



RIDGEWAY

SECONDARY SCHOOL

**Ridgeway Secondary School
Attendance Policy 2021-22
Policy Responsibility: JW**



Ridgeway Secondary School Attendance Policy

Policy author: JW
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1.0	04.01.21	Policy written for Ridgeway Secondary School

Introduction

Our expectation is for all students to have 100% attendance and 100% punctuality to school and all lessons. There is strong statistical evidence to show that students who achieve this are more successful in school, make greater progress and that they are more likely to achieve their academic potential. The table below further highlights the link between attendance and learning:

If attendance over the school year is...	...the student will miss this many days	...and this many lessons
100%	0	0
95%	10	50
90%	19	95
85%	29	145
80%	39	195
75%	49	245
70%	58	290

In addition to the academic reasons for attendance, national research also shows:

- Children with poor attendance often become the victims of bullying
- Prolonged absence from school can lead to loneliness. It can make it harder for your child to get along with other children and make friends and can pose a safeguarding risk.

Ridgeway Secondary School values achievement of every kind and believes that we all respond well to having high expectations placed upon us.

Responsibilities

Although the legal responsibility for regular attendance at school rests with parents/carers, we regard the encouragement of good standards of attendance as a partnership with families designed to support the development of each individual student's potential.

If parents/carers have any concerns about their son/daughter's attendance or are concerned that there may be underlying reasons for him/her failing to attend school, then they should contact the attendance officer.

We ask that parents/carers support us by:

- not letting their son/daughter(s) take time off school for minor ailments.
- arranging appointments and outings after school hours, at weekends or during school holidays.
- not taking holidays during term time.
- ensuring that their son/daughter attends punctually at the beginning of every day.
- ringing or emailing by 8:45am on the first morning of all absences with the reason and saying when the student will return (we have a dedicated section of our phone line and website for this purpose). We ask that this procedure is repeated for any subsequent days' absence.
- sending in a note or email explaining the reason for absence on the student's return to school after an illness (this is a legal requirement).
- keeping us informed by telephone, letter or email on every subsequent day of absence after the first day.
- letting us know if there is any on-going medical reason that prevents their son/daughter attending school.

The school will:

- follow up all first day unexplained absences by phone call / email / text as soon as possible.
- continue to monitor the absence of a student who does not subsequently return to school as indicated with no explanation.
- remind parents/carers of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality via letters newsletters and the school website.

- publish students' attendance rate as part of their school reports.
- inform parents/carers if we have concerns regarding a student's attendance.
- challenge regular lateness.
- refer any serious attendance concerns to the Education Welfare Officer(EWO).
- in extreme cases, work with the appropriate authorities and exercise all possible powers we have to enforce attendance.
- inform the local authority and discuss arrangements for the education of students who are likely to be absent for 10 days or more.
- communicate with the local authority and alternative education providers to support students with medical needs.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Legally schools are required to distinguish and report on authorised and unauthorised student absence.

Authorised Absence

A student's absence will be treated as authorised if he/she is unable to attend school due to illness, medical, dental treatment, the death of a close family member or where permission has been granted by the headteacher. Other authorised circumstances such as student study leave, work experience and educational visits will be entered by the school.

Parents/carers should note that, ideally, all medical and dental appointments should be arranged for after school so that students do not miss any lessons. Where this proves to be impossible then students should bring an appointment card to school and follow procedures in the school's appendix in order to be granted leave of absence during the day. The student should then sign out at reception before leaving the school.

In order that we might be sure of the whereabouts and safety of our students we ask that parents/carers ring the relevant school by 8:45am on the morning of the first day of absence to notify us of the situation as described above.

On return to school, a letter or email signed by the parents/carers is required to confirm the reason for absence and the dates involved. We ask that this letter is brought to school on the first day back.

In cases of long-term absence or where a student's attendance is causing concern, doctor's notes or other medical evidence may be requested.

Unauthorised Absence

If an absence cannot be authorised or a reason for absence is not forthcoming, the absence will be treated as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be contacted by the school in order to seek a valid reason. It is at the school's discretion as to whether absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Extended Periods of Absence (including Holidays)

Please note, under recent amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) regulations, 2006, headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. All applications are assessed on an individual basis by each headteacher. In such exceptional circumstances, headteachers determine the number of school days a student can be away from school if the leave is granted. The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the amended regulations. It is for the headteacher to decide what is considered as exceptional circumstances. However, under these amendments, family holidays do **NOT** qualify as exceptional circumstances. However, leave to attend a high-level sporting commitment or to travel with the family due to the illness of a close family member may be deemed as exceptional circumstances. The schools' term dates are published a year in advance and are made available on their websites in the expectation that parents/carers will ensure that holidays are taken during school holiday times.

The strongest factor in underperformance at GCSE is irregular or poor attendance and it is our belief that we would be failing in our responsibility if we sanctioned time off school in all but the most exceptional circumstances.

