

Roundwood Park School



Attendance Policy

Revised June 2019

(Students, Families and Community Committee)

1 MISSION STATEMENT

Roundwood Park School seeks to ensure that every student receives a full-time education, maximising the opportunities for each student to realise their true potential. To this end:

- The school will, within a safe environment:
 - challenge all students to aim high
 - inspire them to succeed academically and socially
 - help prepare them to play their part in the world as self-confident, active, resilient and caring citizens.
- All school staff will work with students and their families to ensure that each student:
 - is known and valued as an individual
 - attends school regularly and punctually.
- The school will:
 - through '**creating a culture of praise**' provide an effective system of recognition, rewards and consequences which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.
 - an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice and support.

2 AIMS

The school's long-term strategic target is a whole-school average attendance rate of 97%, with more than 92% of students achieving attendance of more than 93% and fewer than 5.5% of students below 90% attendance.

Specifically, the school aims:

- To ensure that attendance and punctuality is a priority for all associated with the school, whether students, parents/carers, teachers, support staff or governors
- To maintain a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- To provide appropriate support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students
- To follow a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school
- To use the whole school recognition, rewards and consequences system primarily, plus other strategies to improve individual attendance and punctuality
- To continue to promote effective partnerships with the County Behaviour and Attendance Team and with other services and agencies

- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence
- By all these means continually improve the overall percentage of attendance of all students at school

3 PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents and carers have a key role to play. In particular they are responsible:

- In law for ensuring their child's regular and punctual attendance
- For informing the school of the reason for any absence before the start of the school day on first morning of absence, and each subsequent day, whether by calling the absence line, email to the 'absence' address, personal visit, or letter,
- For ensuring their children stay at school once they have registered.

In return they can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's progress.

4 'FIRST DAY RESPONSE'

The school operates a 'First Day Response' system whereby the parents/carers of a student who is registered as absent without an explanation will receive a phone call before 11.00am to determine why the student is not at school.

5 REGISTRATION

The timetable for registration is that:

- Registers will be taken punctually each day at 8:30am and at 2:00pm, unless otherwise informed
- Students should be in their tutor bases before these times and seated.
- Morning registers close at 9.10am and afternoon registers at 2.20pm

The procedure is that:

- Each student will be called by name and respond in the prescribed formal manner
- Students arriving after the registers has closed will sign-in through the late book at the KS3 or KS5 pastoral offices, but this will be recorded as an absence. Being late three times or more during a term at a morning or afternoon registration will result in an after school detention C3.

Additionally, all staff take a register as early as possible in all lessons using 'lesson monitor' in SIMS, in particular during the first ten minutes of periods 1 and 2 to support the 'first call response' system.

6 AUTHORISED, UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND PENALTY NOTICES

Only the school may decide whether or not an absence can be authorised. Should school staff have reason to doubt that an explanation for a particular absence is genuine, the absence will be treated as unauthorised. This decision will be communicated to parents/carers by the school.

Absence may be authorised for the following reasons:

- Sickness
- Medical or dental appointments

- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional family circumstances, for example a bereavement

The school will emphasise to parents/carers that all medical/dental appointments should be made whenever possible outside school hours.

Absence will not be authorised for:

- Holidays
- Domestic requirements, e.g. shopping, minding the house etc
- Caring for sick siblings or parents/carers
- Birthdays

The school must notify the Local Authority of any pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the school's permission. Schools are also under a safeguarding duty, under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences

Due to new Government Legislation which came into force on 1 September 2013 the school will no longer be able to authorise any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to allow up to 10 days in a school year for a family holiday or to agree to extended leave for parents to visit their country of origin. If a child is absent from school because of a holiday which has not been agreed, this will be classified as an unauthorised absence and the parents may be fined or legal action taken against them.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added sections 444A and 444B to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for that offence by paying a penalty. The Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007 set out the framework for the operation of the scheme. Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the government requires Local Authorities to issue a Code of Conduct to which all parties involved, authorised by them to issue Penalty Notices, must adhere.

In January 2016 Hertfordshire's Children Services made revisions to their Code of Conduct. Therefore, from 01 February, 2016 if the number of unauthorised absence sessions (a session is half a day) reaches 15 or more in the current and/or previous term the Local Education Authority may issue a Penalty Notice. The school will send one Penalty Notice warning letter before applying for the Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority.

The Penalty Notice requires parents/carers to pay a fine of £60 [per parent or carer] within 21 days. If this fine is not paid within the time limit the penalty rises to £120 [per parent or carer], which must be paid within 28 days.

If parents/carers do not pay the fine they will be liable for prosecution for this offence.

