



Attendance Policy

November 2023

Approved by Local Governing Body

Chair of Governors: John Garner

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Aim

To maximise the attendance of every student at Ruislip High School.

Principles

“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind.” (DfE Guidance – School Attendance 2018).

Our aim is that all our students attend school every day that they are fit to do so. Regular school attendance is vital for students in order that they can make good progress and achieve their academic potential. Ruislip High School defines regular attendance as 95%. The school does, however, recognise that for some students regular attendance may be an extremely difficult target to achieve; the school, therefore, aims to give as much support and positive praise as practically possible in order to assist students in regular daily attendance. Students who do not attend regularly may be placed at considerable risk and, in some cases, may be drawn into patterns of antisocial or criminal behaviour.

Introduction

- 1.1** The purpose of this document is to outline Ruislip High School’s position on attendance through an elaboration of:
 - child and young person’s entitlements
 - the legal framework
 - responsibilities of parents/guardians, Ruislip High School and the Local Authority.
- 1.2** In drawing up the policy, statements have been informed by either statutory requirements, as detailed in the Education Acts and Regulations, or by government advice and Ofsted expectations.
- 1.3** Attendance at school is clearly an important prerequisite for a successful and fulfilling school career. Prolonged absence, irregular attendance and lack of punctuality can all serve to undermine educational achievement and result in considerable long-term disadvantage to children and young people.
- 1.4** It is recognised that students may have difficulties in attending regularly for a variety of complex and often interrelated reasons. These may include:
 - the students’ educational, social and emotional development
 - the students’ medical history
 - social, economic and cultural considerations within the family and community
 - factors operating within school
 - availability of appropriate support from statutory and voluntary agencies within the community.
- 1.5** It follows that the Local Authority (LA), Ruislip High School, parents/guardians, students and the community at large need to work collaboratively in order to maximise attendance. In pursuit of this key task, a positive approach is needed which promotes access to education

within an ethos which values learners, promotes equal opportunities and encourages the involvement of students and their parents/guardians.

The Human Rights Act October 2000 legislates for children to have:

- the right to education, play, leisure and cultural activity;
- the right to protection from work exploitation;
- the right to special care and social integration for children and young people with disabilities;
- the right to have a say in issues that affect them.

Legal framework

Acts and various regulations.

There are legal obligations on:

- parents of children in Years 7-11 to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on roll at a school
- Education Department to provide education and to enforce attendance; and
- Ruislip High School to register attendance, support attendance through pastoral work and for students in Years 7-11, notify the Education Department of irregular attendance, unauthorised absence or any student who has unauthorised absence of ten days or more.

Responsibilities of Local Authority

Improving attendance at Ruislip High School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – parents, students and staff. Each year there are 190 statutory school days. This means there are 175 days for holidays, shopping, birthday treats and non-urgent medical and dental appointments. Therefore absence for these reasons should be kept to a minimum as it is likely not to be authorised. The school works closely with Hillingdon local authority's participation team. Their responsibility is to carry out statutory duties in relation to students' attendance for students in Years 7-11. The LA attendance target for students is **95%**. Each student will be kept informed of their attendance on a weekly basis. Form tutors and Heads of Year (HoYs) will have regular conversations with students about their attendance. If a student's attendance falls below 90%, parents will be called to discuss how the school can support the student to improve their attendance, in the first instance.

School

Staff at Ruislip High School will provide a positive proactive ethos which places a high value on attendance and punctuality. All school employees have a responsibility to set a good personal example in matters relating to attendance and punctuality.

Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to check their weekly attendance percentage as it is written in every student's tutorial reflection booklet each week. This will also be available on their parents' ClassCharts account.

A record of each student's attendance will be kept which will be used in references for university, college or employment. The following are responsibilities of school staff necessary to ensure that students achieve and maintain excellent attendance:

- to keep an accurate record of attendance and absence
- to differentiate accurately between authorised/unauthorised absence
- to respond to absenteeism firmly, consistently and with care
- to contact parents/guardians with concerns, and to record this
- to consult with the Participation Team (PT) if a student's attendance continues to give cause for concern
- to promote regular attendance
- to acknowledge and reward good/improved attendance
- to carry out lesson registration and follow up any absences from lessons, including the sixth form.

