



Attendance Policy

Date approved by the governing body	15 February 2022
Date for full implementation	15 February 2022
Date for Review	Spring 2024
Status	Recommended

Context

"Going to school regularly is important to your child's future. For example, children who miss school frequently can fall behind with their work and do less well in exams. Good attendance shows potential employers that your child is reliable. Research suggests that children who attend school regularly could also be at less risk of getting involved in antisocial behaviour or crime." **Direct.gov website**

Since the presence of COVID and the subsequent disruption to school attendance for many pupils, it has become ever more clear that consistent school attendance is fundamentally important to the academic and social development of children, and to their wellbeing. It is likely that pupils with persistent absence will lose confidence in their own ability due to gaps in their access to teaching sequences, and consequently gaps in their overall embedded understanding. In turn, these pupils may develop low self-esteem. This can have far reaching negative consequences in the classroom and on the playground.

In addition, one pupil's absence can be disruptive to the overall teaching and learning for all pupils in a class, and to the workload and effectiveness of teachers.

"It is not just that there is a clear statistical link between school attendance and educational achievement. It is more the disruptive effect of unauthorised absences. These disrupt the education of the individual child. Work missed has to be made up, requiring extra work by the teacher who has already covered and marked this subject matter with the other pupils. Having to make up for one pupil's absence may also disrupt the work of other pupils. Group learning will be diminished by the absence of individual members of the group. Most of all, if one pupil can be taken out whenever it suits the parent, then so can others. Different pupils may be taken out at different times, thus increasing the disruptive effect exponentially..." **From the highly publicised 2017 Supreme Court ruling regarding unauthorised pupil absence...**

Rusper Primary provides a broad and balanced curriculum, which offers many varied benefits related to effective pupil development. For pupils to truly make the most of potential benefits, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually.

The following policy sets out the school's aims and systems to ensure that attendance and punctuality is high and all stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Aims

- **To uphold the rights of every child to consistent education.**
- **To raise standards and ensure every child maximises their access to learning opportunities through effective attendance management.**
- **To ensure all stakeholders, governors, parents and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.**
- **To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of children and address them.**
- **To work with parents and external agencies in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.**

Responsibilities

Headteacher - *Nick Avey*

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To meet with the school designated attendance staff member regularly to monitor pupil attendance.
- To communicate with and meet with parents of pupils whose attendance is a concern, providing/facilitating support as required.
- To liaise with local authority agencies such as the Pupil Entitlement and Early Help, making referrals where necessary.
- To deal with parental requests for extended leave in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- To meet with the school designated attendance staff member regularly to monitor the school systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To consider the use of Penalty Notices in line with Local Authority policies and procedures.
- Report attendance data, trends and subsequent actions to governors
- Review and amend the attendance policy as required.

Designated Staff Member for Attendance - *Kim Wickens*

- To check the school answer phone and taking messages from parents/carers about child's absence.
- To record reasons for absence and updating class registers.
- To record the names and the reasons of children arriving late.
- To implement the daily checking of SIMs registers after the morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To carry out and record the outcome of first day calls when a child doesn't arrive at school and when no reason has been received.
- Submit attendance data to the local authority and DfE as required
- To meet with the headteacher regularly to monitor the school systems and structures, ensuring they are having an impact on pupil attendance and punctuality.

Teachers

- Complete registers by the required time twice a day.
- Communicate known reasons for pupil absence to the designated staff member
- Raise queries if reasons for absence are unknown

Parents

- To fulfil their legal responsibility ensuring their children receive a suitable full-time education from the age of 5.
- To fulfil their legal responsibility for making sure their children attend school regularly.
- To ensure that their children arrive on time for school every day.
- To contact the school by agreed timescales if their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that the school has up-to-date contact details.
- To work in partnership with the school and external agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Governors

- To review termly attendance reports and ensure the school fulfils all of its responsibilities satisfactorily.

School Expectations for Attendance

All schools are expected to achieve an overall rate of **95%** attendance. In the COVID context, the current National average for attendance is **92%**.

Rusper Primary School sets its aspiration high and therefore targets each pupil as having at least **≥96%** attendance.

90% attendance or lower for an individual pupil is considered 'Persistent Absence'.

Promoting Good Attendance

Rusper Primary School seeks to communicate its expectations for attendance at every opportunity via the following approaches.

- Published and accessible Attendance Policy
- Links to DfE attendance guidance on school website
- Specified attendance expectations in the School Prospectus
- Clear statements of commitment re attendance in the Home School Agreement
- Regular references to attendance in school communications eg Newsletter, posters on school entrance
- Reporting attendance to parents via annual reports

We will provide incentives for our pupils by acknowledging and celebrating attendance in assemblies.

Where attendance becomes a concern, the Headteacher will utilise a series of strategies to engage with and support families; and seek support from external agencies. See 'Responses To Absence'.

