



Attendance Policy

Date of Adoption by the Governing Body:	19 th March 2026
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Introduction

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, school opportunities 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 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."

We work in partnership with families to ensure that all children have a full and equal access to all that our school has to offer. As a school, we encourage families to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems which prevent this are identified and acted on promptly. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning, and learning habits, which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet their full potential and learning expectations. Children who are persistently late also miss a significant amount of learning.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) 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 Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

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

Aims and Objectives

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 \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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 pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Promoting and supporting punctuality

Expectations

At Rockcliffe First School, we expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school every day
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day (i.e. with their reading book, water bottle etc)

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- 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
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, 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 pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils 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 pupils needs

- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for implementing this policy
- 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 pupils, 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

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Working with the families of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with families to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

Class Teachers will:

- Be responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1)
- Submitting this information to the school office by 9am in the morning and 1:15pm in the afternoon

Office staff will:

- Take calls and check emails from families about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from families to the headteacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Families are expected to:

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number 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 the headteacher
- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment
- Contacting the school office, before 9am on the first morning of absence
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time; term time holidays are very rarely authorised and could result in a fine for the family for each child missing school
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with
- Notifying school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

Rockcliffe First School Responsibilities

As a school we will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Keep regular and accurate records of morning and afternoon attendance and punctuality
- Monitor individual child's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents when a child fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through open dialogue about the importance of education and how all of our lessons are linked together
- Contact families where there are concerns regarding attendance, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Discuss attendance at parent consultations and report on it in the child's end of year report
- Make referrals to the Education Welfare Service where required
- Liaise with other professionals where appropriate

Recording Attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will 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 pupil is:

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

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:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

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 8:45am for Reception and Key Stage 1, 8.50am for Key Stage 2 and 9am for Nursery. It ends at 3:15pm for Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 and 3.20pm for Key Stage 2.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45 or 8:50am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm and will be kept open until 1:15pm.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's family must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the School Office and leaving a message on the absence line.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than five days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, or the school will ask for 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 families will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's family notifies the school in advance of the appointment. This should be done through the School Office.

However, we strongly 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.

The pupil's family must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Not all term-time absences can be authorised.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil 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

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, families will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for families to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's family on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit, contact social services or the police
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- 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 pupil was absent
- Call the family 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 education welfare officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their family to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention as appropriate

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform families about their child's attendance and absence levels. This is through termly parent consultations with class teachers and the child's end of year report.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one off events which are unavoidable. Examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, the respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or from the School Office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the family's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Families 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

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Sanctions

Our school can make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate
- We will also consider the attendance of the previous 365 days. Where the average of this attendance is above 95%, a penalty notice will not be pursued.

A penalty notice may also be issued where families allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but families do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give families 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 pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- 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 warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Attendance monitoring

Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be 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.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils 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

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils 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 class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the families of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance

- Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
 - Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
 - Implement sanctions, where necessary (see above)

Monitoring arrangements

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

Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Addressing Attendance Concerns

We expect attendance of at least 96%. We will inform parents whose children fall below this level by letter on a termly basis. Attendance which is 90% or lower is a cause for concern. Initially, concerns are raised with families by a letter with a follow up meeting. There will be opportunities for the family to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. In some situations, where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, then we may make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. In such situations the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to families. However we would expect any attendance concerns to be addressed before needing to take this step.

Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Codes

- Authorised Absences:
 - I: Illness (not medical/dental appointments).
 - M: Medical/Dental appointments.
 - C1: Leave of absence for a regulated performance.
 - C2: Leave of absence for a part-time timetable.
 - J1: Interview for employment or another educational institution.
 - B: Off-site education/remote education.
- Unauthorised Absences (subject to fines, e.g., code G):
 - G: Unauthorised holiday.
 - O: Unauthorised absence.
 - U: Late after registers closed.
 - N: Reason for absence not yet provided.
- Administrative Codes:
 - Y1: Transport not available.
 - Y2: Widespread travel disruption.