



RYECROFT C. E. MIDDLE SCHOOL

POLICY STATEMENT

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Part of the Uttoxeter Learning Trust



The Vision of the Staff, Pupils and Governors of Ryecroft C.E. Middle School

Embracing a culture where no child is left behind, we value and respect all the children that God has put in our care.

We enrich the lives of our children and ensure that Ryecroft is a safe, happy and inspiring place, embodying the Christian values of trust, humility and perseverance.

Psalm 90:12

“Teach us to number each of our days so that we may grow in wisdom”

Version control			
Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
V1.1	27.01.2022	S Bardon	First published version
V1.2	19.10.2022	T Evans	Amended time of 'L' code and PM registration
V1.3	20.06.2023	T Evans	Updated for 23-24 Academic Year

Introduction

As a Church of England school are committed to working together to strive for excellence, ensuring all children receive the best education possible. We encourage them to flourish, live life in all its glory, achieving their full potential. For this to happen children clearly need to be in school. This policy aims to make clear what is expected of parents and children and to assure parents of our willingness to work positively with them if problems arise.

Principles

In line with our Behaviour and Anti-bullying policies and Equality Plan, promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. The school will promote the importance of positive behaviour and good attendance through the curriculum and personal/social opportunities. Good attendance and behaviour by pupils will be recognised appropriately. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. We will ensure that parents are aware of attendance matters as they relate to their child and work with them to ensure good attendance and punctuality.

Some children are occasionally reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent.

The attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Registration

Schools are required by law to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical appointments or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for

which no “leave” has been given. This includes:

- parents keeping children off from school unnecessarily.
- truancy before or during the school day.
- absences which have never been properly explained.
- children who arrive to school after the close of the register.
- school refusal.
- holidays taken during term time that have not been authorised by the Head Teacher.

When completing the register, school follow the DFE school attendance guidance to determine which relevant code to use;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

The register will be taken twice a day, at the start of the morning and the afternoon.

Morning registration;

Registration is an important non-curricula session where pupils build relationships with their key staff member (form tutor), receive key information regarding the school day and engage in classroom worship. The morning register is taken at 8.50 a.m. Children arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.15 a.m are recorded as late – L.

Registration closes at 9.15. a.m. Children arriving at school after this time are “late - after registration closes” and this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable reason for the lateness – U.

Afternoon registration;

The afternoon register is taken after lunchtime during lesson 4, from 1.20pm to 1.40pm

If lateness is a cause for concern, the following procedures will be followed;

1. Parents will receive a letter informing of the concern.
2. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from Visionary Individual Pathways (VIP Education) will contact Parents to further discuss and offer support and advice to improve punctuality.
3. Parents will be invited to a meeting with the EWO. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with Parents and the pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
4. If no improvement is seen, the school may follow Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for persistent lateness. More information can be found at:

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

Absence

Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful.

Alternatively, parents or pupils may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) from VIP Education themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office.

If a child is absent from school, we ask parents to:

- Contact the school office by 9.15 a.m. on the first morning of absence.
- Send in a letter explaining the reason for absence when the child returns to school.
- Reply promptly to any request or inquiry concerning an absence.

If parents do not contact the school on the morning of the first day of absence, a member of the administration staff will try to contact them to find out the reason for absence. This ensures that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent, where necessary, to establish that their child is safe. If a reason for absence is not known by 10.00 a.m., school will request the EWO from VIP Education to establish contact either by telephone, text message or a home visit may be completed.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a two-week period, will mark the absence as unauthorised if no suitable reason is provided.

Children Missing in Education

Schools have a duty by law to refer any absence of 20 days or more to Staffordshire County Council's Children Missing in Education department where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence.

In order to avoid any referrals, parents are requested to inform the school if they are moving house/area or country and to provide a forwarding address, contact number and the name of new school if known.

Medical Absence

Schools have the responsibility to decide whether an absence can be authorised on medical grounds. In a few cases parents may be asked to provide evidence that their child is too unwell to attend school by providing a note from a medical professional. If the school has concerns about the level of medical absence that a pupil has incurred they will contact the parents/carers to discuss it further and to find out whether their GP or other health professional has been contacted.

