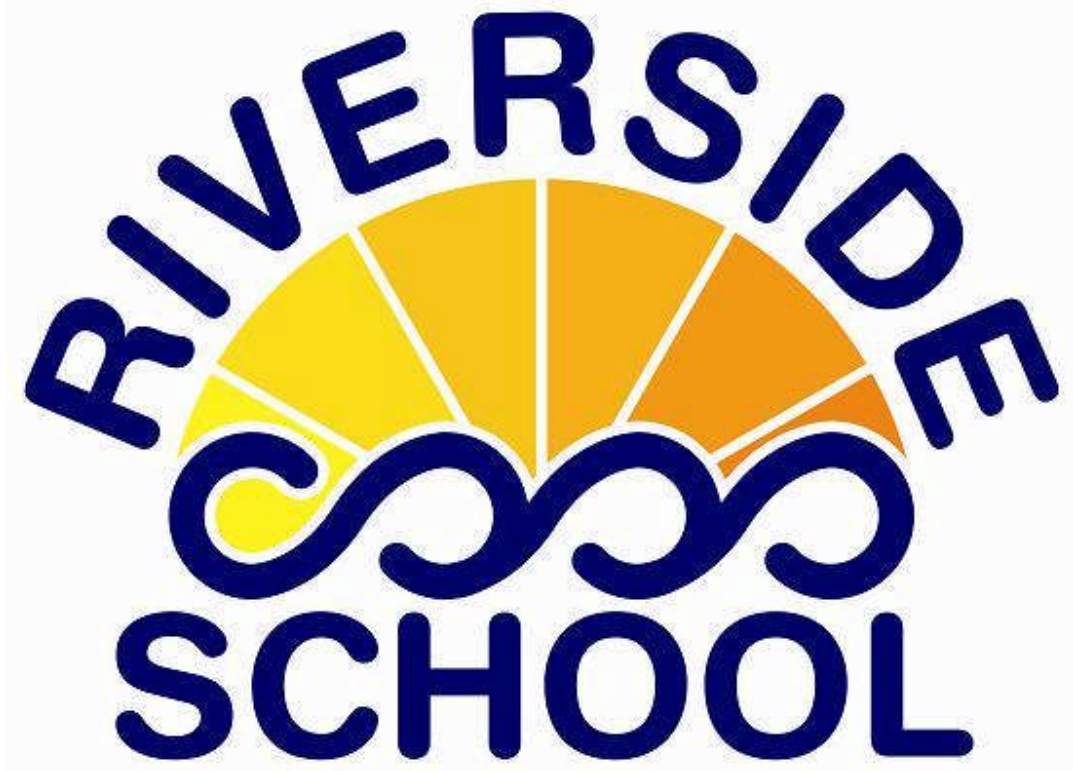


# **RIVERSIDE SCHOOL**



## **STAFF ATTENDANCE POLICY**

APPROVED BY GOVERNORS ON – 23rd FEBRUARY 2010

DUE FOR REVIEW - FEBRUARY 2012

RESPONSIBLE PERSON – HEADTEACHER

SIGNED BY CHAIR OF GOVERNORS \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Introduction

This document provides clear guidelines on staff attendance so that the school can reach optimum levels in order to maintain efficient use of its resources. It should be read in conjunction with local authority guidelines for monitoring and managing absences and the model procedure for handling impaired capability on grounds of ill health.

## 2. Conditions of Service

Regular attendance is a requirement for school staff to carry out their professional duties as set out in their contracts of employment, job descriptions and statutory conditions of employment. The two relevant documents outlining the conditions of employment for staff in this school are the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (DCFS) for teachers and the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services for support staff, midday supervisors, clerical staff, caretakers and cleaners.

Riverside is a Community Special School and all school staff are employed by the Local Authority. References to staff attendance are contained in relevant sections of Bromley's Personnel Handbook for Schools. This Handbook provides a reference manual which incorporates the main policies, procedures and general information governing the employment of staff in Schools.

## 3. Absence through sickness

A satisfactory level of attendance at work is crucial to the smooth running of the school. High absence rates not only impact on staff left to cover the absence but have major implications for the school budget. Unsatisfactory absence rates ultimately lead to lower standards of work and service, in other words, the children lose out. The head teacher must therefore, as a part of normal day-to-day supervision, ensure that staff are aware of the standards of attendance required, where improvement is required and how these will be monitored and reviewed over time. The expectation for all staff in the school is that there will be very high levels of attendance. There is acceptance, of course, that people can become sick; however, employees need to know that there is an expectation that absence through sickness should be kept at a minimum and that sickness records are rigorously monitored. Staff also need to know that failure to reach an acceptable level of attendance may result in formal action being taken under the LA Procedure for Handling Impaired Capability on the Grounds of Ill-Health.

## 4. Annual Leave

With the exception of the School Business Manager and the Site Manager, no annual leave provisions are specified for employees of the school, as duties are mainly undertaken during term-time. Special leave of absence for holidays in term-time is not allowed (as stated in employees' conditions of service).

