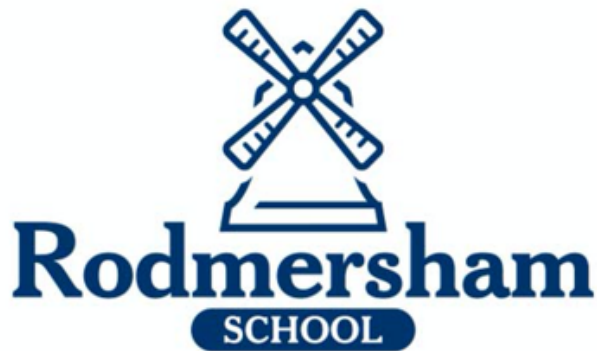


Attendance Policy 2023 - 2024



TO BE REVIEWED SEPTEMBER 2024

Attendance Policy for Rodmersham Primary School

Introduction:

At Rodmersham Primary School, we have a no-nonsense approach to attendance. We firmly believe that regular attendance is non-negotiable if our students are to achieve their full potential. Good attendance is essential for academic success and helps to instil a sense of responsibility and commitment to education. We take attendance seriously and expect all students to attend school every day on time and ready to learn.

Aim:

We aim to ensure that all students attend school regularly and punctually. We believe that this can only be achieved through our unwavering commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers.

The importance of school attendance:

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school, and therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, schools and partners should work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Therefore, securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff or organisation; it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in the school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law on school attendance and the right to a full-time education:

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to ensure their child receives that education either by attending school or by education other than at school.

When parents decide to register their child at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must

attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance.

This is essential for pupils to maximise their school experience, including their attainment, well-being, and broader life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and stage 4 have higher attendance rates over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected reading, writing and maths standards had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.

Monitoring and Review of Attendance:

We monitor attendance and punctuality regularly and will contact parents and carers immediately if we have concerns. We will work with parents and carers to identify any issues and put in place support and interventions where necessary. We will also celebrate good attendance and punctuality with our students but will not tolerate poor attendance or punctuality.

As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention are crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, as well as to examine historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

To achieve this we will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and parents.
- Use this analysis to provide other leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) with the information they need to intervene and support attendance.
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.

School staff, roles, and responsibilities

Headteacher Responsibilities include:

- Raising attendance and reducing persistent absence
- Forming relationships with parents and working collaboratively to raise attendance.

- Safeguarding children who are not regularly attending school or not attending full-time
- Implementation of this policy at the school level

FLO Responsibilities include:

- Reports concern about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with school liaison officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss low-level or regular attendance issues
- Advises the Head Teacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Advises Head Teacher regarding children missing in education

Class Teacher Responsibilities include:

- Submitting attendance registers daily in a timely manner
- Building relationships with pupils so they feel confident to attend school
- Adapting classroom routines and procedures to support children suffering from school-based anxiety
- Undertaking calls in the afternoon to parents of pupils who did not attend school that day. This is a supportive call to check pupil wellbeing, not raise attendance concerns.
- Admin Staff Responsibilities include:
- Chasing attendance registers not submitted promptly
- Undertake first-day calling responsibilities for any unexplained absences where a parent has not contacted the school first
- Amending absence coding when communication from parents received
- Calling parents to ascertain reasons for absence when the parent has not made contact
- Ensuring communication with school leaders where there are concerns about a child who is not in school so safeguarding checks can be completed

Parent / Carer Responsibilities include:

- Ensuring children attend regularly and punctually to school

- Providing school with an appropriate reason for child(ren)s absences on a daily basis- Should we not receive communication from you or be able to contact you, we will undertake a home visit for safeguarding reasons.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends. This should include analysing pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in the use of certain codes, days of poor attendance, and, where appropriate, subjects with low lesson attendance.
- Benchmark our attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher-than-average absence or pupils eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers.
- Monitor the data to assess the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings will then be used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies.

Day-to-day processes for managing attendance

Absence Procedures

The Attendance Lead at Rodmersham School is Mrs Nicola McMullon.

Direct line for reporting absence: 01795 423776 or notify us using the Dojo App.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, thoroughly.

If a child is absent from school, the parent must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school on the first day of absence before 9.00 a.m. The school office line has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody can take your call.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9.00 a.m.
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible and you provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence
- If a child is absent, we will:
- If we have not heard from you, we will telephone you on the first and every subsequent day of absence.

However, it is your responsibility to contact us

- If we are unable to contact parents/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers and send letters home, and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding.
- If there is a significant concern, we may contact the Police to request a safeguarding welfare check.
- A referral will be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents/carers by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be “Missing from Education.”

