School Attendance and Pupil Absence Policy

Introduction

At Rydes Hill (the School), we believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend School.

The School understands that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend School; therefore, the School will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at School, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

The School takes a whole-School approach to securing good attendance, and recognises the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

The School is committed to:
- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Working collaboratively with other Schools in the area, as well as other agencies.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory School age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at School or otherwise.
- Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

The School's attendance officer is the Head, Faye Messinger and can be contacted via RHHeadPA@rydeshill.org.uk. Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the attendance officer for queries or concerns about attendance.

Attendance expectations

The School has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality, and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend School punctually every day they are required to be at School, for the full day.

The School day starts at 8.20am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the School day:
- The morning register will be marked by 8.20am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they were absent when the register started being taken but arrive before the register is closed
- The morning register will close at 8.40am. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend School before this time
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1.30pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time but arrive before the register is closed
- The afternoon register will close at 1.45pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present

Pupils and parents will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

Absence procedures
Parents will be required to contact the School office via telephone before 8.20am on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one School day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the School by the close of the morning register to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend School.

The School will always follow up any absences in order to:
- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the School census system.

Where a pupil is absent for more than three School days in a row, or more than 10 School days in one term, the pupil's parent will be expected to provide a signed letter with an explanation for the absences.

The School will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the School reserves the right to request supporting evidence where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

In the case of Persistent Absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the attendance officer. The School will inform the Local Authority, on a termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 School days or more without authorisation.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 96 percent by the second half of the spring term the School will write to the parents. If attendance continues to fall, parents will be invited to meet with the Head. If at any time during the year, attendance falls below 90 percent, the attendance officer will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the pupil's parent.

Where a pupil does not return from a period of leave or has a continuous period of absence, the School will work jointly with the Local Authority to carry out reasonable enquiries under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to establish the pupil's whereabouts. In conducting these enquiries, the School and it's Local Authority will liaise with the Home Local Authority. If, following these enquiries, the pupil's name is removed from the School's admission register, the Home Local Authority will be expected to investigate whether the pupil should be classified as a child missing education

Attendance register
The School uses ISAMs to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.
Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each School day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:
- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
Please find more information about the specific codes used in the Appendix to this Policy.

Authorising parental absence requests

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the Head – the decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the Head, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil's education into account. The Head's decision is not subject to appeal; however, the School will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents, and will not deny any request without good reason.

Leave of absence

The School will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the School will expect parents to contact the Head in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account. Where the absence is granted, the Head will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from School. The School is not likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:
- Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of School will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions. The School cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the School in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

Illness and healthcare appointments

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of School hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child's absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable. Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

Religious observance

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least two weeks in advance.
The School will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The School will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The School may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

SEND and health-related absences

The School recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending School difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy, the School will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The School will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the School has concerns that a pupil's non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child's lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

If a pupil is unable to attend School for long periods of time due to their health, the School will:
- Inform the Local Authority if a pupil is likely to be away from the School for more than 15 School days.
- Provide the Local Authority with information about the pupil's needs, capabilities and programme of work.
- Help the pupil reintegrate at School when they return.
- Make sure the pupil is kept informed about School events and clubs.
- Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence.

The School will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending School may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending School as normal and there have been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the School will consider:
- Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
- Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
- Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
- Identifying pupils' unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
- Using an internal or external specialist.
- Enabling a pupil to have a reduced timetable.
- Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
- Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom if they feel they need time out.
- Temporary late starts or early finishes.
- Phased returns to School where there has been a long absence.
- Small group work or on-to-one lessons.
- Tailored support to meet their individual needs.

The School will seek medical evidence for recording absences in a minority of cases. Where a pupil's health need means that they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, the School will seek medical evidence to better understand the need of the pupil.

Absent pupils

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the School premises during the School day unless they have permission from the School. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at School, please see the Missing Child Policy for more details:
- The member of staff who has noticed the absent pupil will inform the Head immediately
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the School premises as directed by the Head
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms

- All toilets
- Changing rooms
- The library
- Any outbuildings
- The School grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the School premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- The School will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
- The absent pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the absent pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.
- Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

The Head will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The Head will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

Attendance intervention
In order to ensure the School has effective procedures for managing absence, the Head and SLT, will:
- Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance.
- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Having a weekly tutor review.
  - Engaging with Local Authority attendance teams.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.
  - Creating attendance clinics.

The School will use attendance data, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

Working with parents to improve attendance
The School will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of School life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The School will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g. social services.

The School will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the School has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The School will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends School regularly and to facilitate their child's legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend School every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g. sickness or absences that have been authorised by the Head in advance. The School will regularly inform parents about their child's levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at School can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance officer will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend School regularly. The School will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil's experience in School, e.g. bullying, the attendance officer will work with the Head and any relevant School staff, e.g. the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the School's control, e.g. they are related to issues within the pupil's family, the attendance officer will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g. children's social care or the Local Authority, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

Persistent absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10 percent or more of School, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50 percent or more of School. Reducing persistent and severe absence will remain central to the School's strategy for improving attendance.

