



Rockcliffe First School

Attendance Policy

Aim

The overall aim of Rockcliffe First School's Attendance Policy is to provide a structure to support all our pupils in attending school regularly and punctually. We believe that regular, full time attendance is essential if pupils are to benefit fully from school life and establish good habits that will support them throughout their lives. The DfE's guidance document, **Working Together to Improve School Attendance**, referred to in this document as "WTISA", states that: "An effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures, and responsibilities. To ensure all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand these expectations, all schools are expected to have a clear, written school attendance policy based on the expectations set out this guidance." Staff and governors at our school have worked together to ensure our policy follows the guidance closely.

WTISA also states that: "The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school 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."

The government therefore expects that:

Schools will:

- ☐ Promote good attendance and take all possible steps to reduce absence, especially persistent absence;
- ☐ Ensure all pupils have access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- ☐ Act early to address patterns of absence.

Parents will:

- ☐ Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory age, who are registered at school, attend regularly;
- ☐ Work with the school to tackle any barriers to good attendance and punctuality.

We aim to improve the levels of attendance by:

- ☐ Encouraging the children to develop a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality that will be sustained throughout their school career and into adult life;
- ☐ Actively encouraging and promoting a minimum of 96% attendance (no more than 15 half-day absences in a standard 190-day academic year);
- ☐ Seeking to improve parental involvement, especially in tackling persistent absence and/or lateness;
- ☐ Identifying causes of persistent absence or lateness and working with the family and fellow professionals to tackle the issues as effectively as possible;
- ☐ Monitoring attendance and punctuality regularly (at least weekly) and identifying pupils, or groups of pupils, who have become, or are at risk of becoming, persistent absentees or who regularly miss key learning opportunities due to lateness;
- ☐ Encouraging good attendance and punctuality through a system of rewards and recognition;
- ☐ Regularly informing parents of the attendance of all pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities

Promoting regular attendance and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of everyone—parents and carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

The person responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and monitored effectively is the Headteacher, Sharron Colpitts-Elliott (Sharron.colpitts-elliott@rockcliffeschool.org.uk).

Class teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers. Our Admin Supervisor, Mrs Twemlow, oversees our SIMS attendance system for recording and monitoring attendance.

We have two Governors with responsibility for overseeing all aspects of safeguarding, which includes Children Missing Education and, by extension, attendance monitoring. These are Mrs Williams and Mrs Single-

ton. All members of staff and governors may be contacted at 0191 6434100/office@rockcliffeschool.org.uk.

To help us all focus on this, school will:

- ☐ Give attendance and punctuality a high priority, including via assemblies and events;
- ☐ Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other communications to parents;
- ☐ Provide high quality teaching and learning in all areas for all pupils so that they are enthusiastic about attending school and can see the benefits in terms of academic progress and personal development;
- ☐ Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe in school and know that their presence is valued;
- ☐ Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and absences are followed up promptly;
- ☐ Enquire about an absence if the parent has not contacted the school on the first day of absence;
- ☐ Approach individual parents where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality;
- ☐ Meet the legal requirements with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence;
- ☐ Liaise closely with partners at North Tyneside Council in tackling ongoing, unresolved instances of persistent absences, including via the SEND or Early Help teams, or Children's Social Services as appropriate;
- ☐ Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality;
- ☐ Provide appropriate training for school staff as required;
- ☐ Ensure appropriate information is available for governors and parents/carers;
- ☐ Develop incentives for good attendance and punctuality, including attendance certificates, non-uniform days, etc. to reward children as appropriate;
- ☐ Have procedures in place to help children settle in after a long absence.

We expect parents/carers to:

- ☐ Ensure that their children attend school regularly;
- ☐ Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address;
- ☐ Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, giving a reason, on the first day of the absence. This can be in person, via phone (0191 6434100 Option 1) or via email, at office@rockcliffeschool.org.uk;
- ☐ Notify the school of any continued absence, e.g. an illness lasting for more than one day, indicating the likely date of return and providing medical evidence where necessary/appropriate;
- ☐ Provide a request form for absence in term time (due to **exceptional circumstances** only) to the headteacher (via the relevant class teacher in case of a hard copy or by email at: Sharron.colpitts-elliott@rockcliffeschool.org.uk) in a timely fashion. The form is available from the school office or via our website: www.rockcliffeschool.org.uk;
- ☐ Make non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of school hours;
- ☐ Provide a letter indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician etc. before the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen;
- ☐ Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day;
- ☐ Inform the school if their child is going to be late;
- ☐ Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child;
- ☐ Inform the school at the earliest opportunity of an unavoidable absence.

Leave of Absence Requests

WTISA states that: "Only exceptional circumstances warrant granting a leave of absence...a leave of absence should not be granted unless it has been applied for in advance by the parent who the pupil normally lives with and the headteacher believes the circumstances to be exceptional. Schools must consider each application for a leave of absence individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion." It states: "**As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.**"

Absence related to Medical issues

Children will not be penalised if it is **unavoidable** to have a medical appointment during the school day. Children can only be given a medical mark, however, for the duration of that appointment. We ask that parents are mindful of this.

Example 1: A child has an appointment at 11am. The child can be collected mid-morning and returned after the appointment; therefore, attendance is not affected at all for this day.

Example 2: The child has an appointment at 9:30am. The child would receive a medical mark for the morning register, and would be expected back in by the afternoon, otherwise an unauthorised absence would be recorded – thus affecting their attendance for that day.

We will of course use our discretion depending on the location and the duration of the appointment. Please speak to us in school if you are unsure how to proceed.

