Russell Street School

Attendance Policy

Reviewed on:	November 2024
Reviewed:	Annually
Staff Responsibility:	Attendance Officer/ DSLs/SLT

"The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2%."." 19 August 2024 (DFE)

RSS children are **STARS** – Safe, Together, Achieve, Resilient, Special.

Contents

All children are expected to attend school every day the school is open.

1. Aims

Russell Street School believes 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.

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

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance, and recognise 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.

We are 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.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

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:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, (which explains the persistent absence threshold), Keeping Children Safe in Education and mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Attendance will be recorded electronically.

It will mark whether every pupil is:
- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 3 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:35am on each school day (Years R/1/2) 8:45am (Nursery).

The register for the first session will be taken by 8:40am (Years R/1/2).

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – before 9:00am.

Parents should call 01908 563148 and press 1 to leave an absence message.

Absence due to illness will be 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 parents 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 school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents 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.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed (9am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

A child's attendance is reported to parents annually in the written end-of-year report, or via a termly written report.

If a parent/carer receives support with their child's attendance, a member of the attendance team will follow up a meeting/phone consultation with an e-mail outlining the agreed strategies to be put in place agreed in the meeting/phone call.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2004 school amendment regulations.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- 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 background context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence may include (but are not limited to):

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance - Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least 5 days in advance.

    Russell street 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. We will define this as a day where the pupil's parents would 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.

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

    Where a pupil's parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least 5 days in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

- 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 and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions 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 policy will be followed.

4.2 Legal sanctions

To tackle poor attendance, decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis. Potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below will be used:

Penalty notices – The local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. Before issuing a penalty notice, the individual case will be considered, 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 appropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/s who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority. 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.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Stage One (Day One and Two of absence)

Office staff will monitor attendance on a daily basis and will expect a daily phone call from parents before 9:00am. If this information has not been received by 9:00am, office staff will call all contacts on the contact list held in school to find out why the child is not in school.

Stage Two (Day Three of absence)

On day three of absence, if a definitive reason is not provided at Stage One, or more support may be deemed necessary, the child's teacher, year group lead, DSL or Senior Attendance Champion will call parents to ascertain why the child is still absent from school and offer support that could be put in place.

In exceptional circumstances a home visit may be required.

Stage Three (Week two of absence or absence falling close to 96.5%)

In week two of absence or where attendance is seen to fall close to 96.5%, parents may be asked to attend an 'Attendance Meeting' with the 'Senior Attendance Champion'. The meeting may take place in school or via telephone. (See Appendix 1). Again this will be if a definitive reason is not provided at Stage One, more support may be deemed necessary or attendance in the previous year was below national.

In this attendance meeting, parents and school will agree measures that can be put in place to ensure good attendance at school. A member of the attendance team will send a follow up e-mail to the parent/carer, using the email address: attendance @russell-street-school.co.uk

In the email the child's attendance rate will be included and the strategies agreed to support the family.

A member of the attendance team will log this meeting on CPOMS using the categories 'attendance and communication'. The CPOMS will be assigned to the member of staff who arranged the meeting.

Stage Four (More than 10 days of absence or absence falling below 95%)

If a child is absent for more than 10 days or attendance falls below 95%, an attendance contract meeting will take place in school. (See Appendix 2).

As part of this attendance contract meeting, parents and school will agree measures, signed by both parties, that must be put in place.

A member of the attendance team will log this meeting on CPOMS using the categories 'attendance and communication'. The CPOMS will be assigned to the member of staff who arranged the meeting.

If the contract fails to improve attendance, the local authority will be contacted and legal sanctions may take place – see section 4.2.

6.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. Reducing persistent absence is central to our school's strategy for improving attendance.

We will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who we (or the local authority) consider to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:

- Discuss attendance and engagement at school

- Listen, and understand barriers to attendance

- Explain the help that is available

- Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence

- Review any existing actions or interventions

- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant

- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance to re-engage these pupils. In doing so, we will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence

- Implement sanctions, where necessary (See 4.2)

7. Attendance monitoring

The school office manager monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days we may contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. (See section 5, Stage Two).

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Attendance data is used to track the attendance of individual pupils, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.

Attendance figures for the class (Reception and Key Stage One classes) is published on the weekly Sways that are sent to all parents/carers on a weekly basis. This data is also included on the overview that the headteacher sends to all members of staff on a weekly basis.