If attendance does not improve the school may request parents seek a note of explanation from the relevant health professional or may involve the school nurse. If despite the request for the note of explanation, no note is forthcoming, school may not be able to authorise absences unless satisfactory medical evidence is provided to support the pupil's inability to attend school.

Long term medical absence

The school follow the procedures set out by Staffordshire County Council "Children who are missing Education due to Health/Medical Needs" More information can be found at: <https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/staffordshire/hub/>

Medical and Dental Appointments

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during the school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible then confirmation of the appointment will be required prior to authorising the absence. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents expected to return their children to the school following the appointment whenever possible.

Requests for leave of absence

Leave of absence requests, including holiday leave requests, may only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

If a parent wishes to request leave for their child for any reason they must apply in advance and in writing using the leave of absence request form which can be found at the school office and on our website. The form must be returned to school with at least 4 weeks notice. Where a child does not reside with both parents, it is the responsibility of the parent making the request to inform the other parent. The school will send a reply to both parents.

If a request for leave has not been received and we have reason to believe a pupil is on holiday, a letter will be sent to Parents requesting medical evidence. If no medical evidence can be provided the absence may be coded as unauthorised and a penalty notice request sent to the Local Authority. Parents will also be requested to attend a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer.

Monitoring attendance and lateness

The school aims to achieve at least 96% attendance each year. To help with this, we monitor attendance regularly. The school has established a system for monitoring attendance and lateness, the purpose and aims of which are as follows:

- To improve the overall percentage of attendance and improve pupils' punctuality at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a high priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance and punctuality related data.
- To develop and implement an effective system of communication between school and home.
- To reward good attendance and punctuality.
- To work effectively with the Local Authority and other agencies that support attendance and punctuality

Our Independent Education Welfare Officer from VIP Education regularly monitors children's attendance that fall below the school's annual attendance target. Where there appears to be a particular problem with attendance, the following procedures are applied:

- A letter is sent to Parents informing them of a decline in school attendance and the need for this to improve due to the impact on the pupil's education.
- If school attendance continues to decline, a further concern letter is sent to Parents.
- If still no improvement seen, Parents and pupils will be invited into a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss the concerns and to offer support around any possible barriers or problems at home or at school which may be contributing to poor school attendance. The discussion held will be documented by the EWO and an action plan to improve school attendance will be devised with Parents and pupil during the meeting and a review date set if needed.
- If school attendance does not improve, the school may follow Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notice. More information can be found at;

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.asp>
[X](#)

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued

Parents/carers have the legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time, properly dressed, with the correct equipment and ready to learn. Parents may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This will be done under the 1996 Education Act, Section 444. It aims to ensure that parents

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carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children. If a child is in the care of foster carers or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if one of the following criteria is met:

- There is unauthorised persistent absence. "Persistent" means at least 20 sessions of unauthorised absence over a period of twelve school weeks, excluding holidays. These absences do not need to be consecutive.
- There is a period of absence not authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher, (e.g. family holiday).
- Persistent late arrival at school, i.e. after the register has closed. "Persistent" means at least 10 sessions of unauthorised late arrival over a period of 12 school weeks, excluding holidays. These late episodes do not need to be consecutive.
- The presence of an excluded child in a public place at any time during school hours in that child's first five days of exclusion. An "excluded child" is one who has been excluded from school for a given period under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- A Penalty Notice will not be issued in respect of children in the care of the LA with whom other interventions will be used.

A session is equivalent to half a day in school.

Other conditions

- There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised leave of absence can be used in an academic year.
- In cases where there is more than one pupil in a family with unauthorised absences, Penalty Notices may be issued for more than one child.
- Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence /lateness will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

As part of this process the parent(s) will first be issued with a 20-day notice period, clearly advising that if unauthorised absence / lateness occurs in this 20-day period, a Penalty Notice may be issued. This is to allow the parents a further period to address their child's irregular attendance by working with the school or other agencies. It is part of a scaled approach and affords the parents an opportunity to avoid receiving a penalty notice. This is seen as good practice and integral to a proportionate response.

