

ROWDOWN PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

(UPDATED 19/01/18)

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INTRODUCTION

This policy sets out the rationale, our aims and the strategies that will be used to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum attendance.

We recognise that all children have the right to an education. A good education helps to give children the best possible start in life. Regular attendance and punctuality is important for all children whatever their age and is essential for every child's academic, social and personal development. School is the best place for children to be. Evidence suggests that children out of school are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse and more likely to be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.

ROLE OF THE PARENTS

It is important for parents to recognise that children who do not attend school regularly miss out educationally and socially, making it harder to succeed and harder to make friends. With an increasing number of other services such as youth provision, counselling, out of school care and study support, being directly linked to school, children can also find themselves missing out on informal learning and recreational opportunities and available support as well.

We are aware that parents/carers are responsible for their child/ren's punctuality and attendance and we are committed to working in partnership with them, seeking to overcome any issues or problems that are causing unacceptable levels of absence.

The school's role is to:-

- Implement the Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Monitor the attendance of pupils
- Work in partnership with parents/carers to deal with any problems that are affecting good attendance, including the provision of support by the Attendance Officer and Learning Mentors
- Use the support services in place to assist families in overcoming problems
- Co-operate with parents, the Education Welfare Officer and any other agencies

Our Educational Welfare Officer visits Rowdown Primary School on a regular basis to discuss any concerns we might have regarding a persistently poor attendance record. Where difficulties

continue, she will send letters, visit families and in extreme cases, this could lead to a Penalty Notice being served or prosecution.

AIM

Our aim is for all pupils to achieve 100% attendance. We are committed to putting systems in place that will encourage all pupils to attend school regularly and maximise their full potential.

HOW WILL WE ENCOURAGE GOOD ATTENDANCE?

Rowdown Primary School will provide teaching and learning environments that are welcoming, secure and stimulating, where pupils are respected and valued as individuals, encouraged to attend and therefore able to succeed. Additional support for more vulnerable groups will be provided.

Pupils who achieve 100% attendance for three terms will be awarded certificates and celebrated in a presentation. Pupils whose attendance in a term shows marked improvement i.e. 5% or more improvement will be praised and rewarded.

The table below shows how attendance can affect your child's future progression:

Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year Excellent attendance! These children will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.
95%: 10 days absence a year These children are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 2 week holiday every year can only achieve 95% attendance, any absence due to sickness would then seriously affect their chances of achieving their best.
90%: 19 days absence a year Children in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best.
85%: 29 days absence a year The Government classes children in this group as "Persistent Absentees", and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work. Parents of children in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by the Local Authority.

We raise awareness of the importance of attendance by:

- Presenting a weekly certificate for the class with the highest attendance in each key stage
- Providing extra playtime for the class with the highest attendance
- Half-termly reward of a Mufti Day for the class from each key stage with the highest attendance
- Termly reward for 100% attenders of a film night
- End of year reward for children with 100% attendance of a sleepover at school with treats and a film

As an incentive, to bring all pupil attendance above the threshold of 95%, we will not be authorising any child with less than 93% attendance to attend any extra-curricular trips. (The only exception to this will be children with a medical care plan where significant absence is related to their condition.) Additionally, we will also not be authorising any child who has more than 3 lates in a half term to attend any extra-curricular trips.

Mrs Johnson is the Attendance Officer. Her role is to monitor attendance and punctuality in schools, communicate concerns to parents and arrange meetings to ascertain why children are

not in regular attendance. She will offer support, encouragement and practical assistance to ensure that attendance/punctuality improves.

The Attendance Officer will liaise with the Senior Leadership Team, the Learning Mentors, the Education Welfare Officer and all relevant agencies to improve poor attendance.

REGISTERS

School attendance registers are legal documents. They are required by law to be called twice a day at the commencement of each session. Registration times are shown below:

- **Morning session: 08:50am – 08:55am**
- **Afternoon session: 13:00pm – 13:15pm**

The school doors open at 08:45am allowing 5 minutes for children to get to class before the register is called

The registers will be completed electronically using SIMs. Children are marked present with a (/) code. Children who are absent will be marked with an (N) code. If a class teacher receives a reason for absence this can be added to the comment box on the SIMs register. Children arriving after 08:55am and before 09.15am are marked late with an (L) code. The registers are closed at 09.15am.

Attendance needs to be established once the children arrive in the classroom. You should allow the children time to quickly organise coats, bags, packed lunches and settle to the early morning activities. Teachers should settle the class and call the names on the register, in order that they appear on the register. There should be silence for this procedure.

Children arriving after the official close of the register, are marked as absent for that session with an unauthorised (U) code. Their attendance on-site is noted on the late register (kept in the main school office) to meet fire regulations.

- Off roll amendments will be made by the office.
- All letters explaining absence to be placed in the register. It is the whole schools responsibility to seek an explanation for a child's absence.
- Once a month, an official register will be printed. The official register will highlight the number of unauthorised absences and the number of late marks for each child.
- The school has a legal duty to publish the above information on the child's school report.

PUNCTUALITY

It is the policy of the school discourage late arrivals. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his/her continuity of learning, but also that of others.

