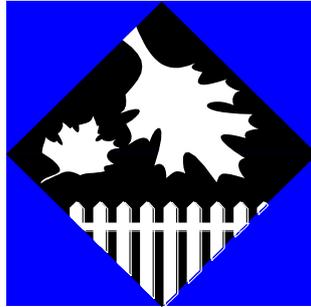


Rokeby Park Primary School



Attendance Policy

Reviewed: February 2017
Next review: February 2018

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“The poor attendance of a number of pupils can disrupt their own learning and that of other pupils. These children quickly begin to fall behind their peers and often never fully catch up with gaps in their skills or knowledge”.

Department for Education (DfE)

Introduction

Regular attendance and punctuality at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- progress and the standards they reach
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside other

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

Excellent 96%+

Well done! This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

Average 94-95%

Just below average – strive to build on and improve this.

Poor 85-93%

Below average. Absence will now be affecting the child's progress at school and the standards they reach. At this level we will do all we can to ensure parents will work with the school to improve the situation.

Below 85% Unacceptable –

Well below average. Absence **IS** causing **SERIOUS CONCERN**. It is affecting attainment and standards and is seriously disrupting your child's learning. We will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer [EWO] to improve your child's attendance.

The School Target for the Academic Year 2016/17 is 96.1%

It is the school's responsibility to impress on the children and parents/carers, that regular attendance is important. This will be done in the following ways:

- weekly whole school attendance assembly - class attendance race and trophy awarded to the class with the highest attendance;
- If any class achieves 100% attendance for the week, the whole class are presented with 100% attendance stickers;
- termly attendance awards for children achieving 100% attendance over the term and the whole academic year;
- 'Early Bird' week is held once each term after which all children arriving on time for the whole week are presented with a certificate;
- regular reminders in newsletters to parents, making regular attendance a high priority in the School Prospectus and Parent Handbook, and raising the importance of attendance issues to parents at meetings and on the website;
- standard letters to parents with regard to pupil absence;
- persistent absence warning letter if attendance drops;
- the Headteacher and administration staff monitor attendance weekly.

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Only the school can 'authorise' absence. The school will not assess all reasons as 'valid'.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case.

Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from increasing. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the School Prospectus and Parent Handbook.

Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

Persistent absence

Pupils attend school for 190 days per year. Pupils are registered at school every morning and every afternoon. Each school day counts as two sessions. So pupils are registered for 380 sessions a year. If a child is absent for 1 full day, it is counted as 2 absences.

The Department for Education state that a pupil is defined as "persistently absent" if their attendance is below 90%. Therefore, if a student misses 19 or more days (or 38 sessions) over an academic year they will be classed as Persistently Absent.

A child does not have to miss much school to become a persistent absentee.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement.

Where a child is absent from school the following procedures must be implemented:

1. Class teacher to mark register with the appropriate symbol.
2. If a reason for absence has not been notified to the school the Administration Assistant will phone the home of the child concerned.
3. Where office staff receive messages, they should pass them on to the class teacher.
4. Parents will be asked to provide evidence of illness/absence according to Local Authority policy so that the absence can be authorised.
5. If the school is unable to contact parents a letter will be sent home or the EWO will be contacted. Absences will not be authorised unless there is a valid reason. Every effort will be made to find a reason for pupil absence.
6. The office staff will monitor absence and implement this system, informing the Head of the need for further monitoring and EWO involvement.
7. Regular patterns of absence, either authorised or unauthorised will be discussed with EWO.

Arrival and Registration

All children should be in the playground at 8.45 am each day. There is always a member of staff on duty at this time. The children are called into school to be registered at 8.50 am allowing ample time for them to enter school, sort out bags and books and enter classrooms promptly for the start of the day at 9.00 am. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances.

Morning registration ends at 9.00 am. If a child arrives after the registration period, he/she must report to the school office and will be marked in as 'Late'. Arrival after 9.15 am is recorded as an unauthorised late mark.

Punctuality is a life skill. It is also polite. Children who are persistently late are disrupting, not only their own education, but also that of other pupils. Lateness is considered to be an equally serious absence as valuable learning time is lost. Parents and carers of children with developing patterns of lateness will be reminded of the importance of good time keeping. If lateness persists, the EWO may become involved.

Parental Responsibility

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents one parent, both parents, or carer, with whom the child resides. Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the School Prospectus and Parent Handbook. The importance of punctuality is also stressed, as lateness impacts on

learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole. Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance and punctuality concerns being reported.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15 am on the first day of absence, informing the school of the reason for absence and length of absence if known. If the length of absence is not known then parents are requested to call in daily.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

It is essential that:

- every effort is made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours;
- parents ask for and are given an appointment card or verification by the doctors/dentist/hospital;
- if your child is out of school for an appointment at the doctors/dentist/hospital he/she should be returned to school immediately after the appointment;
- if your child is absent due to vomiting they should not return to school for the next 24 hours after the last time the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school;
- the school should be informed as early as possible if a child is expected to be absent through illness. We will support parents and the child in any way we can.

Keeping a child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require investigation and medical evidence may be required.

School Responsibility - THE LAW and School Attendance

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the governing body is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated, each regulation applies to all schools in England.