Therefore, the process is as follows:

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- School completes and signs a penalty notice request form.
- School provides the pupils attendance registration certificate signed by the Head teacher / Principal
 - or their nominated deputy – confirming that non-attendance / lateness during the period was unauthorised.
- School provides an assessment and plan which demonstrates that the use of a Penalty Notice is now the appropriate action to improve the child's school attendance / punctuality.
- The local authority issues a 20-day Warning Notice to the parent (s) advising them of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued and that the child must have no unauthorised absence / lateness during the set period.
- If there are unauthorised absences / lateness in the period and after due consideration of the facts of the case with the school, issue a Penalty Notice through the post.

Please note:

Where the Penalty Notice is requested from a school in response to a leave of absence (holiday) related unauthorised absence or is in relation to an offence under section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the formal warning letter and 20-day improvement period will not apply.

All Penalty Notices are entered onto a database maintained by Families First to ensure that no duplicate Penalty Notices are issued.

Use of a Penalty Notice or formal warning of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised persistent absence /lateness will be restricted to one notice/ warning per parent of a pupil per academic year.

Payment of Penalty Notices:

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. The penalty notice fine would be:

- £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent per child if paid between 21 – 28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

If prosecution takes place under section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

The County Council retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs (collection or prosecuting in the event of non-payment).

Non-payment of Penalty Notices:

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in the withdrawal of the Penalty Notice and will trigger the fast-track prosecution process under the provisions of section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Elective Home Education

If school receives written notification from parents that they wish to home educate their child, then we will inform the Local Authority of the decision to remove the child's name from the admissions register. Whilst school will not seek to prevent parents from choosing to electively home educate their child, neither will they seek to encourage them to do this – particularly as a way of avoiding exclusion or due to a poor attendance record. Prior to making a decision to Elective Home Educate, Parents are requested to contact Staffordshire County Councils Elective Home Education department; <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/Elective-Home-Education/Elective-Home-Education.aspx>

Summary

It is vital to a child's progress that they attend school as often as possible and that they are on time. There are strong and proven links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. Attendance of less than 95% (equivalent to 9.5 days or more absence in a school year) has been shown to compromise pupil attainment. An attendance of 90% is equivalent to missing 19 days or nearly 4 weeks from school in a year. Only 10% of pupils who are persistently absent from school achieve 5 A*-C grades at GCSE.

Impact of absence:

- 90% attendance = 19 days off school
- 85% attendance = 29 days off school (a whole half term!)
- 80% attendance = 38 days off school
- 70% attendance = 57 days off school (a whole term!)

Impact of lateness:

Over a school year –

- 5 minutes late every day = 3 days absent
- 15 minutes late every day = 10 days absent
- 30 minutes late every day = 19 days absent

If parents have any concerns relating to attendance or lateness that they wish to discuss, they should contact the school in the first instance. School staff are committed to working with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

Appendix – October 2020

This appendix has been written to reflect the changes made to the Attendance Policy and following wider opening of schools during the Coronavirus pandemic and should be read in conjunction with the school's Attendance and Safeguarding Policies.

DfE Guidance for full opening: schools (updated 1st October 2020) states:

Attendance expectations

In March, when the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

Now the circumstances have changed, it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise, as far as possible, the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future, there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves, or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19).
- shielding advice for all adults and children was paused on 1 August 2020 which means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who were shielding - read the [current advice on shielding](#)
- if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that

area, and that area only, may be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and, therefore, they may be temporarily unable to attend.

- pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional are likely to discuss their care with their health professional at their next planned clinical appointment - you can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health at [COVID-19 - 'shielding' guidance for children and young people](#)

Specialists in paediatric medicine have reviewed the latest evidence on the level of risk posed to children and young people from coronavirus (COVID-19). The latest evidence indicates that the risk of serious illness for most children and young people is low. In the future, we expect fewer children and young people will be included on the shielded patient list.