Safeguarding students

Children missing from education

Ruislip High School follows guidance set out in [Children Missing Education \(2016\)](#). Where no reason for absence has been given for a child the following actions will be taken:

- a message on ClassCharts will be sent to parents requesting a notification of absence
- when no response is received a phone call will be made to parents and other contacts provided to the school. If a child is LAC or subject to a child in need or child protection plan the social worker will be contacted
- on the third day of absence further safeguarding checks will be initiated, including speaking with friends, emailing the student on their school account, a home welfare visit and contacting the schools of any siblings if known
- where there are concerns that the child may be at significant risk of harm relevant referrals will be made to children's services and police involvement may be initiated
- when a child has reached the threshold of 10 days missing from education with no contact a Child Missing from Education referral will be made via the [Stronger Families Hub](#).

In accordance with the DfE document *Children Missing in Education* (2016), the school must ensure that students are registered with admissions on their first agreed day of attendance to Ruislip High School. If the child fails to attend on the agreed date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity.

For all students in the school, Ruislip High School will monitor student attendance through daily registers and will inform the local authority of students who fail to attend regularly. Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

The following statement is made by the DfE in the document *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2018):

All staff should be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. Staff should be aware of their school's or college's unauthorised absence and children missing from education procedures.

The school will maintain accurate and timely registers and concerns of the nature stated by the DfE will be reported by the attendance officer (or any other member of staff) directly to the designated safeguarding lead, who will then take appropriate action to support the police, social services, and/or the local authority in locating the child. The school will then provide appropriate support on the child's return to school as advised by the authorities.

Students

Students are responsible for making sure that their own punctual and regular attendance is maintained at the highest level.

- Students should attend all of their lessons on time, equipped and ready to learn
- Students have a responsibility to follow school procedures should they arrive late for registration
- Students should not leave the school premises during the school day without the proper permission to do so. If they are Sixth Formers, students must sign in and out correctly when leaving the site throughout the school day
- Students who experience difficulties, which may prevent them from attending school regularly, should speak initially to their form tutor. Students will then be offered prompt and sympathetic support
- Students who take on the role of young carers within their families will be supported by the Pastoral Director who will act as a link person with staff, young carer groups and with other agencies. This is to ensure that they are not overburdened by their responsibilities and that young carer issues are raised within the school.

Parents/guardians

Parents/guardians are responsible for making sure that their child attends school on a regular basis.

- If a student is prevented from attending school by reason of sickness or unavoidable cause, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the school of the student's absence. The school should be notified on ClassCharts on each morning by 8am, with any supporting evidence being uploaded if applicable.
 - Click on relevant child's name
 - Scroll across and click on the report absence tab
 - Click report new absence
 - Enter the relevant date of absence
 - Enter a reason for absence ensuring that if the absence is linked to COVID it is clear

- Attach supporting evidence, if necessary
 - Click 'submit'
 - You will receive a pop-up message stating that the absence has been recorded
- If the school does not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, the school will not authorise the absence and this will be shown on their child's report.
 - Parents/guardians should also notify the school in advance on ClassCharts of any known absences e.g. music examinations, university open days, etc.
 - Parents/guardians should **avoid, if possible, making routine medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours**
 - Parents/guardians do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time. The school will not authorise these absences as they are damaging to a student's education
 - For students in Years 7-11, if unauthorised leave is taken, the matter may be referred to the Participation Officer (PO). A family taking unauthorised term-time leave may be subject to a £60 penalty charge, per parent, for each child absent from school, increasing to £120 per parent for each child absent without authorisation. Failure to pay will result in a prosecution at Uxbridge Magistrates Court, for the original offence of unauthorised absence from school. Should unauthorised exceptional leave be repeated it may result in a summons to a magistrates' court without further penalty notices being issued. Parents should also refer to the Exceptional Leave section of this document (page 5)
 - Parents/guardians should inform the school of any significant change or influence in their child's life which may impact on attendance or learning.

AM/PM registration procedures

- Teachers are responsible for taking the register promptly at the start of the day using Class Charts. Staff should register each student using one of the following codes: / = Present N = Absent L= Late. Upon entering an L mark, teachers will be prompted to enter into the system the number of minutes late. The other available attendance codes will be entered at a later date into the system by the Attendance Administrator
- The register should close at 9:30am. Any student not present should be marked absent using the letter N
- Period 4 teachers are responsible for afternoon registration; the same procedures apply as above in terms of codes.

Lesson registers

- Class teachers are responsible for taking registers at the beginning of their lessons
- If a student arrives after the register has been taken, but with a note from a member of staff, the teacher should overwrite the existing code and should note the reason
- Class teachers are also responsible for recording and discussing with students the reasons for their lateness. The number of minutes late to the lesson should be recorded on Class Charts
- If a student is marked absent for the previous lesson but arrives at the teacher's lesson, an explanation should be sought. This may involve calling for SLT to check with the school office
- If a student is absent from a lesson but has been marked present for their previous lesson, the teacher should alert SLT on tour to assist in locating the student

- Any questionable absences should be reported immediately to the school office for further investigation
- Persistent lateness to a range of lessons is a serious pastoral issue and should be acted upon by the Head of Year (HoY).