In recognition of local circumstances (bad weather, public transport problems) schools may keep registers open for a reasonable period (maximum 30 minutes). For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line is taken on late arrivals. Where pupils miss registration altogether and fail to provide an adequate explanation, they will be marked as unauthorised.

- Parents /carers of pupils arriving late on more than 3 occasions will receive a letter regarding the schools' policy on punctuality

- If lateness persists, a second letter will request that parents/ carers attend a meeting with Mrs Johnson to ascertain the problem behind persistent lateness.
- If no improvement is made, a meeting will be made with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and Mrs Johnson
- If poor punctuality continues, a referral will be made by the school to the Education Welfare Officer

Being late to school can have a considerable impact over the whole school year. The table below shows you just how much time can be missed over a year just by being 5 minutes late to school every day:

5 minutes late every day = 3 days of school lost in a year
10 minutes late every day = 6.5 days of school lost in a year
15 minutes late every day = 10 days of school lost in a year
20 minutes late every day = 13 days of school lost in a year
30 minutes late every day = 20 days of school lost in a year

REPORTING SICKNESS

Parents are expected to telephone the school on the first day of absence before 09:00am. If we have not received a note/message of the child's absence, the Attendance Officer will either telephone or text the parent/carer to establish the reason for the child not being in school. After the third day of absence a phone call must be made or a note forwarded to provide an update to the school and the expected date of return. The school will make contact on the 3rd day, should the child still be absent with no reason provided.

If your child is absent for four consecutive days we would expect them to have been seen by a doctor.

For illnesses of this length we will ask to see medical evidence, either in the form of:

- A prescription
- A medicine bottle/ label
- Appointment card/ letter
- Discharge notice from a medical centre
- Printed call log from General Practitioner surgery

If you have contacted your GP surgery but were unable to get an appointment, you can request a phone consultation. Your GP surgery would be able to provide you with a printed call log or appointment card to confirm that you have contacted them. Alternatively, you can request for a form from the school that can be signed by your GP or the surgery receptionist, confirming that your child has been to see them and the reason and length of absence. (The doctor will not make a charge for this).

Letters will be sent home every Monday to all children where the school has not received a reason for absence. These letters must be returned, with any medical evidence attached, to Mrs Johnson.

An authorised absence is one where the school has either given approval in advance or an explanation offered afterward, has been accepted as a satisfactory justification for the absence, for example reasons for absence that may be authorised are:

- Illness
- Medical - This could be a doctor, dentist, optician or hospital appointment. Either the appointment card or letter **must** be seen before this can be authorised.
- Excluded by the school

- Family absence/holiday (10 days maximum at any one time in any one year may be granted in **exceptional circumstances** - See requests for leave of absence)
- Religious Observance
- Travellers on the move
- Other Authorised Circumstances – May be authorised at the Head of School's discretion – this is classed as a death of a close family member, i.e. parent, sibling or grandparent.
- Interviews for secondary schools
- Study leave/entrance examinations
- Dual registration with a P.R.U or reading centre
- Leave of absence (consent of Head of School sought in advance)

Please support your child's education by only allowing them to stay off school with good reason. If your child complains of a headache, stomach ache or sore throat, please bring them to school. We can take their temperature and monitor them over the day. If they are still unwell we will contact you to come and collect them. Children often forget their ailments once they are in school with their friends.

All other absences are deemed unauthorised. Though the school will use discretion in special circumstances, it is not obliged to accept explanations such as:-

- Birthdays
- Parent/ Carer/ Sibling/ Extended family member's illness or hospital appointments
- Shopping (even if it is for school uniform)
- Caring for younger siblings
- Waiting in for delivery/household item to be repaired
- Car not starting
- Head lice
- Athletes foot
- Conjunctivitis
- Oversleeping
- Staying elsewhere overnight
- Concerns re: bullying
- Mum having a baby

These will not be accepted as valid reasons. In these instances the absence will be deemed unauthorised. The same applies where no explanation has been given. A consistent approach to managing attendance throughout the school will be applied and all absences will be challenged in a positive and supportive manner.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION/OFF ROLLING CHILDREN

A **child missing from Education** is defined by the Department for Education as "a child of compulsory school age who is not on a school roll, or being educated otherwise (E.G. privately), and who has been out of any educational establishment for a substantial period of time (usually 20 days or more)". By "being in education", this means full time education suitable to the child's age.

Rowdown Primary School will endeavour to make every effort to ensure that a child is not missing from education by ensuring that:-

- Regular telephone contact is made with parent/carers. If no communication is forthcoming we will contact the child's emergency contacts
- A home visit is made by the Attendance Officer (Mrs Johnson) and another member of staff to ensure that the child is no longer residing at the property

- A letter will be posted to the home address requesting any information regarding the child's whereabouts

If any of the above are unsuccessful, and the school are unable to locate the family, a *Child Missing from Education* form will be completed after 10 days and sent to the Local Authority and we will await their instructions.