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child’s attendance is below 90%, or where punctuality is a concern.
- Invite you into school to meet with the Headteacher and/or the Pastoral Support Advisor to discuss the situation.
- Create a personalised action/support plan to address any barriers to attendance if required
- Offer signposting support to other agencies or services if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for statutory intervention if attendance deteriorates following the above actions

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. Good timekeeping is a vital life skill that will help children progress through their school life and into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons, and if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and miss vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Rodmersham School are:

Gates open: 8.40 a.m. Gates close: 8.55 a.m.
End of the school day: 3.30 pm

Arriving to school

There is no supervision before school in the playgrounds, and parents and pupils should not enter the school premises before the doors open at 8.40 a.m. unless they are accessing Breakfast Club.

A Breakfast Club is available for parents/carers who wish to use it. The club opens at 8:00 a.m. and costs £3.00 per daily session (including breakfast). This must be booked in advance.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed will be discussed with parents/carers, and grounds for prosecution or a penalty notice could be provided.

If your child arrives at school between 9:00 a.m. and 9:15 a.m., they will receive a late mark (L) in the register. If your child arrives after 9:15 a.m., they will receive an unauthorised late mark (U).

Attendance recording Unplanned medical absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school is genuinely concerned about the illness's authenticity.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer 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 with the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence:

- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school before the appointment.
- This should be evidenced in a copy of the appointment booking.
- However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours where possible. Where this is impossible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum necessary time.

Promoting and incentivising attendance:

At Rodmersham School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and setting high expectations for our pupils and parents for attendance and punctuality. It is a central part of our school's vision, values and ethos. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and well-being.

We want to work in partnership with parents and pupils to ensure every child is given full access to their right to education and can fulfil their potential. We celebrate good attendance and punctuality and will not accept barriers to the child receiving a high-quality education.

To help us all focus on this, we will:

- Report to parents regularly on attendance
- Contact parents if there are concerns regarding parents so we can work together to make improvements

Granting leaves of absence

- Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. We will consider each application individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.
- Parents would need to submit written requests for leave of absence at least 7 days before the absence would commence.
- If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is very unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for **a family holiday**.

Exceptional circumstances:

- Absence for the bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not usually for extended leave.
- Absences for critical religious observances are often considered for the ceremony and travelling time but not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Absences to visit family members are not generally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may need time to visit seriously ill relatives, and the school will authorise compassionate leave for up to a maximum of three days.
- Failure by the local Authority to provide transport

Fixed Penalty Notices

A fixed penalty notice will be issued when your child/ren is:

- absent for ten or more half-day sessions (five school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or 50 school days – these do not need to be consecutive
 - persistently late (coded U) for 10 or more sessions after the register has been closed
 - unauthorised absence for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
 - unauthorised absence for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance
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- The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.
 - If issued a fine or penalty notice, each parent must pay £80 within 21 days or £160 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 consider 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.

Strategy for reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absences

Persistent absence (10% or more of the school year) may cause concern and result in a referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer. In some cases, the School Liaison Officer may even consider prosecution. The school will follow procedures before referral, and parents will be notified in writing.

The Headteacher will discuss all children persistently absent at attendance meetings and contact parents to discuss how their child's attendance will be improved. This may require an attendance action plan/agreement with parents.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance/Punctuality

96 - 100% attendance – the class teacher will notify the Head Teacher of concerns. you may be contacted if appropriate.

93 - 96% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents/carers

90 – 93% attendance – school intervention letters/meeting with parents/carers

Attendance below 90% - categorised as 'Persistent Absence.' If there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

For the cases that require intensive family support, the school/parent will consider Early Help family support. See EHPS-Leaflet-for-Families.pdf (kelsi.org.uk) for further details.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face more significant barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as that of any other pupil, and therefore, the attendance ambition for these pupils will be the same as for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help all children access their full-time education.

In all cases, we will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents. We will talk to pupils and parents to help us understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance, and we will develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

This may include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or implementing an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals promptly and working with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is

accessed.

- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniforms, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined-up pastoral care is in place where needed, and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example, for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Pupils with long-term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provisions provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who would otherwise not receive suitable education because of health reasons.
- Fixed penalty notices

Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, a temporary part-time timetable may be needed to meet their individual needs.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. A Flexible Learning Plan will be drawn up when required to show how the child's educational, well-being and safeguarding needs will be met whilst not in school full-time. The Flexible Learning Plan should have a time limit by which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. Formal arrangements should also be for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the school has decided that a pupil is absent from school for part of the week or day, and therefore, this will be treated as an authorised absence.

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:

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

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

Equality act 2010 and Rights of the Child

Working together to improve school attendance 2023 (DfE)