Authorised and unauthorised absences

Authorised absence is absence with permission from the school. This includes instances of absences for which a satisfactory explanation has been provided e.g. illness. All cases where a request for authorisation of an absence is questionable should be referred to the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences. Holidays taken during term time, known as **exceptional leave**, will be treated as unauthorised absences. The reasons for the exceptional leave will be logged on the student's record and the PO may issue a **Penalty Notice** resulting in a £60/£120 fine per parent for each child absent without authorisation. In the case of an unauthorised absence lasting twenty school days or more, the student may be removed from the school roll.

Exceptional leave

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Leave during term time is discouraged because any absence has an impact on overall attainment. The school understands that there may be exceptional reasons why a parent requests leave of absence during term time. Each case will be individually reviewed by the Headteacher before a decision is made.

A parent may request leave of absence for his/her child during term time by completing an exceptional leave form. The Headteacher will not authorise term time leave unless there are exceptional circumstances and the child has attendance above 95%. The Headteacher will make the final decision regarding any leave of absence. Parents will be asked to provide supporting evidence when exceptional leave is requested for events such as specific occasions, sports tournaments etc.

The exceptional leave form should be completed, ideally, at least three weeks before the required leave (Appendix 1). The completed form should be sent to the Attendance Officer, who will ensure that the most recent attendance statistics sheet is attached to the form before it is submitted to the Headteacher.

If unauthorised leave is taken, the matter may be referred to the Participation Officer (PO). Family taking unauthorised term-time leave may be subject to a £60 penalty charge, per parent, for each child absent from school, increasing to £120 per parent per child. Failure to pay will result in a prosecution at Uxbridge Magistrates Court, for the original offence of unauthorised absence from school. Should unauthorised exceptional leave be repeated it may result in a summons to a magistrate court without further penalty notices being issued.

The exceptional leave form and Headteacher's response will be placed in the student's file.

The Headteacher will base his/her decision on the following:

- Previous requests will be considered; the Headteacher is unlikely to approve a second period (more than one day) of exceptional leave
- Mitigating circumstances – the Headteacher will consider the reasons for the leave, including constraints of parents' employment.

The Headteacher will give permission for leave of one day for:

- Examinations, including music grade exams
- Funerals
- Performances in relation to outside commitments
- Religious observance.

The Headteacher will not give permission for leave, unless for exceptional reasons, during:

- Years 11, 12 and 13
- Public examinations
- Internal examinations.

The maximum leave the Headteacher will give in one year is six school days.

In the case of mitigating circumstances, the Headteacher may ask for additional proof such as a letter from a parent's employer.

Students involved in performances and filming

The Headteacher will consider each request on an individual basis: taking the following in to consideration:

- Current attendance
- Student tracking report
- Student behaviour record, positive and negative
- If a tutor is being provided

Religious Events

Parents can request exceptional leave for attendance and/or observance for specific religious festivals. The school's position is that it should be a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the family belongs and/or fundamental to the religion.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Students who miss the start of the day can miss work and may miss vital information. Students who arrive late for lessons disrupt the learning of others.

Monitoring procedures

The Sixth Form monitoring procedures are slightly different to those in the lower school and can be found in Appendix 2.

- Attendance tracker is updated half way through each half term and checked regularly by the HoYs and Attendance Manager.

Tracker dates

- Friday 20th October 2023
 - Friday 24th November 2023
 - Friday 15th December 2023
 - Friday 2nd February 2024
 - Friday 15th March 2024
 - Friday 26th April 2024
 - Friday 17th May 2024
 - Friday 21st June 2024
-
- Morning registration closes at 9:30am
 - Students arriving after their start time will be marked as L (late)
 - Students arriving after 9:30am will be marked as U (late after registration)
 - Students arriving after 9:30am (unauthorised) will receive a 60 minute after school detention in the first instance
 - Tutors/AHOYs/HoYs follow up students whose attendance/punctuality is becoming a cause for concern with their parents in order to agree on improvement strategies
 - Stage 1 - A phone call home to agree how we will work together to improve the attendance
 - Stage 2 - An attendance letter 1 will be sent home and a meeting arranged with parent/guardian and Head of Year. An action plan will be agreed with clear targets for improvement
 - Stage 3 - If the student's attendance and/or punctuality does not improve the Head of year will liaise with the school's attendance team for advice and support. An Attendance letter 2 will be sent at this stage and a further meeting will be arranged with the parent/guardian and the Attendance Team. The existing Attendance Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary
 - Stage 4 - If the student's attendance continues to decline a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be arranged.
 - Persistent absentees will be assigned to a mentor within the school who will closely monitor attendance and deploy a rewards ladder for strong attendance.

