Attendance Policy

For use from September 2026

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

This policy also complies with our Trust's Funding Agreement and Articles of Association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the Trust's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole Trust
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteachers/heads of school to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 School Leaders

School leaders are responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school

- Nominating either themselves or a member of the senior leadership team as the school's Attendance Champion
- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the SCC and their link DSI
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
- The importance of good attendance
- That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where appropriate

3.3 Role of the School Community Council

The School Community Council is responsible for:

- Supporting school leaders to implement the policy
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, support the school to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Regularly reviewing attendance

3.4 The Shared Services Team

The shared services team is responsible for:

- Driving attendance improvement across the Trust
- Working more intensively with schools who require support with attendance improvement
- Acting as a central contact point for schools with attendance queries

3.5 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school (School Attendance Champion)

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Maintain a school culture that promotes high attendance
- Builds strong relationships with families
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The Attendance Champion for Rustington Community Primary is the Headteacher - Marie Smailes - who can be reached by contacting the school office.

3.6 Teachers

All class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely manner.

They should raise concerns about a pupil's attendance and may be best placed for an initial conversation with parents

3.7 School Administrative staff

Office Staff will:

- Take calls from parents /carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Follow up any non-attendance where no reason has been received asap
- Vulnerable pupils and those walking independently will be prioritised in the follow up checks
- Provide school leaders with appropriate attendance reports

3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers[1] are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the school to report their child's absence before the start of the day on the first day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.9 Working in partnership with families

Good attendance starts with close and productive relationships with parents and pupils.

In the first instance, all schools are expected to:

- work with pupils and parents to address any in-school barriers to attendance
- understand any barriers that may exist outside school, meeting with pupils and parents, agreeing actions and making referrals to services and organisations where appropriate Where absence intensifies, additional action may include:
- individual and specialist support such as mentoring, out of hours learning or alternative provision
- formal conversations with parents, providing an opportunity to listen but also for the school to set out potential (legal) consequences

[1] The phrase Parents / carers includes:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Where voluntary support has not been successful, schools should work with the local authority to intensify support, issue a notice to improve and pursue legal action if all other routes have failed.

4. Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

5. Recording Attendance

5.1 Attendance register

Schools will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

Schools will take the attendance register 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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

The school will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years from the date the data was entered.

The register for the first session will be taken within 15 minutes from the start of the session and will be kept open for a further 15 minutes. The register for the second session will be taken within 10 minutes of the start of the afternoon session.

5.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence before the start of the school day or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office.

The school will mark absence due to illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school 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 parent/carer will be notified of this.

5.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents maybe routinely asked for proof of the appointment.

However, parents/carers are encouraged 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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

5.4 Lateness and punctuality

Good attendance and punctuality are both vital to your child's education. A child arriving late may disrupt not only their own learning by missing the start of lessons but also that of others. Some feel embarrassed and upset going into class once lessons are underway. To avoid this please ensure your child arrives in good time.

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

5.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, schools may contact the police or children's social services
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving West Sussex support services
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: [issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 6.2 below), as appropriate]

5.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Schools will share information on their child's attendance at least on a termly basis, but more frequently if the child's attendance is a cause for concern.

Schools will make the information understandable for parents, explaining the time missed and its impact on their child's learning.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

6.1 Approval for term-time absence

Headteachers will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the Trust's leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher will require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. This might include evidence of a medical procedure, travel details including flight details, workplace contracts that limit timings of holidays, wedding bookings etc.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments – evidence of appointments will be sought
- 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 elsewhere.
- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Generally, the Department of Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday to be an exceptional circumstance.

Applications citing exceptional circumstances will need to be supported by the appropriate evidence.

Failure to provide requested evidence in a timely manner will result in the request NOT being authorised and may also result in safeguarding concerns.

6.2 Legal sanctions

Before escalating to legal interventions, schools will have explored all other interventions, such as Attendance Contracts, to improve a child's attendance

Our schools will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case by case basis.

Penalty notices

Parents may be fined for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by the local authority who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the local authority will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

7. Strategies for promoting attendance

Schools will routinely celebrate good attendance through a variety of ways including assemblies, certificates, rewards etc

8. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

8.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Schools will:

- Listen and understand the barriers to attendance
- Work with families to address any in-school barriers
- Seek support for families with barriers that are outside of the school's control. This may include referral to services and organisations that can provide support
- Keep all actions under close review

Where engagement is proving challenging, schools may need to hold more formal conversations or seek to make a referral to the local authority for further support.

8.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. Some pupils experience emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships or work. These pupils are still expected to attend school regularly.

