Attendance policy

Responsibilities

Status	Statutory
Review cycle	Annually
Key school staff member & role	Cathy Webb – Designated Safeguarding Lead & Children and Families Manager
Policy written / reviewed	February 2024
Ratified by the governing body	March 2024
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Version control details

Version number	Date of version	Details of updates, changes or review
1.0	February 2024	Updated policy

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ROWHILL SCHOOL

Attendance policy

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regard to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory requirements 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:

- 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, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

It also refers to:
- School census guidance
    - Complete the school census - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
    - Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for school
    - Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing body is responsible for:

Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.

- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The governor for attendance is Mr Danny Ralph.

3.2 The Headteacher is responsible for:

- 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.

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school, Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Building relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention and re-integration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Cathy Webb and can be contacted via email at webbc@rowhill.kent.sch.uk

3.4 The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher
- Working with Local Authority School Liaison Officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices where appropriate.

The attendance officer is Michelle Wildish and can be contacted via email at wildishm@rowhill.kent.sch.uk

3.5 Class teachers and form tutors are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on the school's management information system within the first 5 minutes of every lesson or tutor period.

3.6 School admin and office staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and report it to the Attendance Officer and Form Tutor; also, this will be logged on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the class teacher, welfare team or attendance officer in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:20 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

3.8 Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time and arrive punctually to every lesson and form time.

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

- We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register
- We will take our attendance register at the start of the first registration of each school day and once during the second registration following lunch break
- It will mark whether every pupil is:
  - Present
  - Attending an approved off-site educational activity
  - Absent
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.
- We will also record:
  - Whether the absence is authorised or not
  - The nature of the activity if 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:50 am on each school day. The register for the first registration will be taken at 9.10 am and will be kept open until 9:30 am. The register for the second registration will be taken at 12:30 pm for Primary Pupils and 1.35 pm for Secondary pupils.

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 8:30 am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school attendance officer or their child's welfare team. (see also Section 7).

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 5 days or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school may 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 parents/carers will be notified of this.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents should inform the attendance officer or their child's teacher about any planned absence as soon as possible before the absence.

If the absence is due to a medical appointment, then an appointment card should be provided to authorise this absence. However, we encourage parents/carers 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 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 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. Pupils who are persistently late to school will have a meeting arranged with their parent/carer to discuss their punctuality and an action plan will be put in place to address this.

4.5 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 parent/carer 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 to ascertain the nature of the absence, contact any outside agencies involved (Early Help worker or Social Worker), contact the Front Door team or the police if required.
- 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.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.   If absence continues, the school will consider involving a Local Authority School Liaison Officer.

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels through a dedicated termly attendance letter/certificate, which shows pupil's attendance, absence (both authorized and unauthorised) and lateness. Pupil attendance figures are also included in annual school reports and annual EHCP reviews.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence:

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be '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. Examples of "exceptional Circumstances" include but are not limited to:

- Death or terminal illness of a close relative
- Wedding or funeral of a close relative
- Religious observance.

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

Any request should be submitted in writing to the Headteacher as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for a leave of absence. Valid reasons for authorised absence include illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see Sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail).

Religious observance denotes where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' 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.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carer must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, local authority officer or the police. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Rowhill School promotes positive attendance at school and celebrates this with the whole school community. To support promoting positive attendance at school, Rowhill School:

- Sends regular communication to parents/carers to inform them of their child's attendance
- Supports parents/carers to remove barriers to non-attendance, for example, via our Therapeutic Team and Children and Families Co-ordinator
- Holds regular AIM (Attendance Improvement Meeting) meetings with parents/carers and other professionals to support positive attendance at school
- Provides termly rewards for Pupils who have the best improved or 100% attendance
- Promotes positive attendance at school through assemblies.

Registration time provides the opportunity for form tutors and welfare teams to discuss attendance with pupils to support and barriers having a negative impact on school attendance. The Children and Families Co-ordinator is employed to support the Attendance Officer to work with target families to improve attendance

7. Attendance data

7.1 Monitoring attendance

Monitoring attendance is crucial to ensuring the correct support is in place for students and families who require support with attendance. The approach we take is bespoke to each individual family and is tailored to their specific needs. To ensure the correct levels of support are in place, Rowhill School works closely with other professionals and agencies, such as Social Services, Early Help, KCC Inclusion and Attendance (PIAS), KCC SEND, Case Workers, Mental Health professionals etc., and always takes a child-centred and trauma-informed approach.

Rowhill School will:
- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence 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 compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

Rowhill School will:
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

Rowhill School will:
- Provide termly attendance reports to the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team and Governors, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

7.4 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular AIM meetings with the parents/carers of pupils whom the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide regular letters to inform parents/carers of their child's absence
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Provide support from our Children and Families Co-ordinator
- Use an Attendance programme to ensure there is close monitoring and a clear chronology of support being put in place.
- Refer to Local Authority for family support/action

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Cathy Webb, Senior Leadership and Designated Safeguarding Lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance

Code	Definition	Scenario
/ Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration	
\ Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration	
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	D Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Pupil is on study leave during their public examinations in Year 11
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

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Unauthorised

Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on holiday that was not approved by the school
N	No reason provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when reason emerges, or replaced with O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with the reason given for the pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived after register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil is of non - compulsory school age and is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is a disruption to travel as a result of a national emergency or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admissions register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holidays or INSET day.

- END OF POLICY -