Parents/Carers are therefore asked to respect these new regulations under which we must now work, and that if there is a need to take your son/daughter out of school during term time, it must be made very clear in the request how the circumstances are exceptional. In such circumstances, requests for the school to authorise absence should be made by writing to the headteacher in advance, not in retrospect.

Applications for leave of absence, which are made and refused, will result in the absence being unauthorised, which may result in legal action against parents/carers, by Penalty Notice, if the student is absent from school during that period.

Work and absence

Every lesson missed is an opportunity missed. Although every effort is made to support students in catching up with work missed, simply cannot be made up, so students inevitably lose out and their progress will be affected.

- Students who have permission to be absent from school (see above) are expected to get work in advance from teachers and make up any written work missed as soon as they can.
- Students who are off school for an extended length of time may obtain work to complete during their absence. This may be obtained by contacting the relevant pastoral leader.
- Students who are absent without notice (e.g. due to illness) are expected to complete all work missed. There is a section in the student planner for students to note work missed which will be monitored by teachers. We ask that parents/carers also monitor this, to ensure all work is completed.

Request for leave of absence

If medical or dental appointments have to be made in school time, an appointment card or a letter from parents/carers should be shown to the Attendance Officer (Mrs R Craig) at least 48 hours prior to the day concerned and a pass will be issued.

Parent/carers who would like to request a leave of absence for exceptional circumstances should write a letter to the Attendance Officer who will inform the Headteacher in advance.

Children Missing Education

- We ask all parents/carers to provide us with more than one emergency contact number. This gives us additional options to contact a responsible adult when a child missing education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.
- The Attendance Officer prioritises phone calls and home visits for key students.
- The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) follows appropriate procedures when carrying out reasonable enquiries- e.g. discussions with neighbours, relatives, landlords etc to determine whether a child may be at risk of harm.
- There may be occasion where we have been unable to contact parents/carers after 2 days, have no information as to the whereabouts of the student, there is no answer at the home address and neighbours do not know of their whereabouts. In that case, the DSL or Attendance Officer will request the police do a safe and well check on the second or third day of absence. We inform social services, through the Worcestershire Family Front Door, to let them know we have requested a police safe and well check.
- We inform the local authority of any student who has missed 10 school days or more without permission.
- When appropriate, the DSL will make a referral to social services and/or police.

Monitoring

Staff at each school monitor attendance and punctuality; this includes designated members of SLT team, Attendance Officer(s); pastoral leaders and the form tutor. There are other staff (e.g. school nurse, family support worker) who may monitor attendance as part of their work with individual students and families.

The processes and responsibilities for monitoring are outlined in the appendix for each school.

The Education Welfare Service

The EWS is the Local Authority's statutory service for the enforcement of school attendance and other education related legal interventions.

A school will refer a student to the EWO if:

- A student's attendance declines below 90% unless appropriate medical evidence is provided to excuse absence
- A student's attendance declines rapidly and there is little evidence of parental/carer engagement.
- A student's attendance declines rapidly and parents/carers refuse to accept their responsibility for ensuring that their son/daughter attends the school every day and on time
- Parents/Carers condone their son/daughter's absence or truancy
- Parents/Carers remove their son/daughter from school for unauthorised absence – including for family holidays.

After negotiation with the school, the EWO may issue a Penalty Notice to a parent/carer. The Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days and £120 if paid within 28 days. The local authority's code of conduct states that 'The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in cases of:

- An excluded child is found in a public place during the school hours of the first five days of exclusion
- Overt truancy is detected (including being caught on truancy sweeps)
- Parentally condoned absence is evidenced
- Unauthorised leave of absence has been taken (unauthorised family holidays)
- Delayed return from leave of absence without prior school agreement
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed)

We are obliged to refer any issues to the EWO who will decide whether to issue a Penalty Notice.

The use of a Penalty Notice allows a parent/carer to discharge their liability for an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 by the payment of a fine. If the fine remains unpaid at the end of the 28-day payment period, the matter will automatically proceed to court for prosecution of the original offence unless the notice is withdrawn, and the parent/carer will be notified in writing.

- Begin court proceedings when the school and EWO have exhausted all possible strategies
- It is hoped that the working partnership between the school, the parent/carer and the student will lead to positive outcomes with regard to any attendance and/or punctuality issues and avoid the need to begin legal proceedings. However, it should be noted, that if there is not an appropriate improvement in attendance and that if recourse has to be taken to legal action, this may result in a parental/carer fine of up to £2,500, a community order or, in extreme cases, a jail sentence of up to three months. If the court thinks it will help to stop your child missing school. The court may also impose a Parenting Order. Please see the following website for further details:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/parents/schoolslearninganddevelopment/yourchildswelfareatschool/dg_066966

Support for Attendance Issues

The school seek to be proactive when dealing with attendance issues and aim to provide high quality teaching, curriculum flexibility, mentoring and multi-agency working. If a student's absence gives cause for concern, a school leader will, where appropriate, instigate a support package.

Rewards and sanctions

All schools have a variety of rewards for attendance and punctuality. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure students with medical conditions are not disadvantaged.

