

Attendance Policy



1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold and complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register: By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The online attendance register on SIMs will be taken at the start of the morning and afternoon session of each school day. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Unplanned absence: Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). The school will record all attendance-related incoming messages from parents and notify the relevant person. In cases where no satisfactory reason has been received to explain a pupil's absence, the school will endeavour to contact home on the first day of absence. When a pupil is absent and contact cannot be made by telephone, a text message will be sent.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments: Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

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

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality: A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code. A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence: The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents: Parents are notified on their child's attendance record annually in the written end-of-year report.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence: Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Term-time holidays will not be approved.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions: Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

- Incentives will be made available to promote and maintain good attendance levels.
- Attendance targets will be set.
- Certificates may be awarded to pupils with high attendance rates and significantly improved attendance.

6. Attendance monitoring

The Learning Mentor monitors pupil absence on a half termly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

The school's threshold for poor attendance is 92%. At the end of Term 1, if a child's attendance falls below the threshold set by the school, the school will inform parents and take action (Appendix 2).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the SLT in collaboration with all staff.

After review, this policy will be approved by the school's Governing Body.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2021.

Policy Approved by	School Governing Body
Chair of Governing Body	Pete Sheldon
Signature of Chair of Governing Body	
Date	
Review Date	September 2021

Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.1. The **Governing Board** is responsible for:
 - Receiving information from the Head of School on attendance.
 - Contributing to plans in response to where attendance is a cause for concern.
 - Supporting the school in its efforts to raise attendance.
 - Contributing to the school's strategies to improve attendance.

- 1.2. The **Senior Leadership Team** are responsible for:
 - Developing, monitoring and reviewing the Attendance Policy.
 - Producing and distributing Attendance information for parents/carers.
 - Setting and monitoring targets for improving attendance within school.
 - Supporting all staff in their work related to attendance.
 - Attending School Attendance Panel meetings of identified pupils and working closely with the Early Help Team to monitor and review these.
 - Collating attendance data for the DfE (Department for Education), LA (Local Authority) and Governors.
 - Liaising with the LA over attendance targets and school strategy.

- 1.3. **Class Teachers** are responsible for:
 - Having regular discussions with pupils about the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.
 - Collecting reasons for absence from pupils, i.e. absence notes and handing them into the office.
 - Responding to queries and concerns when parents initially contact school about attendance.

1.4. **Admin Assistant & Admin Manager** are responsible for:

- Accurately logging when letters and phone calls have been initiated and referring serious concerns to the Learning Mentors.
- Contacting parents on the first day of absence whenever possible, when pupils are absent without notification.
- Communicating the reason for absence to the relevant member of staff.
- Completing statistical returns for LA, DFE.
- Liaising with the Early Help Team when required.

1.5. **Learning Mentors** are responsible for:

- Identifying individual pupils with known punctuality/attendance problems and ensuring these pupils are monitored closely.
- Identifying those pupils whose attendance is significantly below average, but who do not fall within the group, to ensure they are supported.
- Referring pupils to the Early Help Team when attendance gives severe cause for concern and being aware of strategies being used with these pupils and their families to ensure consistency within school.
- Liaising with other partner agencies and services towards improving and developing strategies to raise levels of attendance where relevant.

1.6. **Parents** are responsible for:

- Fulfilling their responsibility by ensuring their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Contacting the school on the first day their child is unable to attend.
- Ensuring their child arrives on time and is well prepared for the school day (equipment, PE kit, completed home learning etc).
- Contacting the office staff whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school.
- Informing the office staff and seeking authorisation for any forthcoming appointments and, where possible, arranging appointments outside of the school day.
- Ensuring the continuity of their child's education by taking holidays during the school holiday period. To request leave of absence only when absolutely necessary.
- Attending any relevant meetings that have been organised to discuss their child's attendance.

Appendix 2 – Dealing with attendance concerns

If a child's attendance falls below 92% and is fast approaching the persistent absence threshold, the following procedures will be followed, taken from the 'Attendance Matters Local Authority Pathway for Schools' Guidance:

2.1 Hold a conversation with the child/parents/carers to share concerns and follow this up with a letter confirming concerns.

2.2 If the action taken by the school does not have the desired effect, check whether there is a current existing Early Help Assessment in place for the child and family.

2.3 If there is an existing Early Help Assessment in place, make contact with the Lead Professional to share concerns about attendance and ensure that this is named in the plan with clear actions for school to assist in supporting the plan.

2.4 If there is not an Early Help Assessment in place, complete the assessment for children where there is evidence of additional need. This is vital in order to understand fully the issues that may be affecting attendance and where required, bring in appropriate agencies to support the child and family.

2.5 If the family are resistant to having an Early Help Assessment, reassure them that the process is in place to ensure that the right support is offered to them.

2.6 If, after reassurance and persistence, the family are still unwilling to engage, continue with the 'Attendance Matters Pathway' and enforcement action can then be considered.

2.7 The Attendance Matters Pathway contains a series of three letters, sent at different junctures with set timeframes in between.

2.8 Letter 1 is the first in the series. It shares the school's concerns with parents and emphasises the need for improved attendance as well as offering support. If attendance shows an improvement after letter 1, no further letters will be sent.

2.9. Letter 2 will be used when support has been offered and/or taken-up, but attendance has nevertheless not shown improvement. Before sending letter 2, a 3-4 week gap will be given to allow for an improvement to take place.

2.10 Letter 3 will be sent if there is still no improvement in attendance and at this stage, the letter makes clear to parents/carers that they are highly likely to be subject to enforcement action. If attendance improves between letter 3 and the LASAP, school may withdraw the referral or this will be taken into account at LASAP.

2.11 At the letter 3 stage, also complete and submit a referral to the Local Authority School Attendance Panel. The LASAP is Rotherham's multi-disciplinary decision making forum that oversees enforcement action under the provision of the Education Act (1996) with regards to parental responsibility for regular school attendance. The Chair of this group is the Early Help Head of Service and a range of agencies attend

regularly. When school has a case being heard at LASAP a member of school will attend, as will parents and the child where appropriate.

2.12. Following referral to LASAP there will be one of four outcomes as follows:

- FPN issued
- FPN and decision to hear formally at a future LASAP
- Decision to hear formally at next LASAP
- Referral rejected and school notified of reasons

2.13 If attendance improves whilst progressing through the pathway, however at a later date attendance again deteriorates and there has been less than a twelve week period between the initial improvement and subsequent deterioration, school will not begin the process from the start but from the place where they last were.

COVID-19 Addendum

Attendance Expectations

From the start of the autumn term 2020, pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). School attendance registers have had a new category added 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19).' This category will only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation, no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, and this will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)
- Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine
- Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only

Local Lockdown

If rates of the disease rise locally, school may need to prevent some pupils from attending. Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' will be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

Remote Education

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), we will offer them access to remote education, through Google Classroom. (See Remote Learning Policy)

Holidays

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, this falls under the category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)', and will not count as an absence.