Schools will:

- Aim to mitigate anxious feelings in school as much as possible
- Understand the individual needs of the pupil and family

- Aim to put in place interventions, such as pastoral support, temporary adjustment to practice and policies to help meet the needs of the pupils struggling to attend.
- Consider a time-limited phased return for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

For pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, schools will:

- Ensure provision outlined in a pupils EHCP is accessed
- Attempt to reduce in-school barriers including reasonable adjustments in routines, uniform, lunchtime arrangements etc
- Consider support from other agencies and local authorities

In exceptional circumstances, consideration of a temporary part-time timetable may be appropriate. Part-time timetables should:-

- Have the agreement of the school and parents
- Have clear review dates
- Be in place for the shortest amount of time as possible

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

8.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

In the cases of both long term physical or mental ill-health, schools will

- Work with parents to consider whether a time-limited phased return would be beneficial for the pupil
- Consider pastoral support for the pupil
- Consider any temporary adjustment to routines, procedures, etc

9. Attendance monitoring

9.1 Monitoring attendance

Schools will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. Attendance data for each school will be shared with the Board of Trustees on a termly basis.

9.2 Analysing attendance

Schools will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

9.3 Using data to improve attendance

Schools will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

9.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to SEND managers and DSLs to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to their link DSI
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

9.5 National Targets (ABIE) and RISE Support

The school is issued an individualised annual target known as the Attendance Baseline Improvement Expectation (ABIE). These targets are AI-generated by the Department for Education (DfE) and consider the school's specific context, including its location, pupil needs, and deprivation levels. The primary objective of the ABIE is to act as a "ladder of progress" to restore attendance levels to pre-pandemic standards.

The school will use its annual ABIE report to:

- Identify the minimum performance expectations for the academic year.
- Benchmark performance against identified "similar schools" within the region that demonstrate high attendance to drive strategic improvements.
- Ensure that attendance strategies are tailored to the specific needs of the school community

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum on an annual basis. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Board of Trustees.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Medicines – Supporting Children with Medical Conditions
- Behaviour Policy (locally held by each school)

Appendix 1: 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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home

		and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence

U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: Acronyms used in this policy

- **DfE**: Department for Education.
- **DSL**: Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance.
- **EHCP**: Education Health and Care Plan
- **SCC**: School Community Council.
- **SEND**: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Appendix 3 Leave of Absence Request form

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

REQUEST FORM FOR ABSENCE FROM LEARNING TIME

The law states that parents must ensure their children regularly attend school to receive their education. The Department for Education states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional is likely to be rare, significant, unavoidable and short. The current law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Please note that having already booked a holiday will not be considered as a good reason for term time absence. In relation to 'unavoidable' absence, the Headteacher will consider whether the event could have reasonably been scheduled at another time. Issues of cost will not be considered as an exceptional reason.

<table>
<tr><th>PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME AND ADDRESS</th><th colspan="3">HOW TO USE THIS FORM</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="3">▪ Use for all absence other than sickness
▪ Return to school <u>well in advance</u> of the date of requested absence- at least 2 weeks
▪ Use a separate form for each child and each absence</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Name of Child:</td><td colspan="2">Class:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Is this the first request for absence this academic year? YES / NO</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dates requested (from/to):</td><td>Date expected back in school:</td><td colspan="2">Number of school days requested:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Reason for request for absence from learning – If you wish for this absence to be authorised, you will need to fully explain why the circumstances of this absence are exceptional and provide any evidence requested by the school. This might include evidence of pre-booked medical procedures, flight details, letters from employers etc (continue overleaf if necessary):-</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">I will also be making an Absence Request for children at the following schools (please list the school & names of child/ren)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Signed:</td><td colspan="2">Date:</td></tr>
</table>

SCHOOL OFFICE TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION			
Last Academic Year Attendance:	%	Green Amber Red	**Attendance of 96%+ is green** **Attendance of 93% - 95.9% is amber** **Attendance less than 93% is red**
Current Attendance:	%	Green Amber Red	

HEADTEACHER TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION	
Your request is **approved** and the absence as set out above is duly **authorised.**	☐

The **code placed** in the register will be:

Other Authorised	**C**[2]	Approved Sporting Activity	**P**
Religious Observance	**R**	Unauthorised holiday absence	**G**
Educated Off Site	**B**	Unauthorised absence	**O**

Your request is **not approved** and if the pupil is absent as proposed above it will be recorded as unauthorised.	☐

Reason:

Signed:	**Date:**

[2] Provide details of this absence in the Notes section of MIS

Regular attendance at school is important for your child's education and is a legal requirement.

Responsibility of this rests with the parents.

Only the school, not the parents, can authorise absence.