7 PERSISTENT ABSENCE

Persistent absence is absence of 10% or more, regardless of reasons, in an academic year. An individual child with an attendance record of less than 90% is deemed to be a persistent absentee whether or not any absences have been authorised.

8 TRUANCY

While the school recognises that a student may truant from school or particular lessons for a variety of reasons, truancy is always recorded as unauthorised absence. The school has in place a number of strategies to manage and minimise truancy:

- Students are made clearly aware that this behaviour is unacceptable
- Instances of truancy are investigated as required to identify the reasons and to inform the school's response
- The student can be placed on a report card to monitor attendance and punctuality
- If necessary, support is offered to the student concerned
- Parents/carers are always informed
- The appropriate sanction under the school's Recognition, Rewards and Consequences policy is put in place, that is, a C3a, Saturday morning detention
- Spot attendance checks are made regularly. These may focus on a particular year group if it is giving rise to concern
- A record is made on the student's file and information fed back to the Head of Year and as necessary to the responsible senior leader. Faculty and Subject Leaders may be involved if there is a difficulty concerning a particular curriculum area.

9 THE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OFFICER (SAO)

Daily the SAO:

- Makes calls to parents/carers of students not known to be present from the morning register
- Record the findings on the daily Absence Report
- Email the Daily Absence Report to all staff
- In the afternoons, further check the registers for absences or registers not taken
- Takes appropriate action

Each week the SAO:

- Produces attendance reports for Heads of Year and the designated senior leader, including the XX week whole school report, the 'Tracking of Students of Concern' year worksheets, [which includes all students below 93%] and the 'Attendance Intervention Tracking Master' year worksheets.
- Ensure that the appropriate letters of support and challenge are promptly sent to parents/carers early in the week and that the 'Attendance Intervention Tracking Master' year worksheets are immediately updated.
- Manage the process of Penalty Notices in collaboration with the appropriate senior leader as and when the need arises.

Every half term the SAO:

- Assists the Form Tutors and Heads of Year in completing and starting each cycle of the Student Attendance Trackers [for students with attendance lower than 94%] by providing the half termly and year to date attendance data.

Every term, and as appropriate, the SAO:

- Assists the senior leaders and Heads of Year in analysing trends [8, 15, 23, 30 and 39 week year on year comparisons] and devising appropriate strategies.

10 LOCAL AUTHORITY ATTENDANCE OFFICER (LAAO)

The key roles of the County AOs are to:

- discharge the County Council's legal duty to ensure that all students of compulsory school age are in receipt of suitable education
- maximise attendance rates at the level of individual students, individual schools and county-wide
- assist in removing barriers which may prevent a child receiving education.

The school either seeks advice or makes a referral to the AO when it believes it has exhausted all avenues available within the school to improve attendance (see section 11 following). The LAAO will then contact the SAO, Heads of Year and sometimes with the student and parents/carers causing concern, and subsequently monitor the student's attendance. Finally a decision may be taken to pursue the Penalty Notice process within school, or externally through the AO or a legal prosecution through being an open case with the AO.

11 STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

A number of strategies are in place within the school to promote excellent attendance and punctuality.

Students are more likely to attend regularly if teaching and learning is to a high standard and the curriculum is matched to individual needs. Accordingly:

- The curriculum is monitored, reviewed and developed to meet the needs of each student.
- Heads of Year utilise their 'non-contact' sessions to monitor individual student needs, and this can also be supported by the Achievement Mentors for students on their caseload.
- Attendance statistics are used to inform pastoral and curriculum practices. These statistics are also issued to the appropriate senior leader and Headteacher.

All relevant parties are kept fully informed and appropriately involved:

- Parents/carers are kept regularly and fully informed of all concerns regarding a student's attendance and punctuality. A warning letter, medical confirmation letter or Penalty Notice warning letter may be sent as the result of the weekly data.
- Senior leaders discussing attendance cases and weekly data during their line management meetings.
- Annual reports are made by the appropriate senior leader to the governing body regarding attendance.
- Students are consistently reminded of the importance and value of good attendance through discussions in tutor groups and assemblies.

Students are treated on an individual basis:

- All students whose attendance falls beneath 94% will be set targets for improvement in the following half-term and this will be closely monitored through the Student Attendance Tracker [SAT]. Through the SAT conversations the Form Tutor will support, encourage and use recognition strategies with the student as their attendance improves and look deeper for any possible patterns or reasons for absence. The SAT targets will be reviewed by the Form Tutor and Heads of Year every half-term.
- All issues, which may cause a student to experience attendance difficulties are promptly investigated and followed up by the Form Tutor and Heads of Year as appropriate.
- Attendance is covered in every student's report and parental consultation.