CHILDREN MOVING ABROAD

When the school has been advised that a child is being removed with no known destination (ie moving abroad) the school will arrange a meeting with the parents/carers (within 5 school days) and the Education Welfare Officer.

The following information will need to be ascertained:-

- Who from the family is leaving the country
- When the family is leaving the country (we would need to have sight of flight information/ferry/channel tunnel details)
- Where the family is going (The name of the country is not sufficient, we would need to know the area and address if known)
- What education provision has been put in place (E.G. name of school that the child will be attending)
- What is happening to the property they are currently living in

Once the above has been established, the school will complete a Children Missing from Education form and forward it to the local authority and await further instructions.

ACTIONS THAT WILL BE TAKEN FOR LESS THAN 95% ATTENDANCE

Where the attendance is below 95%, children will be monitored by the school's Attendance Officer – Mrs Johnson. In a short term intervention, the Attendance Officer will contact the family, discuss the causes of the poor attendance and support the family in raising attendance to be above 95%.

The criteria for monitoring children:

- Attendance falls below 95% (previous school year or year to date) – a letter will be sent to parents/ carers to notify them of the schools concern for their child's attendance level
- After 3 separate periods of absence – school to contact parent/carer to discuss reasons
- If no contact is made a letter will be sent inviting the parent/carer to a meeting with the Attendance Officer
- If parents/carers do not attend the meeting and do not provide an explanation for missing the meeting a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer and all further absence will require medical evidence to be provided. Parents of pupils in this category will be informed of the consequences for them and their child, which could result in legal proceedings, should attendance not improve.

Efforts will continue to build a positive partnership with parents/ carers. Staff will provide support to pupils after absence, of whatever length, ensuring a positive encouraging transition back into school.

Pupils removed from the school by the parent/carer, without notification of the name and address of the new school will be immediately referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

The role of parents/carers is to:

- Show they value their child's right to education (Article 8 UN Convention Rights of the Child)
- Ensure that children go to school regularly, arrive on time and do not miss school for unacceptable reasons
- Help children to understand the importance of going to school and make it clear that absences from school for no good reason will not be supported
- Praise children for good or improved attendance
- Ensure that the school is aware of any issues or problems that are affecting attendance and work with the school to resolve these
- Telephone the school or talk to a member of staff to explain any illness on the first day of absence and provide reasons for lateness
- Make all appointments outside school time. In the event that this is not possible, parents are asked to provide confirmation of the appointment from the medical profession. A photocopy will be taken of the appointment card or letter for our records
- Assist children at home in catching up on missed school work

RECURRING LATE ARRIVALS/ UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Particular attention should be paid to emerging patterns of late arrivals and unauthorised absences. It is the responsibility of each parent to ensure regular school attendance and failure to do so may result in each parent being charged with the offence under Section 444 (1) and 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996. If convicted, each parent may be liable to pay a fine of up to £2,500 and/ or three months custodial sentence. If a child lives with a family friend or relative for a period of time and has day to day care of the child, each responsible adult will be considered as a 'parent' under the Education Act 1996 and can be charged with the same offence and be liable for prosecution.

Fixed Penalty Notices may be issued if:

- Arrives late (after the close of the register at 09.15am) for five sessions (half days) within a six week period
- Has 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised leave of absences during term time
- A child who has been excluded from school is seen in a public place in the first five days of an exclusion.

This is a fine of £60 (if paid within 21 days), rising to £120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days have elapsed). Failing to pay the fine will result in prosecution and being summoned to appear at the Magistrates Court.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUESTS

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Amendments 2013 state that Headteachers/ Head of Schools may **not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Rowdown Primary School actively discourages parents from taking children on holiday during term time. Holidays in term time are not a right and will therefore, not be granted. It remains at the discretion of the Head of School to authorise a leave of absence request for exceptional circumstances. Schools should carefully explore with parents why such leave of absence is necessary.

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is then absent from school the absence must be marked as unauthorised.

If a leave of absence request is granted and where the parents keep a child away for longer than agreed, then the extra time will also be marked as unauthorised and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued. Please make every effort to plan your holidays, outings and visits to relatives etc. during the school holidays to avoid disruption to your child's education.

Where holidays are planned to visit family members living overseas, schools may find it helpful to discuss with parents the most appropriate time of year and point in the pupils educational career for the visit. This could be timed to minimise the effects on the continuity of the pupil's education. A Penalty Notice may be issued if parents take an unauthorised holiday.

Taking holidays during term time. **It is not the right of the parent to take children away during term time.** Only if this is completely unavoidable, for example, the employer only allowing holiday to be taken during term time, will the Head of School consider authorising absence. A request for special authorised absence should be made in writing on the form available from the school at least two weeks before the holiday and providing the child has above 95% attendance year to date. This will be carefully considered and in cases where the school cannot sanction the special absence, this will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where the school and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the child is absent from school the absence must be marked as unauthorised. As part of the ongoing drive to improve attendance levels in all schools this document is intended to assist governors, school staff and parents/carers in making decisions about the timing, need and educational impact that can occur when taking a child out of school for a holiday during term time. The document is informed by the relevant legislation and regulation as part of a whole school attendance policy.