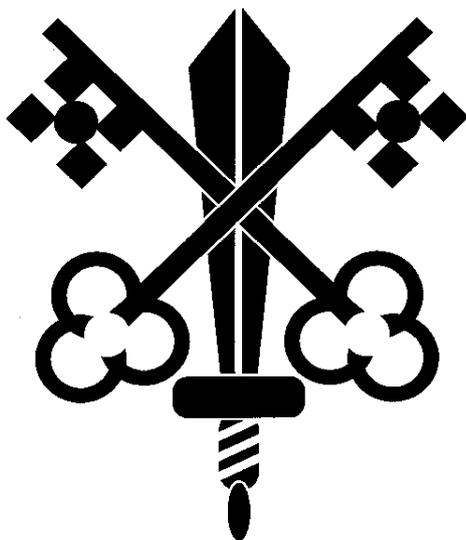


**RUSTINGTON  
COMMUNITY  
PRIMARY  
SCHOOL**



**Attendance Policy**

**Signed Chair of Governors: .....**

**July 2018**

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Review due Summer 2019

## **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Rustington Community Primary School (the "School") fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils have access to full-time education to which they are entitled.

This Policy is applicable to all children registered at the School and is available on the School's website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant legislation and guidance issued by the Department for Education and West Sussex County Council (WSCC).

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at the School attend regularly. The headteacher (Head of School) and governors (School Community Council) at the School shall work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils registered at the School are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Pupils who are persistently late or absent are likely to fall behind with their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A pupil whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

## **Aims and Objectives**

This Policy shall ensure that all staff, parents, carers and governors in the School are fully aware of the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy the School aims to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all pupils, where this is attainable.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the School.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that the Policy applies to EYFS aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, carers, staff and the Pupil Entitlement Team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage pupils to have a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

The School shall maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents and carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping pupils with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the pupil's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, carers, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

### **Definitions**

- **Authorised absence**
  - An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
  - Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.
- **Unauthorised absence**
  - An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
  - The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### **Procedures**

The School will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes;
- To maintain appropriate attendance data;
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils;
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness;

- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the School;
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence;
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time;
- To seek medical evidence to confirm illness where the authenticity of the illness is in doubt;
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality;
- To refer to the Pupil Entitlement Team any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to the School's initiatives to improve;
- To report attendance statistics to West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and the DfE where required;
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Deputy Headteacher who has responsibility for monitoring attendance.

### **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

#### **Class teachers are responsible for:**

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers;
- Informing the Deputy Headteacher where there are concerns ;
- Providing background information to support referrals;
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns;
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness;
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register;
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary.

#### **The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for:**

- Overall monitoring of school attendance;
- Recording trends in authorised and unauthorised absence;
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues;
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised;

- Making referrals to the Pupil Entitlement Team;
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Pupil Entitlement Team officer;
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

**Staff in the School Office are responsible for:**

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information;
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence;
- Ensuring the Absence/Late Book is completed each day;
- Contacting parents of absent children if no contact has been made by 10am;
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early;
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Deputy Headteacher;
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance to parents/ carers where appropriate.

**Parents/Carers are responsible for:**

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment;
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence by 9am;
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence the School will require evidence from the relevant medical professional (e.g. Appointment card or letter);
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time;
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

**Registration**

The School's gates open at 8.35am (EYFS, KS1 & KS2). The start of the school day is 9.00am (KS2) and 9.00am (KS1 & EYFS) with a graduated entry from 8.45am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classrooms.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance for their pupils. The pupils should be recorded as either:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent; or

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded as absent at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.10am in the morning session. In the afternoon session all registers must be completed by the class teachers within 10 mins of the lunch break ending. These registers shall then be returned to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the WSCC. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and stored for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

If an amendment is made to a pupil's attendance record, the amendment must include:

- the original entry; the amended entry;
- the reason for the amendment;
- the date on which the amendment was made; and
- the name and position of the person who made the amendment.

