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RISHWORTH SCHOOL

CHILD ABSENT FROM EDUCATION POLICY

Children who are absent from education for prolonged periods and/or repeated occasions

Distribution: School website, School Policy Drive.

Note: **This policy should be read in conjunction with all other relevant policies and procedures relating to child protection and registration.**

Rishworth is committed to the promotion of the welfare of all children and recognises the primary importance of maintaining a safe environment for all children and adults. The school will safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are students at the school, in compliance with the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024. For this reason, health and safety is of paramount importance and should be an integral part of all processes. In the event of a student not being collected, it is vitally important that all adults use professional and personal judgement in order to ensure the safety and well-being of that young person.

Policy

1.0 Purpose

In order to ensure our vision for our students is fully realised, allowing them to flourish in every aspect of their lives, developing the self-knowledge and self-reliance to find purpose and enjoy every opportunity in their lives, it is imperative that every child attends school regularly.

Missing lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and children with poor attendance records tend to achieve less, in all stages of their school lives.

Consistent and regular attendance is a requirement of the School. In exceptional circumstances such as prolonged illness, recuperation or compassionate circumstances that result in extended absence, the school will provide work and facilitate a student's return to full time education within an agreed timeframe. This is at the Head's discretion.

The Government expects all schools to:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, students and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all students are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow- up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify students or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of students absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

In addition to these School responsibilities, there is also an expectation that:

- Parents will perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.
- All students should be punctual to their lessons and other timetabled School activities.

School Procedures ensure that up-to-date information and contact numbers are held centrally, and can also be accessed by all staff. Colleagues are able to access and use the centralised computer record system, currently iSAMS. In addition, parents are supplied with contact numbers for the School on hard copy literature and on the website: https://www.rishworth-school.co.uk/

2.0 Unexplained Absence

2.1 The school has a duty to follow up any unexplained absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data to the School Census.

2.3 Where a student has not returned to school for **10** days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for **20** consecutive school days (28 days in the case of exclusion for non payment of fees for UK resident students, 10 days in the case of any student where the School sponsor their TIER 4 visa in order to comply with immigration rules as per Clause 9.10 of the Terms & Conditions), the student can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

2.4 The School has a legal duty to report certain attendance issues to its local authority: 10 days unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or leave of absence); failure to attend regularly, and deletion from the school register when the next school is not known. In the last-mentioned case, the School is required to report the circumstances as soon as possible to the local authority in which the student lives.

2.5 The School will inform the local authority (where the child is a UK resident) when a student's name is to be deleted from the admissions register on certain grounds, namely (i) when the child has been taken out of school to be home educated; (ii) when

the family has apparently moved away; (iii) when the child has been certified as medically unfit to attend; (iv) when a child is in custody for more than four months; or (v) the child has been permanently excluded. (It may be necessary to make, as appropriate within any existing rules and guidelines, an additional report to the Immigration Authorities where the child is an international student.)

3.0 Procedure

3.1 First Day Calling Procedure

If a day student has failed to arrive by 9.20 am, and no explanation for non-attendance has been received from the parents or guardian, the School Office will make reasonable enquiries of the parents, guardian, boarding staff or other stakeholders as to the reason for the student's non-attendance and record we have completed these procedures (see below). It will, as soon as possible, make the same enquiries of boarding staff in respect of any boarder whose non-attendance at registration has been marked with the symbol 'N'. The School Office will amend the electronic register when information about a student's absence has been obtained or verified. In any event the School Office will keep a list of printed absence; this information can then be used for fire procedures.

Procedure:

- Registers saved by 8.50am.
- Late children checked and registered.
- Absence emails and answer machine messages listened to.
- Check lessons to see if student has arrived but not signed in at Reception.
- First phone call to parents/boarding staff by 9.40am asking for a response.
- If no reply a second phone call, text or email is sent requesting a response.
- By 10.20am the Head or DSL should be informed of any child still unaccounted for.
- If still no response, start calling, ringing down all contacts on our system until a reply is received including social workers etc.
- Continue throughout day to try to make contact using contact list and if known, child's own phone number. A home visit may be appropriate and a decision to proceed with such will be made by the DSL or a nominated deputy, based on the family circumstances, the decision to make a home visit or not to make a home visit will be recorded on CPOMS along with the accompanying rationale.
- If child does not present in school on second day, there has been no information received from any of the contacts and the child's whereabouts are unknown, the Police should be contacted. This should be done using the 101 number.

3.2 On the day that a student returns to school, he/she should provide explanation for their absence from a parent or guardian. This can be in the form of a letter, email or telephone call and is submitted to the School Office and added to the student's file. If explanation has not been received by the second day after a student's return from absence, the parent/guardian concerned is phoned and informed that the absence will

be counted as an unauthorised absence unless communication is received the next day; any such communication, once received, should be dealt with in the manner above.

3.3 It is a tutor's responsibility to monitor the attendance of their tutees. Where there is a concern, the matter should be discussed at first with the student (if appropriate) and then with the appropriate Head of Year or member of the SLT. Where an attendance problem is identified in that conversation, and as the first line of contact with parents, the Form Tutor will liaise with parents about the matter in the first instance. It is important that any contact is recorded in writing so that a full record of any dialogue can be kept should the matter need to escalate. As a guide, we expect students to have full attendance. However, there will be occasions when, for example, a tutee is unwell and kept off school. Tutors should raise the matter as a potential attendance issue where absence becomes significant in scale or appears to be following a pattern. Letters are sent home if attendance falls below 90% without a valid previously notified reason.

Exceptional leave

Requests for exceptional absence for any planned appointment or event should be as far in advance as possible in writing to the absence email: admin@rishworth-school.co.uk. All requests will be considered by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) consulting, where necessary, with the Head. We do ask for as much notice as possible and supportive acceptance if for any reason we feel that permission should not be granted. Students will only be granted leave to be absent from school in exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave of absence on compassionate grounds or in exceptional circumstances should be made in writing and in advance of the proposed absence when possible. Absence in exceptional circumstances does not include birthdays, family holidays, days out as a special treat or other family celebrations.

In relation to absences for religious observance, the School will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belongs. Where necessary, the school may seek confirmation from that religious body that the day has been set apart for religious observance.

Whilst it is preferred that absence in term time is avoided, each request will be considered individually and decisions made based on a number of criteria including:

- The stage the student has reached in their educational career
- Whether there are compassionate reasons such as a serious family illness or bereavement - The student's academic record
- The unique nature of the absence
- If the request is to participate in a co-curricular activity such as sport or drama, the level of representation will be considered
- Whether the student is sponsored on a Student Visa.

In relation to request for absence for a holiday or recreational reasons in term time, these should not be expected to be recorded as authorised.

Provision of work during absence
For authorised absences of 5 days or fewer, the usual expectation is that the student will take responsibility for catching up with missed work on their return to School.

For authorised absences longer than 5 days, the tutor or Head of Year will assist the student in catching up with missed work.

In the case of unauthorised absences, there is not an expectation that the School will provide work, but teachers may do so at their own discretion.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) is a term referring to reduced or non-attendance at school by a child or young person.

Rather than the term 'school refusal', the term EBSA recognises that this avoidance has its source in emotional, mental health or wellbeing issues. A growing body of analysis suggests that EBSA should not be thought of as a deliberate act of defiance, but instead as a complex issue inextricably linked with mental health and wellbeing.

This guidance applies to students displaying social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance. It is not only for students who have a diagnosed mental disorder, or a disability or special educational need.

As well as working on universal approaches to mental health and wellbeing, Rishworth School recognises the importance of developing a planned process around EBSA for children and young people who require more targeted support.

The possible interventions in cases where EBSA is being displayed are:

1. In the early stages of a possible EBSA being identified and a student's attendance is at or below 90%, a member of staff (normally the tutor or HOY) may meet with student and call home. If the student is not in School, a phone call home may happen. Any conversations would aim to sensitively communicate the School's high expectations for attendance and identify any potential risk factors that might be contributing to EBSA. Any reasonable adjustments or support put in place should ensure that the time the child spends in school is prioritised (DfE, Feb 2023). These will need to consider the individual circumstances of the child, mindful of safeguarding responsibilities as set out in KCSIE (2024). A Return to School Action plan may be required at this, or any other, stage of a student displaying EBSA.

2. If attendance does not improve, the likely next step would be a meeting with parents and student in School. Any actions or reasonable adjustments would be agreed by all parties and followed up in writing.

3. If attendance does not improve, the likely next step would be a meeting with parents to further assess the student's EBSA and barriers to attendance, consider the risk factors contributing and review current reasonable adjustments. It would be reiterated to all that the priority must be working towards fully integrating the student back into School. A prolonged period of absence may heighten anxiety about attending in future (DfE, Feb 2023).

4. If attendance does not improve, a home visit may be considered, organised with parents' prior consent. There would be further assessment of risk factors contributing, review of reasonable adjustments, barriers to attendance. It would be reiterated to all that the priority must be working towards fully integrating the student back into School. A prolonged period of absence may heighten anxiety about attending in future (DfE, Feb 2023). An Early Help or Section 17 referral may be appropriate at this stage, **however, we reserve the right to make an Early Help or Section 17 referral at any point and would consult with parents before doing so unless doing so is perceived to put the child at greater risk.**