



RUSHDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY

Attendance policy

Approved by:	Lindsay Edwards Principal	Date: 1/9/2024
Last reviewed on:	1/9/24	
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Introduction

Rushden Primary Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give them the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

We recognise the importance of good attendance in enabling pupils to achieve their maximum educational potential and to have optimal life chances and enter adulthood successfully. The Academy is committed to working in partnership with families and other agencies to support good attendance for all pupils.

Parents have a responsibility by law for ensuring their child attends the Academy regularly and punctually. The government recognises that a good level of attendance is at least 95 %. This is equivalent to a half day absence per fortnight. Half a day's absence a week or a day a fortnight would equate to 90% attendance. A day's absence per week would drop attendance to 80%.



At Rushden Primary Academy we:

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued
- expect students to arrive on time every day
- will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- believe leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances.

How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the academy on each day of absence by calling the main school telephone number 01933 201 200 and leaving a message on the absence line.

Please inform us of any planned absence in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

To inform us about a planned absence please complete the request form on the school website. If you have an unavoidable medical appointment, please can you bring the appointment letter to school.

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy. Pupils are entitled to a full time education and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life. This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance. It includes how we aim to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

Here at the Academy, we pride ourselves on building relationships with children and their parents and carers. We appreciate that that the barriers to attending school and punctuality can be different for each family that we support, and we work hard to find solutions to overcome the barriers with a person-centred approach.

Where a child is experiencing long term absence, the way we approach the situation again will be specific to the individuals needs and circumstances. The support we may offer could include:

- Organising work to do at home.
- Regular check-ins with teachers and pastoral staff.
- Working with the hospital outreach team if a child is unable to attend school due to a medical reason.
- Short term tutoring.

Attendance is celebrated within whole school assemblies. We do not highlight individuals but look at class percentages instead. The class with the highest attendance at the end of each term is rewarded.

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive at the Academy from 8:40 each day and the register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am.

The register for the afternoon session will be taken at either 1.00pm or 1.15pm dependent on when the children return to class after lunch. Where parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

(Note - where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- 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))

Parents are expected to:

Make sure their child attends every day on time

- Contact the academy on 01933 201 200 to report their child's absence before 8.50am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the academy 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

Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school office and requesting a meeting with Emma Larbey (Attendance Lead) or emailing elarbey@rushdenprimaryacademy.org.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

The principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the academy
- Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust
- Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases
- Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

- Communicating the Academy's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels.

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'Attendance Lead') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.

The attendance lead is Mrs Larbey and can be contacted on 01933 201200 or elarbey@rushdenprimaryacademy.org

The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the principal
- Working with the Education and Inclusion Partnership Team to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Mrs Wright and can be contacted via 01933 201 200 or email cwright@rushdenprimaryacademy.org

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis and submitting this information to the office by 9.00am and 1.15pm.

Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system.
- Transfer calls from parents to the Mrs Larbey, the Attendance Lead, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

5. Recording attendance

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

We will use the national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible by calling the main school telephone number on 01933 201 200.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the absence is longer than five days the academy 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. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the academy is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised providing the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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. The leave of absence form can be found on our website.

Go to section 6 of this document to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

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

We identify families who need support through close monitoring of the registration system and offer early help when a negative trend is detected.

Following up unexplained absence

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

- 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 pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts and had no contact from parents after three consecutive days (six missed sessions) of absence, the academy may do a home visit.
- If absence continues, the academy will consider involving the Education Inclusion Partnership Team.

Reporting to parents/ carers

The academy will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels through reports and attendance related letters will be sent once a child's attendance has dropped below the threshold of 95%.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The principal can only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' and if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The academy 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 two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning. We will not authorise any holidays, unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Legal sanctions

The Academy are duty-bound to report poor attendance to the Local Authority and they may deem it necessary to issue a penalty notice.

A referral will be made to the Education and Inclusion Partnership Team for unauthorised term time absence. The current criteria for unauthorised term time absence is:

- Five consecutive days (ten sessions)
- Ten sessions of unauthorised absence in a ten week period.

Penalty notices will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent.

From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will **be £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.**

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of **£160**.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

If you're prosecuted and attend court because your child hasn't been attending school, you could get a fine of up to **£2,500**.

Money raised via fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. **Any extra money is returned to the government.**

Please note, the Academy does not issue or receive these funds.

For further information regarding your legal responsibilities and penalty notices:

<https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/attendance-behaviour-and-home-schooling>

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/19/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/>

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

For children who face complex barriers to attendance, we will meet with families and have a sensitive conversation to work together and put the right support in place for their individual needs.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

We work closely and sensitively with families and children who have an additional need or illness. Our Non-Designated Unit supports children with SEND and can, when required and staffing allows, help with bridging the gap between home and school by providing nurture provision at 8.40am. To try and help children who struggle to come into school we can offer later starts and earlier collections for a set length of time, we will do 'meet and greets' at the main Reception door, daily 'walk and talks' on the way to class or whatever deemed appropriate for that child, on a case-by-case basis. We do our best to ensure the support given is bespoke to the needs of the child.

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 academy must inform the
Local Authority.

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

As with everything we do, how children return to school after a long period of absence is based on the circumstances and needs of the individual. We work closely with families to ensure the right support is in place when returning to school.

8. How we monitor attendance

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases.

Analysing attendance

The academy 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

Using data to improve attendance

The academy 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 severed absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- 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

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 academy will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such as facilitating an Early Help Assessment to see if there are wider issues that a family is facing, maybe engaging with the Adverse Childhood Experience team and meeting with the Education Inclusion Partnership team.

The procedure for highlighting and managing attendance is as follows:

1. When it is identified that a child's attendance drops below 95% the first letter* is sent home. If at the next review the child's attendance improved, they will continue to be monitored but no further action is taken at that time.

2. If at the next review, attendance as not improved and or worsened, a second letter* is sent home. Again, if at that review the child's attendance improved, they will continue to be monitored but no further action is taken at that time.
3. If attendance continues to be an issue at the third review or a child's attendance has suddenly dropped below 80% parents are invited in for a meeting with Mrs Larbey, the attendance lead. During that meeting barriers to attendance and or punctuality are discussed. We also make an agreement that children will attend for 95% or more in the following 5 weeks. It is also stated that any absence, without proof of medical appointment or approval by the Principal for extreme circumstances will not be authorised.
4. If the child's attendance does sufficiently improve, we continue to monitor but no further action is taken at that time. However, if there is no improvement we may then contact the Education Inclusion Partnership Team to help support.

*The Attendance Lead and Officer meet termly and will review on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the circumstances leading to a child's attendance dropping below 95%. In these situations, dispensation maybe given, and no letter will be issued.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum, annually by the Principal.