Registers

Registers are a statutory legal document, which must be completed accurately by a member of the teaching staff. Attendance registers are taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

This policy contains instructions on the completion of the registers and these must be followed precisely.

The recommendations for using different codes to mark authorised, unauthorised and present marks should also be followed. Please refer to appendix A, for a breakdown of the codes used in our school.

Registers close at 9.30 a.m. and 1.30pm. Lateness after this time is classed as an unauthorised absence unless it is for a medical appointment or other reason authorised by the headteacher.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day absence from school is classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.

The following table shows examples of authorised and unauthorised absences (the latter comprising all term time leave except in **unavoidable** medical or dental, religious, or other **exceptional**, circumstances):

Examples of Authorised Absences	Examples of Unauthorised Absences
Unavoidable urgent medical or dental treatment	Where children miss registration and are unable to give an acceptable reason
Non-routine appointment as determined by a specialist (appointment card/letter needed)	Medical and dental appointments which are non-urgent and can be made after school
An agreed period for family bereavement	Additional days taken for exceptional circumstances, including holidays, other than those agreed
Religious observance days, the number of which is determined by the school	Shopping during school hours, including buying uniform
Off-site unavoidable activities e.g. music exams, if agreed by the school	Going to the airport to meet or say goodbye to others

NB This list gives an indication of what might be authorised or unauthorised and is not exhaustive.

Persistent absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more of schooling (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year) **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level is considered to be impacting on the pupil’s educational achievements and we need parents’/carers’ fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and the following action will take place:

If attendance is below 90%, an action plan will be drawn up in consultation with parents/carers and the situation will be monitored for 4 weeks. North Tyneside’s team leader for Attendance and Placement will be informed if the PA continues. Other professionals who might be able to offer support, e.g. Public Health School Nurses or Family Partners, will be consulted, possibly via Early Help (a Team Around the Family).

WTISA states that: “Where absence escalates...schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties”.

However, it goes on to say that: “If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in

these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children's social care assessment.”

We will follow the WTISA guidance that: “In all cases, schools and local authorities are expected to make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible.”

Holidays in Term Time Procedures

WTISA states that: “Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable. An application for leave of absence should not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school.”

Under normal circumstances, children attending Rockcliffe First School are **not** allowed absence for term-time holidays. Any absence, other than for illness or emergency medical attention, will be coded as unauthorised (G) – Family holiday not agreed or (O) unauthorised. Parents may choose to complete an ‘**Exceptional Circumstances Form**’ (Appendix B) stating why they are removing their child during term time. This is available from the school website or the school office. **The completed request must be provided to the headteacher at the very earliest opportunity. Only exceptional circumstances will be authorised.**

Punctuality

We operate a staggered start and finish to the school day. At present, the school day begins at 8.45 a.m. for pupils in Nursery (or at 12.30 p.m.) and Reception, at 8.50a.m. for Key Stage One children and at 8.55a.m. for those in Key Stage Two. Children arriving after these times should report to the school office, where the parent or carer will be asked the reason for lateness. This will be recorded by the Admin Supervisor, along with their time of arrival.

If a child arrives after 9.30a.m., with no reason given by their parent/carers, this will constitute a half day's absence.

Punctuality is monitored by the Headteacher on a regular basis. If a child's punctuality is a cause for concern, the parent/carers will be contacted and a meeting arranged to discuss reasons for the lateness.

Strategies for Promoting and Rewarding Good Attendance

- ☐ Individual certificates will be presented termly where full or nearly full attendance has been attained.
- ☐ 100% attendance for the year will be rewarded with a certificate and a prize.
- ☐ Half-termly newsletters to parents/carers will show each class's attendance.
- ☐ Rewards such as non-uniform days for best class attendance each half-term will be used as appropriate.
- ☐ Governors will be informed through the termly headteacher's report to governors.
- ☐ Parents/ carers will continue to receive information about their child's attendance via their annual report.

Equality

Working Together states that: “Whilst every pupil has a right to a full-time education and high attendance expectations should be set for all pupils, the attendance policy should account for the specific needs of certain pupils and pupil cohorts. The policy should be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so schools should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. In development and implementation of their policy, schools should consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

At Rockcliffe First School, we will follow this guidance closely. We believe that **all** children should have equal access and inclusive rights to the curriculum regardless of their age, sex, gender, race, religion or belief, disability or ability. We plan activities that are tailored to the needs of all groups and individuals. Rockcliffe First School is committed to creating a positive climate that will enable everyone to achieve their full potential. In the application of this policy, we will have regard to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, SEND Policy, Behaviour Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, PSHE (including Relationships Education) Policy, Children Missing Education Policy and all other relevant policies and procedures.

Sharron Colpitts-Elliott
Headteacher

September 2023 - Review date: September 2024

Appendix A – Codes

PRESENT / Present (AM) \ Present (PM) L Late (before registers closed)	AUTHORISED ABSENCE C Other Authorised Exceptional Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) E Excluded (no alternative provision made) H Family Holiday (Exceptional Circumstances, agreed) I Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) M Medical/Dental appointments R Religious observance S Study leave T Traveller absence
UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE G Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) N No reason yet provided for absence O Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description) U Late (after registers closed)	
NOT COUNTED IN POSSIBLE ATTENDANCES X Non-compulsory school age absence Y Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (e.g. school closure) Z Pupil not yet on roll # School closed to pupils, e.g. bank holiday	APPROVED EDUCATION ACTIVITY - PRESENT B Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) D Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) J Interview P Approved sporting activity V Educational visit or trip W Work experience