



Attendance and Punctuality Policy


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1. Introduction

Rugby Free Secondary School (RFSS) is committed to providing all education of the highest quality for all its students and recognises that this can only be achieved supporting and providing excellent school attendance. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them at RFSS. High attainment depends on good attendance and it is our policy to celebrate both.

2. Statutory / Legal Guidance

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1997 a parent is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives full time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1)/(1A) of the Education Act 1996.

If children are to succeed in their education and reach their full potential, it is essential they attend school regularly and are punctual. Parents are informed of the school's expectations and procedures through the student's planners, induction processes, newsletters and other communication between school and home.

Our school staff will always contact parents to notify them of a cause for concern in relation to their child's attendance.

3. Aims

- Our school seeks to ensure that all children in its care receive a full time education, which maximises opportunities for achieving their potential.
- The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the community feels safe and valued.
- All staff will work with children and their families to encourage each child to attend school regularly and to enable them to feel safe and valued.



- The school operates an effective system of age appropriate incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of children and families to improve attendance and punctuality. The school will challenge and support parent(s)/carer(s) who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives, the school will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with children, parent(s)/carer(s) and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information, guidance and support. The school has a computerised attendance package (SIMS) which is used to take twice daily registers and monitor attendance data.

4. Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. In order to achieve this, it is essential that parent(s)/carer(s):

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- Notify the school of a child's illness on the first day using the absence line including an estimation of the likely length of absence and reason for absence.
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day of return.
- Contact the school as soon as possible about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.
- In return, Rugby Free Secondary School will:
 - Contact home on the first day of absence if no message has been received.
 - Follow up promptly any concerns that parent(s)/carer(s) have that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in our school.
 - Regularly and consistently remind children of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
 - Provide the services of Family Support to assist families who are struggling to ensure their child(ren) arrive at school on time and every day.
 - Complete home visits, both announced and unannounced, to ensure that the reason for absences are clarified and that the child's safety remains paramount.



5. Pupil Absence

Parents must inform the school by 9:00am if their child is absent and must give the reason for and likely duration of the absence. A message can be left on the school answerphone if no answer can be sought on the dedicated attendance line.

Our absence management process is as follows:

- The register is taken by the Form Tutor at the start of the school day. Any child arriving after 8:45am must report to the member of staff running 'late gate'. If a child arrives after 9:00am, they must report to the main office. Both the 'late gate' location and the main office are the single point of entry (SPOE) after 8:45am for all children entering the school.
- The registers will be checked promptly after completion to identify children who are absent without notification.
- By 9:30am we shall attempt to contact the parent(s)/carer(s) of those children not in school and for whom no reasons for absence have been given.
- The school will wherever possible complete home visits to all unexplained absences that day if no contact is sought.
- The school will make reasonable steps to identify the whereabouts of children during periods of extended absence. Should the criteria qualify, and a student be absent from school without contact for 10 school days, a referral will be made to the Local Authority's Children Missing in Education (CME) Team.

6. Unauthorised Absences

It is the Head teacher who determines whether or not an absence is authorised. The Head teacher may give delegated responsibility at any time to a nominated officer who may act on his/her behalf. A request form, or notification of an absence does not automatically give authorisation. Unauthorised absences include all unexplained or unjustified absences not relating to a child's ill health and will include a reason for considered as authorised circumstances.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- Absence due to sickness or other unavoidable cause;
- An absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which



the parents belong;

- Medical or dental appointments agreed prior to the absence (parent(s)/carer(s) should seek to return their child within 30 minutes of the appointment);
- Agreed leave of absence under exceptional circumstances.

Only the school can authorise absence, not the parent(s)/carer(s), and the school is not obliged to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason.

7. Leave During Term Time for Extended Periods or Holidays

Rugby Free Secondary School expects all children to attend school regularly and, as such, will not authorise any extended leave or holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances. We expect parent(s)/carer(s) to share the same commitment to learning and to plan holidays and leave during the school holidays. If, in all extreme case, parent(s)/carer(s) wish to request leave in light of exceptional circumstances, they must write to the Head teacher, giving at least 10 school days' notice. The Head teacher will consider each application and a nominated officer within the school will respond to parent(s)/carer(s) with the outcome of the application.

As a school operating under Warwickshire County Council, we are obliged to follow their policy with the escalation of unauthorised absence. As a parent(s)/carer(s), you are entitled to make representation to the Head teacher using our 'exceptional circumstances form' dealing the exceptional circumstances in which your request is based upon. If the reasons for absence detailed in the request are not deemed to be exceptional, the school may refer the absence to the Local Authority and an initial Penalty Notice of £120 per parent/adult for each child, reducing to £60 for early payment could be the outcome. This would require payment being made directly to the Local Authority within 21 days.

Non-payment will mean that the Penalty notice will rise to £120 after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. If the penalty has not been paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority may instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

The school does not benefit financially from this action.



In line with guidance provided by Warwickshire County Council, the school may make a referral for consideration of fixed penalty notice in the following circumstances:

- Where at least 10 sessions are lost due to unauthorised absences in any 100 session period.
- Where leave of absence during term time is taken without authorisation from the school and the given threshold is met.
- Excessive delayed return from a family holiday (not agreed).
- Persistent late arrivals to school.
- Where, during a truancy sweep, a child is found playing truant from school without a valid reason for absence.