Monitoring Attendance

The school day is divided into two sessions: Morning and afternoon. Attendance is formally measured in sessions. Rusper Primary fulfils its legal responsibility with class teachers completing registers twice daily, recording individual pupil attendance at each session.

Individual pupil attendance is reviewed daily by the designated staff member.

Overall pupil attendance is reviewed at least fortnightly by the designated staff member and the Headteacher. In these reviews, the following elements are scrutinised

- Overall percentages for attendance, authorised absence, unauthorised absence and lateness
- Individual percentages for attendance, authorised absence, unauthorised absence and lateness
- Patterns of absence for pupils whose attendance may be causing concern

Absence Types

Medical Appointments

If a pupil needs to leave school for a medical appointment during school hours s/he must be signed out, and in again on return, at the office. **Parents/carers are asked to make every possible effort to make appointments out of school hours.**

Illness

Genuine illness will be authorised, although the school reserves the right to ask for medical clarification if a pupil's medical absences are above the amount expected for a usually healthy child. If it has been necessary for a pupil to have extended absence due to illness, the school will work with the pupil, parent/s/carer/s and any other involved agencies to instigate a re-integration programme for that pupil.

Exceptional Circumstances

Parents can request absence for their children under exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances would be

- Funeral of an immediate relative
- Religious observation
- Compassionate leave
- Close family wedding
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside the school day
- Music/Ballet Exam
- Educational visit to another school

If planning a school absence, please see the page **Requesting Absence** page in the **Parent Zone** on our school website. There are two approaches, described in the section below on informing and requesting absence.

The Headteacher carries the responsibility to authorise exceptional absences. If the absence is authorised, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school.

Unauthorised Absence

Any absence that doesn't meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances will be unauthorised.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is now no legal entitlement to **holidays during term time** and this should be avoided. Absence for term time holiday will automatically be classed as **unauthorised absence**.

Lateness

It is important that all pupils arrive at school punctually; and at Rusper pupils should be by **9:00am**. Formal lesson schedules begin at 9:00am. If a pupil is late, s/he should report to the school office to be signed in and ensure that in case of emergency the school has an accurate head count. **Where possible, the child should be signed in by the parent.**

Rusper Primary understands that there may be many reasons why a pupil may arrive to school after registration. If a pupil is late, s/he should report to the school office to be signed in and ensure that in case of emergency the school has an accurate head count.

Pupils arriving between 9:00 and 9:30am will be marked as late.

The local authority recommends that, unless there is prior agreement or good reason, if a pupil arrive more than half an hour late, this should be recorded as an **unauthorised** absence for the morning session.

Informing the School and Requesting Absence

If a pupil is absent for the day, the school expects parents/carers to make contact as early as possible, and no later than 9:30am, giving the reason for the absence and the expected day of return. If the reason for pupil absence is provided after 9:30am, the school will record the morning session as **unauthorised** absence.

If the reasons for a pupil absence remains unspecified after 9:30am, the absence will be classed as **unauthorised** for both the morning and afternoon session.

If parents/carers wish to notify the school of an absence for a term time appointment, they should complete the online form accessible through the Parent Zone on the school website, and via the link below

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=C3X-6XRERUqgG8mddgWLRktfCzBrZMZPhlEh9zrClb1UMFJVWk9FWTkwVENXTEhZRLc4STVNWUUYRi4u>

If parents/carers wish to notify the school of an absence for any reason other than a term time appointment, they should complete the online form accessible through the Parent Zone on the school website, and via the link below

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=C3X-6XRERUqgG8mddgWLRktfCzBrZMZPhlEh9zrClb1URE1aU0JGS1dVVDZUWEIMTVFZM1hYMU9QSy4u>

Parents who feel the requested absence should be considered for exceptional circumstances, and therefore authorised, should call the school office to request and appointment with the Headteacher.

If the requested absence is authorised by the school, parents/carers will receive a letter informing them of the school decision. **See Appendix 1 – Letter A2**

If the request for absence to be authorised under exceptional circumstances is received less than 48hrs before the actual absence, it will not be authorised on the grounds of insufficient time for the Headteacher to discharge their duty and give due consideration to the request. Parents will be informed of this decision via a letter **See Appendix 2 – Letter A5**

Responses to Absence

It is a legal requirement for children to attend school full time from the term after their 5th birthday.

It is the parents' legal responsibility to ensure their child's good school attendance and punctuality. Persistent parental neglect in this responsibility is considered and **managed as a safeguarding concern**.

It is the school's legal responsibility to manage and promote good attendance; and ultimately uphold the safeguarding of all its pupils. Rusper Primary School will carry out its responsibilities in all respects with diligence, firmness and consistency.

Rusper Primary School records all pupil attendance according to national statutory codes.

The school follows up absences where no reasons are given. If no contact is received from the parents/carers the school will contact the parents/carers on that day to establish a reason for absence.

If attendance or punctuality is causing concern, the school will initially liaise with the parent verbally to establish if there are mitigating circumstances to consider, and also to establish if there may be forms of support that the school may offer.

If attendance falls below 90%, the school will send a note specifying this. **See Appendix 3 – Letter A3.**

If, following a two week period, the pupil's attendance has not improved, the school will request to meet with the parents/carers to discuss whether further support may be required

- either by the school eg by setting up personalised attendance plans with targets for attendance
- or by referrals to external West Sussex Local Authority agencies eg 'Early Help' or 'Pupil Entitlement' (formerly Educational Welfare Service) to provide family support with maintaining best school attendance for the child.

More about the broad range of support services offered by **Early Help** can be found here

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-and-health-information-for-professionals/children/early-help/early-help-services/>

Pupil Entitlement works with Schools and Families to ensure children and young people have access to their entitlement to a suitable education. It consists of the teams listed below:

- Admissions
- Children Missing In Education
- Fair Access
- Investigation

If a child's unauthorised absences build up to 10 or more sessions within a 10 week period, the school will consider a referral to Pupil Entitlement. In the first instance of 10 unauthorised sessions, the referral could lead to the application of a Fixed Penalty fine. Should a pupil's attendance/punctuality still not improve, and a further 10 sessions of unauthorised absence accrue, the parent/carers will be referred to Pupil Entitlement again. In this case the referral will request an investigation to be conducted by the PE team. The investigation could lead to the application of a Fixed Penalty fine, or for the family to be prosecuted under the 1996 Education Act. Alternatively an Education Supervision Order could be sought in the family proceedings court under the 1989 Children Act.

In this situation, a letter informing parents of the referral to Pupil Entitlement will be sent. **See Appendix 4 – Letter A4**

If a child's parents/carers take the child out of school for holiday purposes during term time, this will not be authorised. If the holiday equals 10 or more sessions missed, the Headteacher will make a referral to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation for the application of a Fixed Penalty fine.

Upon receiving notification of intended holiday plans, parents will be notified by the school that the planned absence will not be authorised; and of the potential consequences the absence for holiday is equal to exceeding 10 sessions. **See Appendix 5 – Letter A1**

Once the holiday has taken place and the absence is recorded, and if the absence is equal to or greater than 10 sessions, parents/carers will be notified by the school that a referral has been made

to Pupil Entitlement for a Fixed Penalty fine. In this situation, a letter informing parents of the referral to Pupil Entitlement will be sent. **See Appendix 4 – Letter A4**

Consistency

It is the responsibility of all school staff to be welcoming to pupils and their parents, creating an atmosphere where they both feel able to raise concerns and share any information that could affect the pupil's attendance.

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure that all requests for term-time absence, and cases of absence concern are treated fairly and consistently.

Please note, that if parents/carers decide to proceed with term time holiday that can't be authorised, the school will not provide work for the children to do while they are away. This decision is based on the principles that

1. To do so would contradict the Rusper primary ethos of not authorising term time holiday – instead the school would be supporting the holiday.
2. To do so would increase workload for teachers which the school is duty bound to reduce.

Appendix 1 **Letter A2**

Dear

We have received your request for term-time holiday. As you have requested it will be authorised under the following grounds _____.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 2 **Letter A5**

Dear

Absence Request

We have received your request for term-time absence.

Where requests require special consideration e.g. religious observance or family events such as weddings, the head teacher's responsibility is to give consideration to requests and to use discretion in determining whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

In this case, the formal request was received less than 48 hours before the planned absence thus allowing insufficient time for the head teacher to perform their duty. Consequently, the absence request is unauthorised.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

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Yours sincerely

Appendix 3 **Letter A3**

Dear

It is my duty to bring to your attention that school attendance for _____ has dropped below 90%. Your child's current attendance for this academic year is _____. In addition to authorised absences, there are currently __ sessions recorded as unauthorised absence (1 day = 2 sessions).

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

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Yours sincerely

Appendix 4 **Letter A4**

Dear

Unauthorised Absence – Name

It is my duty to bring to your attention that the number of unauthorised absences within the last ten weeks for _____ is now _____. In accordance with the policy below, I notify you that this case will now be referred to Pupil Entitlement for investigation.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

In line with the law and the West Sussex authority policy, a referral of this case has been made to Pupil Entitlement. This organisation will be in touch with you in due course to notify of the outcome of their investigation.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 5 Letter A1

Dear

We have received your request for term-time holiday. As you will be aware, it does not qualify for exceptional circumstances and cannot be authorised.

The law regarding pupil attendance is strict. WS local authority policy dictates that if the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day), or if there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. Parents will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

To find more information about absence in term time please go to the school website <http://www.rusper.w-sussex.sch.uk/website/> - School information - Attendance.

Yours sincerely