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007 require governing bodies of all maintained schools to set overall absence targets, and for some governing bodies to set 'focused absence targets' as required by the Secretary of State. School governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment in and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance. Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in the appendix. The Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the administration staff.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the school's electronic attendance module.

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers. These are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteacher, not parents, authorises absence. Rokeby Park Primary School adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- illness
- religious observance
- attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer [EWO], all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

Family holidays and extended trips overseas during term time

The Local Authority and the DFE advise that term-time holiday leave of absence should not be agreed to, as regular attendance at school is vitally important. Holiday leave is disruptive to the class, teacher planning and most importantly, impacts upon the progress and performance of children. It does not matter if the holiday was booked before asking school or not. **Local Authority advice is not to authorise holidays** and only ever authorise in exceptional circumstances if attendance at school for the previous year has been very good.

Even if a holiday is authorised (in exceptional circumstances), please understand that children cannot miss school at any time for the rest of the school year for any other reason, as no other absences can be authorised unless medical evidence is received. Unfortunately, this means families could be fined for poor attendance even if your children are ill.

As a result:

- The school no longer issues holiday forms. Please write to the school if you feel you have a good reason for taking a holiday in term time. This will be considered but may not be authorised;
- If pre-booked holidays cannot be re-arranged, the holiday will be recorded as an unauthorised absence;
- If unauthorised holidays are taken, then the school will contact the EWO, families may be fined and the pupil could lose their place at the school;
- No holiday leave will be authorised for pupils in Year 2 and in Year 6 under any circumstance.

Penalty notices for truancy, introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, will be issued to parents who take their children on term-time holidays without permission.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness or other circumstances, this may not automatically be authorised. Your child's current (and previous school if applicable) attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- absences that have never been properly explained
- holidays not agreed

Penalty notices for absence from school can be issued by the EWO based on requests from schools and the police.

The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- parentally-condoned absences

- holidays in term time
- delayed return from extended holidays
- persistent lateness after the register has closed

Following a request by the school for the issuing of a Penalty Notice a check is made by the EWO that the request meets the conditions of the Code of Conduct. Where a Penalty Notice is issued each parent is required to pay a fine.

Children Missing in Education

Position Statement – national definition of children who are not receiving a suitable education:

“A compulsory school age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving suitable education at home.” (Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education January 2009)

Children Missing Education (2016) protocol is designed to support professionals across CYPS, partners and stakeholders in their combined efforts to safeguard children who are missing from education. Its aim is to identify the practical steps to be taken by professionals to locate and track children and young people missing from education.

All schools must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil’s name from the school admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in the regulations (Annex A). When a pupil is deleted from the school roll, the admissions register must also record:

- name of the pupil’s new school
- the expected start date at the new school

In addition, schools must inform the local authority and supply the following information:

- the full name of the pupil
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives
- at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives
- the full name and address of the parent with whom the pupil is going to live and the date the pupil is expected to start living there (if applicable)
- the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil’s name is to be deleted from the admission register

When a child is added to the admissions register the school must record the expected start date of the pupil. If the pupil does not arrive on the start date, the school must contact the local authority at the earliest opportunity. All schools must also notify the local authority within five days of adding a pupil’s name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point.

All schools must inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school’s permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, at such intervals as are agreed between the school and the local authority (p52, KCSIE 2016)

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed: February 2017 by T Kingston & C Smith

Next review date: February 2018

Appendix

Monitoring Process

Attendance

Whole school attendance and individual children's attendance is monitored by the Headteacher and administration staff every week.

School Attendance Tracker:

- children with less than 90% attendance are highlighted red
- children falling below 96% attendance are highlighted in yellow
- children with above 96% attendance are highlighted in green

First day absence phone calls are made and unexplained absence is pursued.

Where issues persist, the following will be initiated:

Stage 1: Attendance Concern Letter 1 is sent out;

Stage 2: Attendance Concern Letter 2 is sent;

Stage 3: Meeting with parents and Headteacher to discuss impact of poor attendance and strategies to support improvement;

Stage 4: EWO involvement for persistent absentees where school measures have had little impact;

Stage 5: Fine and prosecution for non-attendance.

The School Nurse and Social Services may be informed and involved where appropriate.

Where a child continues to have less than 90% attendance they are at danger of becoming a persistent absentee. These children will be closely monitored and phone calls home and meetings with parents will be arranged by the Headteacher. EWO involvement will be put in place.

Children with less than 96% attendance will be monitored by the Administration Assistant and where concerns are raised these will be discussed with the Headteacher immediately. The Head will then decide what action needs to be taken.

Each half term the Administration Assistant, Headteacher and EWO will analyse the school's attendance. The EWO will write warning letters to parents of children with less than 90% attendance.

If a child's attendance remains a cause for concern the EWO and/or Headteacher will visit the child's home and discuss the matter with the parents.

If unauthorised absences continue a fixed penalty notice can be issued.

Punctuality

Children's punctuality is monitored daily.

Each half term punctuality will be monitored and letters will be issued to parents where there are concerns.

If concerns persist the Headteacher will arrange to meet with parents to discuss concerns and offer support where needed.

If there is no improvement the EWO will become involved and fines may be issued.