Patients can only be removed from the shielding patient list by their GP or specialist, following consultation with the child and their family, and other clinicians where appropriate. If a child or young person is removed from the shielded patient list in due course, they will no longer be advised to shield in the future if coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission increases. Discussion by a clinician with those previously advised that they were a clinically vulnerable child or young person but can now be removed from the shielded patient list, and with their families are ongoing. Since shielding advice has paused nationally, except in a very few areas where the implementation of local restrictions is ongoing, all previously affected children should be able to return to school except where individual clinical advice not to do so has been provided.

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical or public health advice, we expect schools to be able to immediately offer them access to remote education. Schools should monitor engagement with this activity as set out in the [action for all schools and local authorities section](#).

Where children are not able to attend school as parents and carers are following clinical or public health advice, for example, self-isolation or family isolation, the absence will not be penalised.

Pupils and families who are anxious about return to school

All other pupils must attend school. Schools should bear in mind the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right support in place to address this. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, we recommend schools

discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk in school. Schools should be clear with parents that pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies (for example, the pupil has been granted a leave of absence, is unable to attend because of sickness, is absent for a necessary religious observance).

Action for all schools and local authorities

There's separate guidance on recording attendance at [addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus \(COVID-19\) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year](#).

We are asking schools to work with families to secure regular school attendance from the start of term as this will be essential to help pupils catch up on missed education, make progress and promote their wellbeing and wider development.

We are asking schools and local authorities to:

1. Communicate clear and consistent expectations around school attendance to families (and any other professionals who work with the family where appropriate) throughout the summer ahead of the new school year.
2. Identify pupils who are reluctant or anxious about returning or who are at risk of disengagement and develop plans for re-engaging them. This should include disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people, especially those who were persistently absent prior to the pandemic or who have not engaged with the school regularly during the pandemic. Use the additional catch-up funding schools will receive, as well as existing pastoral and support services, attendance staff and resources and schools' pupil premium funding to put measures in place for those families who will need additional support to secure pupils' regular attendance.
3. Work closely with other professionals as appropriate to support the return to school, including continuing to notify the child's social worker, if they have one, of non-attendance.

Ryecroft CE Middle School will:

- Complete the daily Educational Setting Status, reporting those children in attendance to the DfE.
- Contact parents (text/telephone call) if a child who is expected to be in school does not attend and school is not notified. (First Day Contact Policy).
- Explore reasons for non-attendance and address barriers to attendance with them as appropriate.
- Contact parents to identify those children who fall into either the 'clinically vulnerable' group or the 'clinically extremely vulnerable' group or who live with someone in either of these categories. This information will be recorded in a 'Vulnerable Group' register.

- If subject to a local or national lockdown, carry out regular 'safe and well' checks with children considered to be 'vulnerable' at least weekly (including but not limited to children with an EHCP, (P)LAC, children with a Social Worker (CP / CIN).
- Continue to liaise with a child's Social Worker should they not attend school.
- Children (apart from children in Nursery who have a 15-hour place) will attend for a full day unless unwell and a decision is made to send them home.
- Children who display any potential symptoms of COVID-19 will be immediately isolated (ideally in an outdoor area for safety and ventilation purposes) and parents will be contacted and requested to collect the child immediately. (Please refer to Risk Assessment Reopening Handbook for detailed guidance on procedure when dealing with a suspected case).
- Children who have displayed symptoms must stay away from school for 10 days or until they are well (if longer) or until a negative COVID-19 test is received.
- If a member of their household displays symptoms (or receives a positive COVID-19 test) they should self-isolate for 14 days. Should the household member receive a negative test result, the child may return to school.
- Should a suspected case of COVID occur in school, RMS will follow PHE and local authority guidance.
- Children and staff are eligible for a COVID-19 test and a test should be arranged should any symptoms be shown and following advice from NHS 111.

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Signed on behalf of the Governing Body

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Date