Students who are late (either to school or to lessons/tutor sessions throughout the day) will be sanctioned in accordance with the school's behaviour protocols.

Students who abscond from lessons and/or leave the school site without permission at any time during the school day will be sanctioned in accordance with the Behaviour for Learning Protocols for each school.

Appendix 2: Ridgeway Secondary School Attendance Monitoring and Protocols

Overview of protocols

Times of day

Tutor Time	8.45 – 9.05
Period 1	9.05 – 10.05
Period 2	10.05 – 11.05
Break	11.05 – 11.25
Period 3	11.25 – 12.25
Period 4	12.25 – 13.25
Lunch	13.25 – 14.00
Period 5	14.00 – 15.00

Late protocols

School begins with a tutorial session at 8.45am. All students must arrive to school and all lessons on time.

- The school's Attendance Officer checks the registers and if a student is still absent by 9.10am and no communication has been received from the student's parent/carer then contact will be made with the student's parent/carer.
- If a student is marked late to school or lessons, without an appropriate reason the students will then be placed in a C2 detention, which takes place at lunchtime.
- If a student is marked as late twice in a week to school/lessons, without an appropriate reason (for example a medical appointment, supported by a letter or appointment card), then they will be placed in a 3 - Afterschool detention, which takes place Monday-Friday between 2.55pm and 3.30pm.

Lesson truancy

- Students are registered in every lesson. Any student who is absent during lesson time, without permission will be placed in internal exclusion and the parents/carers will be contacted as soon as the absence has become apparent. If the student subsequently fails to comply with the school's attendance requirements, then parents/carers will be asked to attend an attendance panel meeting at the school.
- If a student absconds from school during the day, then he/she has chosen to place him/herself beyond our care. In such circumstances, parents/carers will be contacted, and a sanction will be issued.

Rewards

- Certificates
- Reward lunches

Details of the monitoring procedures

Roles and responsibilities

There are a number of staff at the school who monitor attendance and punctuality: designated member of SLT team, Attendance Officer (AO); form tutor; and head of key stage.

The **designated member of the SLT** will:

- oversee attendance and punctuality procedures
- be aware of students who are a cause for concern
- Informs the headteacher of any attendance/punctuality concerns

The **Attendance Officer** will:

- monitor the attendance and punctuality of all students and inform the heads of year of any causes for concern
- check the registers
- and if a student is still absent by 9:10am and no communication has been received from the student's parent/carer then contact will be made as soon as is practical with the student's parent/carer.
- on a weekly basis, provide data to show each Year group's attendance, authorised absence, unauthorised absence and persistent absence. This information will be disseminated to the head of key stage, headteacher, and designated member of SLT.
- monitor punctuality and set detentions for any student who attends school or lessons late (after the start of the tutor session at 8:45 am)
- liaise with heads of key stage to report punctuality concerns. As with attendance issues, this may result in an invitation to parents/carers to attend a meeting at school to support student punctuality.
- refer to the Educational Welfare Service for potential prosecution.
- meet with all students and parents and carers whose attendance is below 90% or whose attendance gives cause for concern, to devise an attendance strategy.

The **form tutor** will:

- monitor the attendance of his/her tutor group on a daily basis.
- ensure that absence notes are collected on a student's return to school.

The **head of key stage** will:

- monitor attendance for the whole year group. They are responsible for ensuring that their year group meets or exceeds the school attendance target.
- contact parents/carers where attendance falls below 92%, which may result in a meeting in school to devise an attendance strategy.
- meet with all students and parents and carers whose attendance is below 90% or whose attendance gives cause for concern, to devise an attendance strategy.

Thresholds for interventions

Stage	Attendance	Category
1	96%- 100%	Expected
2	90% - 96%	Below expected
3	<90%	Concern

Attendance Percentage	Response/Action
Below 90% Previous academic year	Return to school support calls from Pastoral team Pastoral team support check ins during tutorial Text nudge to parents/carers
94-96%	Attendance monitored by attendance officer and Head of key stage Attendance concern letter 1 at 94% Information leaflet 'Every day counts'
92-94%	Attendance concern letter 2 Meeting with student and member of the pastoral team
Below 92%	Attendance meeting face to face/Microsoft Teams Attendance strategies devised and all actions identified in writing Home visit completed on failure to attend Request for medical evidence for future absences
Continued absence unsupported with medical evidence	Refer to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) for potential prosecution.

Contact details and reporting an absence

The school uses a SIMS system called Lesson Monitor to record student attendance during am/pm sessions and for all lessons. We ask that if a student cannot attend school on a particular day, that the parent/carer phones the Attendance Officer (01527 892867) by 8:45am, to report the absence. We ask that this procedure is repeated for any subsequent days' absence.

HOW TO REPORT ABSENCE:

Please complete the form from the link below:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=vNzgoWi48E2bFEnffg6gieb8Psw7xixFqj1zRFIdoijtUNDhBVFczNE5ONzM2ODQ3OUJBQUs5SjY0Sy4u>