



Attendance Policy

Rusper Primary provides a broad, balanced curriculum, but for children to access the many opportunities that are provided, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually.

The Government expects:

1. Schools and local authorities to:
 - promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
 - ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
 - act early to address patterns of absence
2. Parent/s/Carer/s to:
 - perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school, attend regularly
3. Pupils to:
 - be punctual to their lessons

From the highly publicised 2017 Supreme Court ruling regarding unauthorised pupil absence...

"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..."

To enable pupils to achieve all they are capable of, it is essential that they attend regularly and punctually.

Overall attendance

All schools are expected to achieve an overall rate of 95% attendance. The National average for attendance is 96%. Rusper Primary School sets its aspiration high and therefore targets each pupil as having at least 96% attendance.

90% attendance or lower is considered 'Persistent Absence'. Schools are held to account for minimising persistent absence and dealing with it effectively.

Attendance is monitored on a weekly basis and a child's current percentage can be obtained at any point. This percentage is based on the number of sessions attended out of the total number possible. A session equals half a day (thus a whole school day is two sessions).

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. Parent/s/carer/s 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.

Informing the School

If a pupil is absent for the day, the school expects parent/s/carer/s to make contact as early as possible, giving the reason for the absence and the expected day of return. If no word is received from the parent/s/carer/s the school will contact the parent/s/carer/s on that day. The school follows up absences where no reasons are given. If the reasons for these absences remain unspecified they will be classed as unauthorised.

Unauthorised Absence

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. If the leave is granted, headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school.

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

Parents who are planning a leave of absence for their child should make an appointment to discuss it with the Headteacher; who in turn will consider whether exceptional circumstances apply. In all cases, a leave of absence form, obtained from the school office, must be completed when withdrawal from learning is being requested. Appendix A is an example.

There is now no legal entitlement to holidays during term time and this should be avoided. It will automatically be classed as unauthorised absence and after 5 days (10 sessions or more) within a 10 week period, the headteacher may request that a fixed penalty notice or fine be issued by West Sussex County Council. A guidance leaflet is available on the school website.

Regardless if the absence is authorised or unauthorised, after ten days in which no contact can be made with the parents/carers, the school will make a referral to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation (formerly Educational Welfare Service). If the school can make contact with the parent/s /carer/s, it will warn them, if possible, in writing, that it may need to consider taking the pupil off roll. If taken off roll, parent/s/carer/s would need to reapply for a place through West Sussex County Council Admissions on their return and a place cannot be guaranteed at their current school.

Lateness

The times after which a pupil is marked late or absent are given online, in the school prospectus and/or in the school's attendance policy. The local authority recommends that, unless there is prior agreement or good reason, should a pupil arrive more than half an hour late after the registration closes, this should be an unauthorised absence (U). It is important that all pupils arrive at school punctually; and at Rusper pupils should by 9:00am. If a pupil is late, s/he should report to the school office to be marked in and ensure that in case of emergency the school has an accurate head count. It is most important that parents discuss any problem with either the class teacher or the Headteacher so that appropriate help can be offered.

Rusper aims to manage school attendance with clear protocols, positivity and consistency.

Protocols

It is the parents' legal responsibility to ensure their child's good school attendance and punctuality. If attendance or punctuality is persistently unsatisfactory, initially the school will liaise with the parent verbally and/or by letter. Thus, if attendance falls below 90%, the school will send a note specifying this. If, following a two week period, the pupil's attendance has not improved, the school will again liaise with the parent verbally and/or by letter seeking an explanation. Where necessary, the school may request to meet with the parents to discuss whether support may be required (either from the school or from other council agencies eg Pupil Entitlement)

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: Investigation (formerly Educational Welfare Service), which could lead to the application of a Fixed Penalty fine. Should a pupil's attendance/punctuality still not improve, the parent/s/carer/s could 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.

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.

Positivity

Good attendance will be incentivised through recognition and awards. Those pupils with 100% attendance across a termly period will receive a certificate in assemblies and have their achievement published on the school website. Those pupils who manage 100% attendance for a whole school year will receive a worthy prize.

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. Due regard will be given to the fact that a register is a legal document and, taking this into account, registers will be marked regularly and conscientiously at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Requests for Absence

All requests for absence are now completed by parents using the online forms accessible through the school website. Links to the forms can be found in 'Parent Zone', 'Requesting Absence' and also below...

Leave of Absence Request

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=C3X-6XRERUqgG8mddgWLRktfCzBrZMZPhIEh9zrClb1URE1aU0JGS1dVVDZUWEIMTVFZM1hYMU9QSy4u>

Term Time Appointment

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=C3X-6XRERUqgG8mddgWLRktfCzBrZMZPhIEh9zrClb1UMFJVWk9FWTkWVENXTEhZRIc4STVNWUUYRi4u>

In the event of an absence not being authorised, will receive a letter worded as follows:

Dear Parent/Carer

We have received your request for term-time holiday and as it does not qualify for exceptional circumstances it cannot be authorised.

It is the duty of all schools to uphold the following protocols: If the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day) or there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. You will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

Yours sincerely

Kim Wickens
Administrator

Approved May 2018

To be reviewed May 2020

In the event of the possibility of authorisation, parents will be invited to a meeting with the headteacher to consider exceptional circumstances. They will receive a letter worded as follows:

Dear Parent/Carer

Thank you for your request for absence during term time. Please make an appointment with Mr. A to determine if the absence can be authorised.

It is the duty of all schools to uphold the following protocols: If the unauthorised absence is more than 10 sessions (2 sessions per day) or there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions within a 10-week period, a referral will be made to Pupil Entitlement, West Sussex. You will then be liable to receive a fine, for each child, or possibly face legal proceedings.

Please contact the school office to make your appointment.

Yours sincerely

Kim Wickens
Administrator
Rusper Primary School