8.3 The Senior Attendance Champion

The senior attendance champion:

- Is a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
- Will be mindful of mental or physical health
- Will be sensitive to absence reasons
- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to class teachers, Pupil Premium Lead, SENDCos and headteacher /DSL and DDSLs.
- Works with the local authority to tackle persistent absence
- Works with other schools to improve attendance
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Liaises with other agencies such as the School Nursing Team and Health Visitors

8.4 Class Teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

8.5 Office Staff

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They report concerns about attendance to the class teachers, Pupil Premium Lead, SENDCos and headteacher /DSL and DDSLs.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and Child Protection <mark>and behaviour policy</mark>

Appendix 1: Attendance Meeting

Your child's attendance at Russell Street School is currently _____% which is below the target for all students of 96.5%.

We know that your child's attendance is very important to you.

This meeting is to discuss strategies that can be put in place to support you in improving your child's attendance.

Strategies Discussed……………

If attendance does not improve using the above strategies, then an Attendance Contract will be put in place.

Signed …………………………………………………………………………………. (Parent) …………………………………………………. (Date)

Signed …………………………………………………………………………………. (School) …………………………………………………. (Date)

Appendix 2: Attendance Contract

Your child's attendance at Russell Street School is currently _____%.

We know that your child's attendance is very important to you.

This contract meeting is to agree strategies that will be put in place to improve your child's attendance.

Parents' Will………………

School Will……………………………

If attendance does not improve using the above strategies, then legal action will take place.

Signed ………………………………………………………………………………. (Parent) ………………………………………………. (Date)

Signed ………………………………………………………………………………. (School) ………………………………………………. (Date)

Appendix 3: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Full name	Description
The student is counted as present.		
/ or \	Present am or pm	Present in school during registration.
L	Late	Late arrival before the register has closed
The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.		
B	Educated off Site	The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school.
K	Education provision provided by LA	Education provision arranged by a local authority, rather than the school
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational trip	A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by an approved organisation.
W	Work Experience	A student in the final two years of compulsory education is attending work experience.
The student is counted as absent, authorised.		
C	Other Authorised Absence	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Other Authorised Absence	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Other Authorised Absence	Pupils on part-time timetables
J1	Interview	Leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission into another educational institution
E	Excluded	If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion.
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.
R	Religious Observance	The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.

S	Study Leave	Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils for public exams. Students should still be able to come into school to revise.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	This Illness code can be used for any form of illness, if you don't want to distinguish Covid-19 illness.
I01	Illness	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for students absent due to non-coronavirus related illness (unless the truthfulness of the claim is in question). This code should not be used for medical or dental appointments.
I02	Confirmed case of Covid-19	This code maps to the statutory mark of I. This is for pupils who have a confirmed case of coronavirus.
The student is counted as absent, unauthorised.		
G	Family Holiday (Not Agreed)	The Holiday was not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher.
N	No Reason	The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time, it should be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised Absence	If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Late (After Register Closes)	Schools should keep registers open for a reasonable amount of time, after which the student should be marked with a U.
These codes are not counted so will not affect attendance figures.		
D	Dual Registration	The student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.
X	Non-statutory school age absence	Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend. This code should only be used for early years students who have not yet passed the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday.
Y1	Unable to attend	Absence due to transport normally provided not being available.
Y2	Unable to attend	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend	Part of school closed.

Y4	Unable to attend	Unexpected whole school closure (different from # for planned closures).
Y5	Unable to attend	Pupils in the criminal justice system.
Y6	Unable to attend	Absence due to public health guidance or law.
Y7	Unable to attend	Any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil Not On Roll	This code can be used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining. Schools must take attendance for pupils from the first day the student should be attending the school.
#	School Closed To Pupils	This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as if the school is used as a polling station.

All Pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies. Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness). Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand. Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers. Have robust daily processes to follow up absence. Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.

Persistently absent pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future

Severely absent pupils	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.	Continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Not applicable.	Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them. Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils and parents to maximise attendance. Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. Consider additional support from wider services and external partners, making timely referrals. Regularly monitor data for such groups.

Support for pupils with a social worker	
Parents are expected to	Schools are expected to
Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered.	Inform the pupil's social worker if there are any unexplained absences and if their name is to be deleted from the register.

Effective school attendance improvement and management

Prevention of poor attendance through good whole school attendance management

All pupils
Developing good attendance patterns through effective whole school approach to attendance (including leadership, ethos and systems and processes)

Pupils at risk of poor attendance
Using attendance and absence data rigorously to support pupils with increasing levels of absence, arriving at school late or taking leave in term time without permission before it becomes a regular pattern

Early intervention to reduce absence before it becomes habitual

Pupils with poor attendance
Intervening as early as possible and agreeing an action plan for pupils with high levels of absence and those demonstrating growing disengagement with school

Targeted reengagement of persistent and severely absent pupils

Persistently and severely absent pupils
Put additional targeted support in place, where necessary working with partners, and agree a joint approach with local authorities for all severely absent pupils