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:
- Children in need
- Looked After Children
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The School will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of Persistent Absence to attend School. These include:
- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The School will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence over 50 percent, and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of Persistent Absence is also at increased risk of harm, the School will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the School's duty of care. The School will also bear in mind that the continuation of severe PA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Monitoring and analysing absence
The attendance officer will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The attendance officer will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a termly and full-year basis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:
- Patterns in uses of certain codes.
- Particular days of poor attendance.
- Historic trends of attendance and absence.
- Barriers to attendance.

Deletions of names from the admissions register
The School will ensure that it only deletes names from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance Regulations. A pupil's name will never be removed for any other reason and the School is aware that doing so could constitute off-rolling.

The School will make returns to the Local Authority when pupils' names are deleted from the admission register. This will be with the exception of pupils whose name has been deleted from the register at or after the end of the last term of the School year when they are in the most senior year group, unless the LA has requested this information.

Names will never be retrospectively deleted from the admission or attendance register – these registers will remain an accurate record of who is a registered pupil and their attendance at any given time. Pupils' attendance will be recorded up until the date that their name is deleted from the admission register.

Attendance Monitoring Procedures
The School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:
1. Attendance is discussed by classroom teachers Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by classroom teachers are passed immediately to the SLT.
2. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the SLT and attendance officer daily.
3. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
4. If a pupil's attendance falls to **96 percent**, the attendance officer sends a letter to parents and offers the opportunity discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the School can help to improve their attendance. The letter also has an attached leaflet outlining how parents can work with the School and their child to improve attendance.
5. If a pupil's attendance falls below **90 percent**, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the attendance officer contacts the parents to discuss this.

6. The pupil's attendance is monitored for **two weeks** and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in School with the classroom teacher and set targets for their child. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the local education welfare officer (EWO), who will then conduct a home visit.

Nursery Attendance

Regular attendance at nursery supports children's wellbeing, routine, relationships, and progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Although attendance in nursery is not statutory, consistent attendance helps children settle, develop secure attachments, and make good developmental progress.

Attendance patterns are also an important safeguarding indicator, and the setting must monitor children's attendance closely and respond promptly to any unexplained or concerning absence.

Parents are expected to ensure their child attends all booked nursery sessions and arrives on time.

Parents must notify the setting **as early as possible** on the day of absence. The notification must include:
*   Child's name
*   Reason for absence (e.g., illness, appointment)
*   Expected duration of absence

Parents must report continued absence each subsequent day if required.

If your child if unwell, please follow the Infection Control Policy. Parents must keep children at home if unwell and follow appropriate exclusion periods for contagious illnesses. Children should return only when symptom free or medically advised.

Parents should inform the nursery of planned appointments or other foreseen absences.

Unexplained absence may be a safeguarding concern. The setting will:
1. Attempt to contact parents using the primary contact number.
2. If unsuccessful, contact secondary or emergency contacts.
3. Record all contact attempts.
4. Escalate to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if no contact is made within 24 hours.
5. Follow local safeguarding procedures, including contacting external agencies if appropriate.

If a family repeatedly fails to attend booked sessions without explanation or does not engage with attendance follow-up, the School may consider withdrawing the child's place, following fair process and safeguarding checks.

The School will pay particular attention to the attendance patterns of children who may be more vulnerable (e.g., SEND, EAL, financial hardship, known to social care). Poor attendance may indicate additional support needs or safeguarding concerns

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:
*   Education Acts 1996 and 2002
*   The Children Act 1989
*   The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
*   The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
*   The Sentencing Act 2020
*   The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations) 2013
- The Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and 1963
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- DfE 'Working together to improve School attendance'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education (KCSIE)'
- DfE 'Children missing education'
- DfE 'Providing remote education: guidance for Schools'
- DfE 'Summary table of responsibilities for School attendance'
- DfE 'Sharing daily pupil attendance data'
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework

This policy operates in conjunction with the following School policies:
- Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Missing Child Policy

Appendix 1 - Attendance Codes

The School will use the national attendance codes set out in Regulation 10 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- # = planned whole or partial School closure
- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Leave of absence granted by the School for exceptional circumstances
- S = Study leave
- C1 = Leave of absence for participating in a regulated performance or employment abroad
- C2 = Leave of absence for part-time pupils
- E = Suspended or permanently excluded but no alternative provision made
- J1 = Leave of absence for job or education interviews
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- K = Attending provision arranged by the LA
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in School
- T = Traveller absence
- Q = Absent due to a lack of access arrangements or due to the pupil having to attend a School that does not qualify for travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live.
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity, with supervision being physically provided by an appropriately trained and knowledgeable person
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- W = Attending work experience
- Y1 = Absent due to their regular transport not being available
- Y2 = Absent due to travel disruption
- Y3 = Absent due to part of the School premises being closed
- Y4 = Absent due to the School site being closed
- Y5 = Absent due to being in criminal justice detention
- Y6 = Absent due to public health guidance or law, despite the pupil being well enough to attend
- Y7 = Absent due to any other unavoidable cause, the nature of which must be documented by the School.
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

Pupils who are absent from School but are receiving remote education for any reason will be marked as absent in the register.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.