



Attendance policy

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Copies of all of our policies can be found
in the school office, and online at
rutherfordschool.org.uk

1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students bearing in mind the students complex health needs;
- promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance with our parents and carers;
- reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- acting early to address patterns of absence;
- building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school including appropriate transport arrangements.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, students and parents/carers;
- making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority as required;

- making sure the school works effectively with local partners (e.g. transport) to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate;
- recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources;
- making sure the school has high aspirations for all students, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs;
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most;
- working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge;
- monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students' needs;
- making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - the importance of good attendance;
 - that absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues;
 - the school's legal requirements for keeping registers;
 - the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate;
- making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data;
- holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy at the school;
- setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance;
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students;
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
- working with the parents/carers of our students to develop specific support approaches for attendance including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where the student faces in-school barriers;
- communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs;
- communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents/carers through all available channels;
- sharing information from the school register with the local authority, including:
 - providing the local authority with the details of students who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been marked with an unauthorised absence for a continuous period of 10 school days;

- providing the local authority with the details of students who the school believes will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness;

3.3 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), and submitting this information to the school office following completion in the morning. The office will complete the register for the afternoon session. Class teachers are also responsible for:

- leading, championing and improving attendance in their class;
- liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed;
- building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues;
- creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers;
- delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families.

3.4 School office staff

School office staff will:

- take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system;
- inform the teaching and learning lead and the class teacher about student absences following contact by parents/carers
- maintain the electronic attendance register and provide information to the headteacher as required.

3.5 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- make sure their child attends every day and on time;
- call the school or contact the class teacher by email to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence giving the reason for absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return;
- provide the school with 2 emergency contact numbers for their child;
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day;
- keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority;
- seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting their child's class teacher or the office, who can be contacted via the class teacher's email, rutherford@rutherfordschool.org.uk or the school's telephone number 02086887560.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We keep a paper and an electronic attendance register, and place all students onto these registers.

We take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- present;
- attending an approved off-site educational activity;

- absent;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances;
- unable to attend for medical reasons.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- the original entry;
- the amended entry;
- the reason for the amendment;
- the date on which the amendment was made ;
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- leave of absence;
- respite.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 9.00am and ends at 3.15pm.

Students must arrive in school by 9.15am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.15am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.30pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent /carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible, by calling or emailing the school office or the class teacher, who can be contacted via rutherford@rutherschool.org.uk or 02086887560.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be recorded in the register.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent /carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code;
- after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code unless there are extenuating circumstances i.e. difficulties with transport;
- ongoing attendance issues including lateness will be discuss with the parents/carers.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may email the parent/carer;
- identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the student was absent;
- call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an external agency;
- where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents/carers to improve attendance;
- identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals;

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents /carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via Star Reviews and Annual Reviews of their EHCP.

5. Absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow students to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to

Holidays during term time are discouraged and where possible, holidays should be taken during the school closure/enrichment periods. We do however recognise that for some, a holiday is important for enjoying quality time together, particularly if the child has experienced prolonged illness or extended post-operative care. Any family/residential holiday request should be made in writing to the Head of School using the request of leave in term time form.

Holiday absences will not usually be authorised in the following circumstances:

- The student's attendance is giving cause for concern and there is no underlying medical problem affecting this.
- The holiday period exceeds 10 school days.

Permission for such absence is made at Headteacher discretion

5.2 Acting Early to address patterns of absence

Acting early to address patterns of absence All pupils are registered daily and codes used to identify the reasons for any absence.

Register opens for the am session at 09:30 and for the pm session at 14:00. The register remains open for half an hour to give time for any essential intervention / transport issue. During the half hour of register remaining open the school must have previously acknowledged the reason for the late arrival into school.

A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another code that is more suitable for the individual circumstance.

Punctuality times are sporadically monitored and individual cases of concern will be discussed at SLT meetings under the agenda item - attendance and punctuality.

All absence is monitored via the registration process weekly and termly. We report absence rates on our Safeguarding system and we note any reasons as we except that this may have a bearing on pupil progress outcomes but also to look for trends and patterns.

We support 'Welfare call' from many local authorities to report weekly attendance and absences for 'looked after children'

Absence through illness is monitored to pick up on changes in pupil's presentations with an aim to seek medical support and intervention as quickly as possible.

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents/carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents/carers a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the student attends school.

They will include:

- details of the student's attendance record and of the absences;
- the benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#);
- details of the support provided so far;
- opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
- a clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period;
- the cessation of the placement along with the funding should attendance not improve within the stated period of time.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance will be promoted through reports written or STAR and Annual Reviews of the student's EHCP. Attendance will also be celebrated at our celebration events when parents/carers are invited. An attendance contract will be offered for student's where their attendance has fallen below an acceptable level along with strategies put into place to encourage attendance i.e. a part-time timetable which builds into fulltime provision over a set period of time, discussions with parents/carers about how attendance can be improved.

7. Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Students absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Following a period of absence, the student will be offered a phased return through a part-time timetable which will build to fulltime over a specified period of time. A return to school meeting will take place with parents/carers to discuss the strategies the school will put into place for the student's return addressing all outstanding barriers. During the absence the school will undertake wellbeing checks and if there are any concerns will seek advice from MASH or the adult safeguarding team.

7.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health ~~or SEND~~

Following a period of absence, the student will be offered a phased return through a part-time timetable which will build to fulltime over a specified period of time. A return to school meeting will take place with parents/carers to discuss the strategies the school will put into place for the student's return addressing all outstanding barriers and ongoing medical conditions. During the absence the school will undertake wellbeing checks and if there are any concerns will seek advice from MASH or the adult safeguarding team.

Where a student has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the student's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

Before pupils return to school after surgery or illness in hospital parents or carers need to ensure that any care plans are updated and all professionals are informed of any changes required to the pupil's programmes or equipment. Medical and therapies involved with the pupil's care work with the school to aid the pupils return to school as quickly as possible.

7.3 Students returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Following a period of lengthy or avoidable absence, the student will be offered a phased return through a part-time timetable which will build to fulltime over a specified period of time. A return to school meeting will take place with parents/carers to discuss the strategies the school will put into place for the student's return addressing all outstanding barriers. During the absence the school will undertake wellbeing checks and if there are any concerns will seek advice from MASH or the adult safeguarding team.

8. Attendance monitoring

Attendance is monitored on a termly and annual basis and the data is presented to governors during their termly meeting. Attendance data is collated from the class registers and/or the electronic record and analysed for trends. As there is a lack of national data for PMLD schools/students, comparisons are made against previous school records.

The school will:

- analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, and classes that need additional support with their attendance, and
- identify students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence;
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends;
- look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns;
- provide targeted support to the students it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families;
- provide regular attendance reports to facilitate discussions with students and families, and to the governing board and school leaders, and designated safeguarding leads);
- use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies;

8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will contact the local authority and place a referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls / email to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and for other emergency purposes)
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the child/family such as respite / community nurse team
- Possible home visits
- Virtual Facetime call All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.

Unauthorised absence is generally not an issue in the school and absence is usually due to medical complexity however, we set the term dates for our school year and we expect all pupils to attend at least 380 sessions / 190 days.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
I	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
l	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend e.g. Covid screening
C	Exceptional circumstances/leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
R	Respite/Religious observance	Student is having respite care or taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

