Russell Street School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed on:	December 2023
Reviewed:	Annually
Staff Responsibility:	Attendance Officer/ DSLs/ SLT

"Evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results. Our research found that pupils who performed better both at the end of primary and secondary school missed fewer days than those who didn't perform as well." 18 May 2023 (Gov.uk)

RSS children are **STARS** – Safe, Together, Achieve, Resilient, Special.

Contents

All children are expected to attend school every day the school is open.

1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Regular absence will seriously affect a child's learning. Absence disrupts routines, so may therefore affect the learning of other children in the same class.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance 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:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- 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

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark 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 3 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:35am on each school day (Years R/1/2) 8:45am (Nursery).

The register for the first session will be taken by 8:40am (Years R/1/2).

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – before 9:00am.

Parents should call 01908 563148 and press 1 to leave an absence message.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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 will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

A child's attendance is reported to parents annually in the written end-of-year report, or via a termly written report.

If a parent/carer receives support with their child's attendance, a member of the attendance team will follow up a meeting/phone consultation with an e-mail outlining the agreed strategies to be put in place agreed in the meeting/phone call.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

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

4.2 Legal sanctions

Parents will be fined for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

When issued with a penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 per child within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may consider:

- A 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 the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Stage One (Day One and Two of absence)

Office staff will monitor attendance on a daily basis and will expect a daily phone call from parents before 9:00am. If this information has not been received by 9:00am, office staff will call all contacts on the contact list held in school to find out why the child is not in school.

Stage Two (Day Three of absence)

On day three of absence, the school's attendance officer will call parents to ascertain why the child is still absent from school and offer support that could be put in place.

In exceptional circumstances a home visit may be required.

Stage Three (Week two of absence or absence falling close to 96.5%)

In week two of absence or attendance is seen to fall close to 96.5%, parents will be asked to attend an 'Attendance Meeting'. The meeting may take place in school or via telephone. (See Appendix 1).

In this attendance meeting, parents and school will agree measures that can be put in place to ensure good attendance at school.

A member of the attendance team will send a follow up e-mail to the parent/carer, using the email address: attendance @russell-street-school.co.uk

In the e-mail the child's attendance rate will be included and the strategies agreed to support the family.

A member of the attendance team will log this meeting on CPOMS using the categories 'attendance and communication'. The CPOMS will be assigned to the member of staff who arranged the meeting.

Stage Four (More than 10 days of absence or absence falling below 95%)

If a child is absent for more than 10 days or attendance falls below 95%, an attendance contract meeting will take place in school. (See Appendix 2).

As part of this attendance contract meeting, parents and school will agree measures, signed by both parties, that must be put in place.

A member of the attendance team will log this meeting on CPOMS using the categories 'attendance and communication'. The CPOMS will be assigned to the member of staff who arranged the meeting.

If the contract fails to improve attendance, education welfare officers will be contacted and legal sanctions will take place – see section 4.2.

6. Attendance monitoring

The school office manager monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data is used to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Attendance figures for the class (Reception and Key Stage One classes) is published on the weekly SWAYs sent to all parents/carers on a weekly basis. This data is also included on the overview that the headteacher sends to all members of staff on a weekly basis.

7.3 The Attendance Officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to class teachers, Pupil Premium Lead, SENDCos and headteacher /DSL and DDSLs.
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

7.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

7.5 Office Staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They report concerns about attendance to the class teachers, Pupil Premium Lead, SENDCos and headteacher /DSL and DDSLs.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy

Appendix 1: Attendance Meeting

Your child's attendance at Russell Street School is currently _____% which is below the target for all students of 96.5%.

We know that your child's attendance is very important to you.

This meeting is to discuss strategies that can be put in place to support you in improving your child's attendance.

Strategies Discussed……………

If attendance does not improve using the above strategies, then an Attendance Contract will be put in place.

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………………. (Parent) …………………………………………. (Date)

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………………. (School) …………………………………………. (Date)

Appendix 2: Attendance Contract

Your child's attendance at Russell Street School is currently _____%.

We know that your child's attendance is very important to you.

This contract meeting is to agree strategies that will be put in place to improve your child's attendance.

Parents' Will……………..

School Will……………………………

If attendance does not improve using the above strategies, then legal action will take place.

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………. (Parent) ……………………………………….. (Date)

Signed ……………………………………………………………………………. (School) ……………………………………….. (Date)

Appendix 3: 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	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
	Authorised absence	
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	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
	Code X: is also now used for not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) **(This code is not counted as an absence in the school census**	This code is used to record sessions where the pupil's travel to or presence at school would conflict with: • guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England or the Department of Health and Social Care12 or • any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)
	The following sub codes will be used:	See Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody

Z	Pupil not on admission 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 holiday/INSET day

All Pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to

Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

Persistently absent pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future

Severely absent pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Not applicable.	Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. Regularly monitor data for such groups, including at board and governing body meetings and with local authorities.

Support for pupils with a social worker	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Monitoring	
Parents:	Schools:
Schools regularly update parents on their child's attendance	Ofsted considers schools' efforts to improve or sustain high attendance as part of inspections. Multi-academy trusts regularly review attendance data and support schools.