### **Lateness**

Once the School's gates are closed at 9.00am the only way to get into the School is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into the School this way between 9:00am and 9:20am will be marked as late in the attendance record by a staff member in the school office (Attendance code L). Any pupil who arrives at the School 20 minutes late will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Pupils who have attended a medical professional's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.10am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M). Parents are encouraged to book these appointments outside of school hours.

Pupils who are persistently late will miss a significant amount of learning and often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each pupil is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the School will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

### **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the School on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify the School of their child's absence it is important that they provide the School with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences. It is important that the School receives accurate information from parents or carers with reasons for the pupil's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the ultimate responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where the School has not received reasons for a pupil's absence then the School shall send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned

by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

The School shall put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for those pupils who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Parents and carers must provide emergency contact details to the School and these should be updated by the parent or carer when necessary.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a pupil is absent from school and the School has not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then the School shall initiate a first day contact process. The School's office staff shall check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. If the School has not been informed of a pupil's absence, the School shall contact the parent to enquire why the pupil is absent from school.

### **Illness**

If a child suffers from an illness where they may be absent from school for long periods of time, the School shall make reasonable efforts to send the pupil's school material home, so that the pupil is given the opportunity to keep up to date with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the School shall contact local support services offered by WSCC to see if arrangements can be made for the pupil to be given home tuition.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a pupil is repeatedly absent and/or the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the School may write to the parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a medical professional's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. The School may seek written permission from the parents for the School to make their own enquiries into these absences in these circumstances.

### **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the Government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence during term time specifically for holidays. The regulations which introduced this change make clear that headteachers cannot grant pupils any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If the leave is granted, the headteacher should determine the number of school days the pupil is permitted to be absent from school. This decision will be made entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

A form obtained from the school office must be completed when withdrawal from learning is being requested and this must be completed and sent to the School at least one month in advance of the start date of the requested period of absence.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices**

The School follows the WSCC guidelines on issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) and unauthorised absence. If a pupil accrues 10 or more unauthorised absences in a 10 week period (each half day counts as one absence) then the pupil will be issued with an FPN. The following are examples of what may constitute an unauthorised absence:

- The pupil fails to attend school;
- The pupil arrives persistently late to school (i.e. after registration has closed)
- The pupil's parents/carers take him/her on an unauthorised holiday during the school term.

FPNs are issued per parent, per child and are an alternative to prosecution, giving parents/carers an opportunity to discharge their criminal liability by paying a fine of £120, which must be paid within 28 days of issue. If the fine is paid by the parent/carer within 21 days, the fine shall be reduced to £60. If the fine has not been paid within 28 days the Pupil Entitlement Investigation (PEI) team will consider prosecuting the parent/carer for the original non-attendance, not for the payment of the FPN.

If a pupil's period of absence for a holiday during term time exceeds 15 consecutive school days, a FPN may not be deemed suitable. Instead the matter may be brought directly before the court. Further information on legal action can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

### **Failure to return to the School**

In exceptional circumstances a pupil may be granted authorised leave during term time by the headteacher. However, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised, if after 10 days the pupil fails to return and no contact can be made with the parents/carers, the School will make a referral to the PEI which will make reasonable enquires and consult with the Child Missing in Education Team (CME). If the School makes contact with the parents/carers, it will warn them, if possible in writing, that it will consider taking the pupil off role if s/he does not return by an agreed date. If the pupil does not return within 20 days and no reasonable explanation is given, the school will consult with CME and, in line with DFE guidance, consider taking the pupil off role. If taken off role, parents/carers would need to reapply for a place through the WSCC admissions on their return.

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96% for each pupil.

It is important for pupils to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary schools we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the School with the aim to improve attendance. Where a pupil's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the School is entitled to make a referral to the Pupil Entitlement Team.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The school office staff members have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software. Regular meetings are held with the Deputy Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

For further information regarding the use of personal data collected when the school monitors pupil attendance in line with the above policy, please see the [Pupil Privacy Notice].