## 5. Special Leave (Paid and Unpaid Leave)

In accordance with LA guidelines, there may be exceptional circumstances when the head teacher may grant special paid or unpaid leave. With the exception of compulsory court attendance, maternity/adoption/paternity leave, school governor duties, agreed trade union duties, jury service, graduation of a partner or child, all special leave, whether paid or unpaid, is at the discretion of the head teacher. As specified in the Staff Handbook, all staff requests for special leave should be submitted on the green special leave application form. All special leave application forms (whether approved or refused) are kept on record. Special leave forms must be submitted at least 7 days in

advance of the proposed period of absence. This will give the head teacher adequate time in which to decide on applications and will give him or her time to seek LA advice, if necessary. All special leave, whether paid or unpaid, is included on the school's weekly absence return form to the LA for salary purposes. Special leave forms are kept in a file in the deputy head teacher's office.

Staff must use special leave forms to request attendance for hospital appointments as records may also indicate a medical problem that may need further action, for example, referral to the LA Occupational Health Physician. In exceptional circumstances, the head teacher may consider a request for special leave within 7 days, e.g., if a medical appointment is urgent.

#### 6. Absence Reporting

The requirements for reporting absence are set down in the school staff handbook. Staff (or partners / family members if this is not possible due to illness) must telephone the school between 8.00 – 8.15 and speak to the head teacher, deputy head teacher or assistant head teacher if they are not well enough to come into school. Staff must ring the school each day unless other arrangements have been made with the head teacher. On return to school, all staff must complete a yellow absence form giving details of the absence for monitoring purposes.

#### 7. Staff Cover

Staff should be aware of the difficulties that the school faces in finding appropriate staff to cover the duties of staff absent through sickness and the financial consequences of bringing in replacement staff. This applies to teaching and non-teaching staff. It is not always possible to find replacement staff, especially on the first day of a person's absence through sickness. Contingences may need to be made using the complement of staff in school on a particular day. In other words, staff may be moved from their usual classes to cover for someone absent.

#### 8. Employee Notification of Sickness Absences

The requirements for notifying sickness absences are set down with the written statement of employment particulars issued to every employee on taking up appointment and within the school's staff handbook. As part of the staff induction process, the head or deputy head teacher should ensure that new employees understand these requirements. On return to work staff are required to complete a yellow absence form of monitoring purposes. Absence reporting procedures are also set down on the reverse of Bromley's self-certification form (PER 1). Staff need to complete the self-certification form when they are absent for more than 3 calendar days (including Saturday and Sunday) and a doctor's certificate needs to be attached to this form for any illness, etc., exceeding 7 calendar days. It is important that staff complete this form correctly. It is necessary to indicate not only the actual day of return to duty but also the day fit to resume work, if these are not the same, in order that the correct entitlement for sick pay purposes can be applied. For example: absent Friday, fit Saturday, return to work Monday.

#### 9. Meeting with the Head Teacher or Deputy Headteacher on return to work

All staff members who return to work after an extended period of sickness must see the Head Teacher, Deputy Headteacher or School Business Manager, ( or in their absence another Senior member of Staff) on the first day of his or her return to work, before the school day commences. Return from absence meetings for shorter periods will be conducted by Head of Department. This meeting can provide a context in which to

discuss a staff member's attendance record and helps fulfil the employer and employee's responsibilities for occupational health and safety, i.e., determining that employees are fit to resume their full duties and responsibilities. A return to work form should be completed and copied to the SBM.

#### 10. Record Keeping and Monitoring

The school has rigorous and effective mechanisms to record and monitor staff sickness. Currently, manual and electronic records are kept each day on individual staff attendance. The LA also sends 6-monthly computerised records of individual staff absences. The head teacher will refer a member of staff to the Occupational Health Physician at an early stage if there are concerns about a staff member's attendance. School Governors should have an overview of how effectively the head teacher is monitoring staff absence and any action he or she takes to improve staff attendance. Staff attendance is an agenda item at Governors' Personnel Sub-Committee meetings.

#### 11. Dependants Leave

The Employment Relations Act 1999 provides a right for employees, regardless of length of service, to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies involving dependants and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements. Dependant is defined as a spouse or cohabitee, child, parent or anyone who reasonably relies on the employee either for assistance if the person falls ill, is injured or assaulted, or to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury. The right does not include an entitlement to paid dependants leave. It is at the head teacher's discretion whether to pay dependants leave. Staff should have a clear understanding of the notion of 'emergency' action on these occasions; there is an expectation that they will do everything in their power, as quickly as is practicable, to make satisfactory arrangements for the dependant so that the staff member can attend work. The head teacher will handle dependants leave sensitively; however, staff should acknowledge any shared responsibility for dependants, for example with their partner (where this is applicable). Staff should also understand that it is at the head teacher's discretion as to whether they are paid for time that they take off from school to care for a dependant. Staff will not be paid, in any circumstances, for the second and subsequent days of absence of Dependants Leave.

#### 12. Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave

Details of Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave can be obtained from the secretaries' office or from the Human Resources department of the Local Authority.

#### 13. Disciplinary Action

If, following investigation, the school has evidence that an employee is abusing the right to time off, disciplinary action shall be taken, in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedure.