to date with the School's attendance process, legislation and government guidance, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- ensure that legislation and government guidance on attendance is complied with and that they (the Senior Management team) are up to date with any legislative changes and how to implement them

#### **Members of teaching staff and support staff**

Members of teaching staff and support staff will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families.
- ensure that the School's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the School's attendance process, legislation, and government guidance, and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue.
- ensure registers are taken electronically twice daily and are completed in accordance with the standardised Department for Education register codes.
- ensure that in all lessons an electronic register is taken.
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve a pupil's attendance in case of future legal proceedings.
- all staff to contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed.
- work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance where they are needed.

## Parents and carers

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, parents are required to:

- ensure their children receives a suitable full-time education and attends school regularly as required by law.
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time, appropriately dressed and with the necessary equipment for the school day ahead.
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school (see section Reporting Absence 5) and include an expected date for return.
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as making medical and dental appointments outside school hours.
- use the School as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the School so that there is easy communication when a problem arises.
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the headmaster in writing.
- sign our home– school agreement.

## Pupils

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, pupils are requested to:

- be aware of the School's attendance rules, and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents and the school timetable.
- speak to their Form Tutor/Head of Year/Head of Key Stage if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance.
- will be punctual when arriving at school in the morning and will attend morning and afternoon registration on time (no later than 30 minutes after the registration begins). Failure to be punctual not only disrupts the learning of that pupil, but also the learning of others.
- attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate equipment for that school day. Lesson times will be made clear through their school timetable.
- follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late, or depart early from school.

## 4. Types of Absence

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence is given to the School. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences, the School has the power to do this on the basis of an explanation provided by a parent/carer.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents should inform the school via parent gateway or by telephone on the first day of absence and let the school know what date they expect their child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child.

### Illness – (attendance code - I)

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term, but parents will need to make contact via parent gateway or telephone to alert the School on the first day/each day of absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, and repeated or prolonged absence parents may be asked to provide the School with medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper. If these are not provided on request it may result in the absence continuing to be classed as unauthorised.

#### Medical or dental appointments – (attendance code – M)

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

#### Authorised absences – (attendance code – C)

There may be some exceptional instances where the school will authorise absence such as for a family bereavement.

#### Exclusion – (attendance code – E)

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The Head of Year will arrange for work to be sent home.

#### Family holidays and extended leave – (attendance code – H)

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave of this type must be made in writing to the headmaster at least 3 weeks in advance of the leave being taken. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered and will be processed as unauthorised absence. The headmaster may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the headmaster's decision is final on whether the request is approved and the length of absence approved.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing via email. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated date of return.

It remains the headmaster's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised (attendance code – G) and parents may be subject to further action by the school or prosecution by the local authority.

#### Religious observance – (attendance code R)

Sir Thomas Rich's School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends and will allow authorised absence for these times.

Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

#### Study leave – (attendance code S)

The school has a period of study leave leading up to GCSE and A Level examinations where pupils are granted authorised absence to revise at home. The school operates study sessions at school within this time to help with revision and to reduce the amount of time spent out of school.

#### Late arrival – (attendance code L)

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon. In the morning registration begins at 8.40am. Pupils who arrive after this time but within the registration period will be marked as late. The morning registration period ends at 9.00am.

Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to reception to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. Any unjustifiable reason for absence will be marked as unauthorised. It is vital that pupils sign in at reception to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for. Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action being taken against the pupil and/or criminal action being taken against the parents.

#### Unauthorised absence – (attendance code U)

If parents/carers fail to provide a satisfactory reason for their child's absence, the School will record the absence as unauthorised.

Pupils may be 'present' at School for the purposes of attendance if they are taking part in an approved off-site educational activity; this will be recorded with the appropriate code.

Educational visit – V

Supervised Sporting activity/fixture – P

Interview at another educational establishment or employer – J

Off-site educational activity – B

Work experience – W

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances – Y

## **5. Reporting Absence**

If a pupil is unexpectedly unable to attend school, for example through illness, his parent/carer should use parent gateway, or telephone the main school, choosing option 1 (the pupil absence notification) by 8.30am on the day of absence. When informing school of an absence the parent's message should include the pupil's name, form, and the reason for absence.

## **6. School Action Following Absence**

Class registers are completed using an electronic registration system. The Reception team will investigate any unexplained or unauthorised absences immediately, the school will then contact the parents or carers. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, their attendance will be monitored. Often this will have been caused by an acceptable reason(s) given for absence. If a pattern of absence emerges, the Attendance Officer/Head of Key Stage/Head of Year/Form Tutor will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and school support systems that could help. The school will also alert parents if they feel that issues of reluctance to attend particular lessons emerge.

Parents/carers will be contacted if a pupil gives a reason for an unauthorised absence and there is doubt about the truth of the reason.

## **7. School Action for pupils at risk of becoming Persistently absent**

When a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (Persistently absent) parents will be contacted and strategies put in place to support improved attendance where possible. The School will work with each pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any school related barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, the School will signpost and support any access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, the School will play an active role in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. The School will act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that our school is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, we will continue to work with the local authority and partners.

## **8. School Action for pupils that are persistently absent**

Where absence becomes persistent, the School will put in place additional targeted support to attempt to remove any school related barriers. Where necessary this will include working with partners. If there is a lack of engagement, the School will hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal action. Where attendance does not improve despite agreed supports in place, the School will work with the local authority to review the need for any legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, we will intensify support through statutory children's social care. As a school we will also work with other schools, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

Where a child has been absent from school for a period of more than 20 school days, and where the absence was unauthorised and both the school and local authority have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. The school will notify the local authority when such action is taken.

## **9. Recording Attendance and Punctuality**

The School buildings are open for pupils from 7.30am. Pupils are dismissed from the school at 3.20pm. Pupils are not supervised outside of these core school hours on the site unless they are involved in an organised extra-curricular activity or parents have been notified that their attendance is required.

Pupils must arrive by 8.30am to ensure that they are in their Form rooms ready for morning registration at 8.30am. If a pupil misses the morning or afternoon registration period, they must sign in at reception, stating the reason for their lateness.

Normally by 11.00am Parents will be sent a text to confirm their son's or daughter's absence and ascertain a reason if no notification has been provided. Parents can reply to this message directly, via phone or email.

All pupils who have attended one or both periods of daily registration but who are leaving school early must sign out in reception, stating the reason for their departure, this must be authorised in advance.

A register is also taken at the start of all timetabled lessons by the subject teacher or member of staff. Any unexplained absences are reported back to Reception staff. If a student is late to the lesson this will be recorded on the register. Persistent lateness may result in disciplinary action being taken against the pupil. Some members of the Sixth Form who finish non-contact lessons for the day are given the privilege of leaving for the day using the electronic facilities in the Sixth Form Centre (attendance code X). However Sixth Formers must be present at school for both morning and afternoon registration. Sixth Formers are also permitted to sign out and in during lunchtime (13.10 until 14.00) however they must use the electronic facility in the Sixth Form Centre.

The School recognises that high rates of attendance and punctuality are beneficial to a pupil's educational progress and the development of their organisational skills and self-discipline. The School gives praise to all those pupils whose attendance is 100% each term. This is recognised in a 100% attendance certificate. Those pupils who significantly improve their attendance will also receive a certificate as detailed in our Rewards Policy.