Lateness to school

School starts at 8:25am for all students. Lateness to school is dealt with on a termly basis.

All students arriving late must report to the HoY at the end of the school day. Students arriving on or after 9:30am (after morning registration) will be issued a 60 minute ASD in the first instance. If students continue to arrive after 9:30am they will be taken out of circulation to complete their lessons with the HoY.

Lates	
Occasion	Sanction
1	Tutor conversation
2	15 minute tutor detention
3	Tutor phone call home
4	Tutor report
5	30 min HOY detention
6	HOY call home
7	HOY report
8	HOY meeting
9	45 min ASD
10	60 min ASD
11	Internal suspension
12	Parent meeting with an individual plan and contract

Rewards and sanctions

Rewards aim to recognise and encourage good/improved attendance and punctuality. Rewards come in many different forms such as:

- Individual certificates
- Form competitions which result in prizes
- Praise during year assemblies
- Postcards of congratulations home

The following list of actions aims to discourage absence and lateness which undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on a student's progress and attainment:

- Letters home
- Detentions
- Internal exclusions
- Participation team involvement

Appendix 1: Exceptional leave form

Authorising leave from the school is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Leave of absence will not be authorised except in exceptional circumstances (refer to Hillingdon and school guidelines).

The Headteacher will consider the following points before authorising leave:

- Attendance history; leave will not normally be agreed if the attendance statistic is below 95%
- The student's stage of education
- The time of year
- The nature of leave (an exceptional experience)
- The number of school days missed.

Full name of student:

Address:

Reason for the application:

Proposed dates:

From: _____

To: _____

Appendix 2: Sixth Form attendance and punctuality monitoring procedures

Curriculum areas

- Subject teachers should flag concerns with student attendance and punctuality promptly to the appropriate curriculum leader
- Stage 1 - the subject teacher should call home to discuss concerns with the parents/guardians. The next time the student attends their lesson, they should raise the issue with the student
- Stage 2 - If attendance/punctuality does not improve after this, the curriculum leader should contact the parents/guardians to address these ongoing concerns and meet with the student
- Stage 3 - if there is still no improvement, the curriculum leader should liaise with the HoY for advice and support and should also inform the Assistant Headteacher i/c Sixth Form. A meeting with the parents/guardians, student, HoY and curriculum leader should take place.

Pastoral

- Attendance tracker is updated half way through each half term and checked regularly by the HoYs and Attendance Manager.

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- Morning registration closes at 9:30am
- Students arriving after their start time will be marked as L (late)
- Students arriving after 9:30am will be marked as U (late after registration)
- Students arriving after 9:30am (unauthorised) will receive a 60 minute After School Detention in the first instance
- Tutors/AHOYs/HoYs follow up students whose attendance is becoming a cause for concern with their parents in order to agree on improvement strategies.
 - Stage 1 - A phone call home to agree how we will work together to improve attendance
 - Stage 2 - An attendance letter 1 will be sent home and a meeting arranged with parent/guardian. An action plan will be agreed with clear targets for improvement
 - Stage 3 - If the student's attendance and/or punctuality does not improve the HoY will liaise with the Assistant Headteacher i/c Attendance for advice and support. An Attendance letter 2 will be sent at this stage and a further meeting will be arranged with the parent/guardian. The existing Attendance Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary
 - Stage 4 - If the student's attendance continues to decline a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be arranged.

- Persistent absentees will be assigned to a mentor within the school who will closely monitor attendance and deploy a rewards ladder for strong attendance
- Persistent non-attendance/lateness will result in the family appearing before the Sixth Form Attendance Panel. This meeting is chaired by the school's PO and attended by a member of the leadership team, the respective HoY, the student and their parents/guardians. If appropriate, individuals from appropriate outside agencies may be invited to attend e.g. safer schools officer
- During the meeting a contract is drawn up to help improve the situation which is reviewed four weeks after the meeting. If an improvement is made, then a letter of congratulations is sent home. If there are further unauthorised absences, the child's place in the sixth form will be reviewed and a decision made as to whether the sixth form remains a suitable pathway for the child. a Penalty Notice or a summons to court may be issued, per parent and per child concerned
- If a student truants a lesson they will receive a 60 minute After School Detention in the first instance.