8. Lateness

Parents are informed that the school gates open at 8:00am and the school day starts at 8:45am. Children should enter the school via one of the available doors in the school site up until 8:45am, after this time the main reception door is the single point of entry.

Out staff operate 'late gate' between 8:45am and 9:00am for children who arrive late to school. Children who arrive between these times will receive an 'L' on the register along with how many minutes they were late. The register closes at 9:30am and any child arriving after this point will be coded as 'U' (late after registration closed) along with how many minutes they were late.

The Attendance Officer along with a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be on the 'late gate' taking names, time and reason of lateness per pupil. Each pupil who is late without a valid reason will be issued a lunchtime detention for 20minutes and given a slip to remind them.

The Attendance officer will then input all late marks along with minutes late onto SIMS. A list is sent out to all staff via email to remind the pupils of their detention along with a parentmail sent to parents to inform them of their child's lateness to school.

If pupils do not turn up to lunchtime detention they will then be required to do a 20 minute after school detention. Another list is sent out to all staff via email to remind pupils about their detention and another parentmail is sent to parents to inform what is happening. However, if pupils do not attend their after school detention they will then be required to be in Refocus



for the following day. A list of pupils who do not attend after school detention and therefore will be in refocus the following day will be emailed to the Senior Leadership Team along with a parentmail sent to parents to inform them what is happening.

When a child is persistently late, contact will be made with the parent(s)/carer(s) and an attendance contract or punctuality plan will be put in place.

If no improvement is seen, the school will refer for support from the Local Authority.

Punctuality to lessons is also important as teachers need to begin the programme of learning promptly. If a child is late to a lesson they will receive a late stamp in their planner and these are monitored by the Form Tutor. If lateness to lessons gives a cause for concern parent(s)/carer(s) will be contacted and appropriate support and/or sanctions put into place.

9. Medical Appointments

Where possible, routine medical appointments should be booked for outside of the school day. In certain circumstances, where this is not possible, parent(s)/carer(s) should notify the school in writing or by showing the appointment letter or by telephone message of the time and date of the child's medical appointment. Children should attend school before and after the medical appointment as far as is practically possible.

10. Identifications & Monitoring

- Parent(s)/Carer(s) of children not in school are contacted by telephone on the first day of absence.
- If no contact is made by the first day a home visit may be undertaken.
- All verbal messages from parents are recorded centrally.
- All verbal messages and notes from parent(s)/carer(s) are retained within the register.
- All parent(s)/carer(s) will be sent a letter if no reason is given for their child's absence.
- After two weeks if no reason is supplied for the absence then it will be noted as 'unauthorised'.



Leadership monitoring:

- The Head teacher or a nominated officer on their behalf, checks registration procedures at least once per calendar month, to ensure consistency by all staff.
- The Governing Body is involved in target setting for the term.
- Attendance data for the whole school is presented to the Trust Board regularly.
- Reports are given to Trustees concerning strategies employed and future action to be implemented for raising attendance.

11. Escalation System

Our school target is 96% and each individual child's target is 100% attendance.

All children whose attendance falls below a nominated threshold for that individual term will be monitored weekly and will be treated as a child at risk of 'persistent absence'. Persistent absence is the official term for attendance below 90% at the end of the academic year – this may be referred to as PA.

As a school operating under Warwickshire County Council, we may choose to refer cases when the absence threshold is met for further investigation by the Local Authority. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued or legal action being taken.

For continued attendance concerns, support will be offered to encourage the child to raise their attendance to above the school target using our staged escalation system.

- **Stage one** – parent(s)/carer(s) are made aware of the fall in attendance by a telephone call from the school to outline attendance concerns. Parents may receive a letter detailing the call.
- **Stage two** – a formal letter is sent to the parent(s)/carer(s) to outline the school's major concerns in relation to the absence of the child. Advice will be given at this point that further absences will result in a parenting contract.
- **Stage three** – a formal parenting contract invitation is sent to the home address and a formal parenting contract meeting will be held in school to draw up formally the reasons for absence and for support to be put into place to ensure the regular attendance of the child. A home visit to conduct the meeting may take place if parent(s)/carer(s) fail to attend without notice.



- **Stage four** – a formal review of the parenting contract to map any progress in the nominated period will be carried out. This meeting will be followed by three potential outcomes:
 - Attendance has improved enough and, as such, the child will be taken off the parenting contract and will be informally monitored
 - Attendance has not improved enough, or the child would benefit from another review
 - period, and therefore will be invited to review his or her attendance again in 4-6
 - weeks.
 - Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school.

Parent(s)/carer(s) are made aware that the Head teacher or nominated officer acting on their behalf may make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which may cause harm to the child's education.

12. Referrals for Additional Support

The school may complete referrals for additional support to the Local Authority's specialist teams in the following circumstances:

- The school has concerns in relation to safeguarding.
- The absence threshold in a given period has been reached.
- The school requires additional support in securing regular attendance of a child.
- The escalation process has failed and targets haven't been met.
- The child is missing in education with no contact for up to 10 school days.
- The school is in receipt of a request for elective home education
- Any other concerns which the Head teacher deems a referral will support the child's overall wellbeing, safety or education.



13. Attendance Codes

Code	Description
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not dual registered)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
S	Study leave
T	Traveler absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Education visit or trip
W	Work experience

14. Attendance in One School Year

Attendance during one school year	Equals this number of days absent	Which is approximately this many weeks absent	Which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons