



Vanguard Learning Trust

The Vanguard Learning Trust is a group of local primary and secondary schools in Hillingdon. We strive to be a Trust that serves its local community and is pioneering in its approach to broadening our students' lives. We believe in effective teaching which allows our students to shine both in and out of the classroom and that intellectual curiosity is at the core of every learning experience. Whilst schools in the Trust have their own ethos and values, they share the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential and life is a journey of discovery.

Attendance policy

Part A: Trust-wide

Part B: Ruislip High School

July 2024

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Part A: Trust-wide

1. Overview

1.1 Aims

This policy aims to demonstrate a commitment by Vanguard Learning Trust to meeting all of its obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance '*Working together to improve school attendance*' (updated 2024, [click here](#)). All schools have a culture and ethos that values good attendance, which includes:

- setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students;
- promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance;
- reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- acting early to address patterns of absence; and
- building strong relationships with families to make sure students have the support in place to attend school.

Trust schools will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

1.2 Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance in '*Working together to improve school attendance*', which applies from 19 August 2024 ([click here](#)), as well as '*School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures*' ([click here](#)). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996 ([click here](#))
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002 ([click here](#))
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ([click here](#))
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, along with the 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments ([click here](#))
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 ([click here](#))

It also refers to:

- School census guidance ([click here](#))
- '*Keeping children safe in education*' ([click here](#))
- '*Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools*' ([click here](#))

1.3 Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Behaviour policy

2. Roles and responsibilities

Although this section of the policy outlines specific duties, it is important to state that the attendance of children is **everybody's responsibility**. All schools within Vanguard Learning Trust will seek to develop a sense of belonging within their local community, fostering strong relationships between students and staff. Aligned with the Trust's values of aspiration, collaboration, and equity, the ongoing aim is to sustain supportive school environments where every child feels motivated to attend school every day and on time:

- Aspiration drives schools to set high expectations and inspire students to recognise their potential, knowing that regular attendance is a key factor in academic success and personal growth;
- Through collaboration, schools work closely with families, community members and local organisations to address barriers to attendance and ensure that every student receives the support they need; and

- Equity guides efforts to provide fair and inclusive opportunities, recognising and accommodating the diverse needs of students.

Together, the Trust is committed to creating a nurturing and equitable educational experience where every child is encouraged to aspire, participate fully and succeed.

2.1 Trustees and the local governing body

The trustees and local governing body (LGBs) of each school is responsible for:

- setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, students and parents;
- making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources;
- making sure the school has high aspirations for all students but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs;
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who/that need it most;
- working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge;
- monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students needs;
- working with school leaders where the school is struggling with attendance, to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance;
- making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - the importance of good attendance
 - that absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - the school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data;
- supporting the sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools; and
- holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

2.2 The headteacher

The headteacher of each school is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy at the school;
- monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students;
- monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
- working with the parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where students with SEND face in-school barriers;
- working closely with the local authority to make use of the full range of legal interventions, where necessary, to formalise attendance improvement efforts. Alternatively, they may authorise the school's 'attendance champion' (see below) to be able to do so;

- communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs; and
- communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels.

2.3 The Trust attendance lead

The Trust attendance lead is responsible for:

- developing and maintaining a trust-wide attendance policy, which incorporates statutory guidance and best practice with regards to attendance processes and procedures;
- regularly monitoring and analysing attendance data at Trust level to identify trends, issues and areas that may need further intervention;
- driving attendance improvement across the Trust by acting as a central contact point and source of information and support with regards to attendance;
- working more intensively with schools who require support to improve attendance, developing intervention strategies to support individual students or groups of students with high levels of absence; and
- facilitating the trust's attendance forum, meeting once a term to share information and resources.

2.4 The designated senior leader ('attendance champion') responsible for attendance at each school

The designated senior leader for attendance, also known as the 'attendance champion', 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 students, 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 students and their parents/carers;
- delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families; and
- collaborating with external agencies and partners to address attendance issues and support students and families.

The name and contact details of the designated senior leader responsible for attendance at this school can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.5 School attendance team

The attendance team of each school is responsible for:

- monitoring and analysing attendance data (refer to Section 7);
- benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement;
- providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and to the headteacher;
- working closely with other staff to tackle persistent absence - this could include wider pastoral teams, the school's special educational needs/disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo), heads of year, family-liaison officers and welfare leads;
- arranging attendance meetings with parents/carers and developing support plans; and
- advising the headteacher/attendance champion when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The name and contact details of the attendance team of this school can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.6 Staff responsible for completing registers

Each school has designated members of staff who are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office. Details of when and how this is done can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

2.7 Office staff

Designated office staff will:

- take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system; and
- transfer calls from parents/carers to relevant staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

2.8 Parents/carers

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, 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; and/or
- those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).

Parents/carers are expected to:

- make sure their child attends every day and on time;
- notify the school (by the specific time and via the means stated in **Part B**) to report their child's absence on the day. This should be done on the first day of the absence as well as each subsequent day of absence. Parents should advise as to when the child is expected to return;
- provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child;
- ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day;
- keep to any attendance contracts, where necessary, that they make with the school and/or local authority; and
- seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the relevant member of staff identified in **Part B** of this policy.

2.9 Students

The expectations for students are as follows:

- In primary school, students are expected to attend school every day on time.
- In secondary school, students are expected to attend every timetabled session on time.
- In sixth form, students are expected to call the school to report their absence as soon as possible on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence.

3. Recording attendance

3.1 Attendance register

Schools will take an attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

3.1.1 Amendments to the attendance register

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

Appendix 1 outlines all the attendance codes accepted by the DfE.

3.1.2 Other information

The school will also record:

- For students of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made. Timings of the school day and when registers will be taken can be found in **Part B**.

3.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by calling the school. Notification procedures for this school can be found in **Part B**. The school will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. The school 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 parent/carer will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Details of how parents/carers should request leaves of absence can be found in **Part B**. However, the school encourages parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Section 5 outlines which term-time absences that the school can authorise.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student 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

Details of how the school identifies and responds to ongoing punctuality issues can be found in **Part B**.

3.5 Following up unexplained absence

The school's day-to-day process for following up on absence can be found in **Part B**. Where any student the school would normally expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may phone the police or the local authority children's social care;
- 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 parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer;
- report, where relevant, the unexplained absence to the student's youth offending team officer;
- offer support, where appropriate, to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance;

- identify whether the student needs support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals; and/or
- where support is not appropriate, not successful or not engaged with, issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (refer to Section 5.2), as appropriate.

3.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents/carers (see definition of ‘parent/carer’, as outlined in Section 3.8) about their child’s attendance and absence levels. More information can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will allow students 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 student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations ([click here](#)). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

4.2 Granting a leave of absence

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher’s discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for. Each school’s definition of ‘exceptional circumstances’ is outlined in **Part B** of this policy. Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours. As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. 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 and in accordance with any leave of absence request form; the specific details of how to access this can be found in **Part B**. The headteacher can request evidence to support any request for leave of absence. If a student is over compulsory school age (eg. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the student or a parent they normally live with.

4.3 Other valid reasons for authorised absence

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

- illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (refer to Sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail);
- religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student’s parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent’s religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart; or
- parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

Other reasons the school may allow a student to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school;
- attending another school at which the student is also registered (dual registration);
- attending provision arranged by the local authority;
- attending work experience; or

- if there is any other unavoidable cause for the student not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

4.4 Sanctions

The school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions including, but not limited to, those listed in Sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 in order to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

4.4.1 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the student attends school. They will include:

- details of the student's attendance record and of the offences;
- the benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 ([click here](#));
- details of the support provided so far;
- opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
- a clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
- a clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period; and
- the grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

4.4.2 Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), 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. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued. Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, 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);
- a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that student;
- further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution; and/or
- any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The school will notify the parents of the days the pupil must not be present in a public place. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. 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 student, 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

Details of the school's strategies for rewarding, incentivising and improving attendance can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

5.1 Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

Details of the school's approach to supporting the following students can be found in **Part B** of this policy. This includes:

- students with complex barriers to attendance, including how the school works with families and strategies for removing in-school barriers.
- students absent from school due to mental or physical ill health, or their special educational needs and/or disability/disabilities (SEND).
- students who are returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

5.2 Attendance monitoring

Information about how the school monitors attendance and absence data (including punctuality data), and systematically and regularly analyses it can be found in **Part B**.

5.3 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student, year group and cohort level. Specific student information will be shared with the DfE on request. The Department for Education has access to the school's management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely. Data will be 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. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

5.4 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance;
- identify students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence;
- conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends; and
- look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

5.5 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual students, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis;
- provide targeted support to the students it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (refer to Section 5.6 below);
- provide regular attendance reports to relevant staff in order to facilitate discussions with students and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including the special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and student premium lead);
- use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies; and

- share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the trust, local authorities and other partners where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

5.6 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The school 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 students who the school (and/or local authority) considers 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 and re-engage these students. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence; and
- implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

Further details of the school's approach towards targeting unauthorised absence, for example – meetings, letters, closer monitoring can be found in **Part B** of this policy.

6. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and at a minimum annually by the attendance champion of the school. Following every review, the policy will be approved by the school's local governing body.

Revision date	By	Summary of changes made
July 2024	BoT	New policy

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Student is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Student is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Student is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent - leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Student is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Student has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Student is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Student is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Student is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)

E	Suspended or excluded	Student has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Student is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Student is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Student is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Student is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every student absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Student is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Student's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Student is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Student has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not on admission register	Student has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays



Vanguard Learning Trust

As a group of local primary and secondary schools, Vanguard Learning Trust's mission is to serve its local community by providing outstanding, inclusive education. The Trust has a collective purpose and responsibility to provide effective teaching, through a curriculum based on equality of opportunity and entitlement that allows students to shine both in and out of the classroom. Each school in the Trust has its own ethos, which also complements the Trust's vision and values, with the common aspiration that all students can achieve their potential.

Attendance policy

Part B: Ruislip High School

Summer 2024

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Part B: Ruislip High School

1. Expectations

The school's view on attendance is that it is everybody's responsibility. Every student is a valued member of the school and their presence is crucial for the collective success and well-being of the community overall. Aligned with the recommendations from an ImpactEd report entitled '*Understanding Attendance*' from January 2024 ([click here](#)), the school is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and that they belong. The school aims to foster strong, positive relationships between students, and between students and school staff, to help build a supportive and connected community. Additionally, the school strives to communicate the importance and benefits of good attendance at every opportunity, helping students understand how their learning experiences contribute to their personal and academic growth.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Although attendance is everybody's responsibility, some members of the school community have a specific role in supporting attendance or providing oversight of the school's endeavours. These roles are outlined below.

2.1 The board of trustees

As outlined in Part A, the board of trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures across Vanguard Learning Trust on at least a termly basis, which includes Ruislip High School. The board also holds the headteacher of the school to account for the implementation of this policy.

2.2 The local governing body (LGB)

The LGB of Ruislip High School is responsible for regularly reviewing 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. Further information about the LGB's role in reviewing attendance data can be found in Part A.

2.3 The headteacher

The school's headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy at the school and monitoring school-level absence data, which is then reported to the governors. Additionally, the headteacher supports staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students as well as trends and patterns across groups of students. The headteacher works closely with the local authority to consider a range of legal interventions to improve attendance, including the issuing of penalty notices as a last resort.

2.4 The senior leader for attendance (the 'attendance champion')

Ruislip High School's attendance champion is Mr Adam Askin. The attendance champion plays a crucial role in promoting and managing student attendance across the school. Their responsibilities include working with the attendance manager and attendance officer to monitor attendance by regularly tracking and analysing attendance data to identify patterns, trends and areas of concern. Their role also involves maintaining accurate records and ensuring that attendance registers are up to date. They support students and families by addressing barriers to regular attendance, offering support and advice, and arranging meetings. The attendance champion is key in fostering a culture where good attendance is valued and recognised, contributing to the overall well-being and academic success of students.

2.5 The attendance manager

The attendance manager is Mrs Kimberley Cluskey. The attendance manager's role is to work closely with the attendance champion, attendance officer, head of years, form tutors, students and their families to ensure we have individual attendance support plans in place to help overcome barriers to attend school. They are responsible for notifying the local authority's school attendance support team of persistent absences and collaborating with them to support improvement. They also report on students with persistent

absences to year leaders and the senior leadership team (SLT), send out student absence letters on behalf of the headteacher, and provide general management information on student attendance as required by SLT or the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH). They are also a safeguarding officer.

2.6 The attendance officer

The school's attendance officer is Mrs Cecilia Evans. The attendance officer liaises closely with class teachers to ensure that registers are completed accurately and are available for scrutiny. The officer monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual student level. They notify parents of student absences when parents have not informed the school through 'Class Charts'. The attendance officer reports attendance concerns to the attendance manager, headteacher, assistant headteacher, or designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and advises the headteacher when to issue legal interventions, such as fixed-penalty notices. Additionally, the attendance officer accurately enters any manual registers onto the school management information system ('Class Charts'), which includes attendance information for offsite students. They also oversee the signing in and out process by students and will inform appropriate pastoral staff of any concerns. They ensure that latecomers are correctly recorded in the attendance registers and liaise with the pastoral team to arrange the collection and dispatch of work for students who are absent due to long-term illness.

2.7 Heads of year and the SLT

Heads of year and the SLT of Ruislip High School are responsible for monitoring attendance data both across the year group and at an individual student level. They pay particular attention to the attendance of students categorised in vulnerable groups. Additionally, they report any attendance concerns to the attendance officer and SLT. Collaborating with the attendance manager and officer, teachers, family-liaison officers and the school attendance support team, they work to address and reduce persistent absenteeism. To further support these efforts, heads of year and members of the SLT arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues and record any actions taken.

2.8 Form tutors

Form tutors are responsible for monitoring, flagging concerns and being a point of contact between home and school to discuss attendance concerns.

2.9 Assistant heads of year

Assistant heads of year are responsible for monitoring attendance data both across the year group and at an individual student level. They pay particular attention to the attendance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, they report any attendance concerns to the attendance manager, attendance officer and SLT.

2.10 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for accurately recording attendance within lessons on a daily basis, using the correct codes and saving this information on Class Charts. Class teachers should also monitor attendance and trends of students' attendance to their lesson and report any concerns to the attendance manager and attendance officer.

2.11 Parents/Guardians

By law, all students of compulsory school age (normally 5 to 16 years old) must receive a suitable full-time education. Parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure this happens, either by registering their child at a school or by making other arrangements to provide them with a suitable, full-time education. Once a child is registered at a school, parents are legally responsible for ensuring they attend; this means students should not have sessions of unauthorised absence.

2.11.1 How parents/guardians support good attendance

To support their child's school attendance, parents/guardians should take several actions. Emphasising the importance of their child having a good rate of attendance, ideally 97% or higher, is crucial. Creating a good routine for mornings at home so that students can arrive punctually and be properly equipped will also help

mornings start calmly. Establishing a good bedtime routine is essential so that children can sleep well, get enough rest and make mornings less of a struggle. Parents/carers should also know the routines of the school day to avoid issues, such as ensuring students have their PE kits on the right days. Reading all school communications helps parents/carers stay informed about what is going on at school and can encourage conversations with their children. Attending all school open evenings and functions is another important step. Wherever possible, medical appointments should be made outside of the school day. Parents/carers should only grant days at home for genuine illness and contact the school via 'Class Charts' as soon as possible to explain why their child is absent and when they are expected to return. If appropriate, arranging for a family member or a friend to take a child to school if a sibling is sick can also help maintain good attendance. Parents/guardians should not arrange for their child to take holidays during school time.

2.12 Students

Students at Ruislip High School are expected to attend school every day and be punctual. This means arriving at school on time, ready to begin the day's activities. Regular attendance is crucial for ensuring that students do not miss out on important learning opportunities. In addition to being on time for school, students must also ensure they attend every lesson promptly. This punctuality applies to each class throughout the school day, reinforcing the importance of being present and ready to engage in learning activities from the beginning of each session. Unless absolutely necessary, students should remain in every lesson for its entire duration. This policy is designed to maximise learning time and minimise disruptions, helping students fully benefit from the instructional time provided.

3. Communication

Effective communication is paramount in ensuring high attendance rates at school, as it fosters a collaborative environment between the school and families. Ruislip High School's attendance officer and attendance manager play a critical role in monitoring and promoting good attendance, acting as the primary liaisons between the school and the parents/carers. They are supported by the attendance champion, a senior lead dedicated to attendance issues, ensuring that robust systems and strategies are in place. The school utilises a variety of communication methods, including regular updates to parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. These updates can be disseminated through emails, letters and parent-teacher meetings, helping to keep families informed and engaged. Ruislip High School maintains a 'buzz' of attendance through a well-planned calendar of events and communications that highlight the importance of regular attendance. To support these efforts, the school's designated attendance champion and attendance manager will work closely with pastoral staff, including heads of year, class teachers, and welfare staff, all of whom are instrumental in supporting various attendance initiatives. The pastoral team can be contacted for further assistance in addressing attendance concerns and providing additional support to students and their families. By employing a comprehensive approach that includes clear communication and dedicated support roles, Ruislip High School aims to minimise student absences and promote a culture of regular attendance. Appendix A and B contain examples of home-school communication.

4. Procedures

Procedures are crucial for the monitoring of attendance because they ensure consistency, accuracy and accountability. They provide a standardised approach for recording and tracking student presence, enabling timely identification of absences. This facilitates early intervention for at-risk students, promotes a safe learning environment and supports legal compliance regarding compulsory education. Clear procedures also streamline communication between stakeholders, ensuring everyone is informed about attendance-related issues. Additionally, accurate attendance records are vital for funding, resource allocation and analysing patterns to improve overall school performance and student engagement.

4.1 Student arrival and lateness

Students are expected to arrive promptly for school by the times outlined below.

Table 1: Start times for Ruislip High School

	Door opens for morning clubs at	Main school doors open at	Classroom doors open at	Student marked late if they arrive after
Times	7:30am	8:10am	8:25am	8:30am

4.1.1 Punctuality

Students are expected to arrive at Ruislip High School on time each day. Sometimes unexpected lateness occurs which cannot be helped. Students who arrive after the official start time indicated in Table 1 should sign in at the school office. School starts at 8:30am for all students. Lateness to school is dealt with on a termly basis. All students arriving with an unauthorised late will follow the sanction ladder for punctuality to school (Table 2). Students arriving on or after 9:30am (after morning registration) will be issued a 60 minute after school detention in the first instance. If students continue to arrive after 9:30am they will be taken out of circulation to complete their lessons with their head of year.

Table 2: Sanction ladder for punctuality to school

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

If a child arrives no later than 30 minutes after the official start time, they will be marked in the register as 'authorised late: late before registration closes.' If a child arrives more than 30 minutes late, they will be marked as an 'unauthorised absence: late after the register closes.' An unauthorised late will affect a child's overall rate of attendance. Arriving late means that students miss the crucial input for their day, which puts them at a disadvantage to their peers.

4.2 Absences

Each school day consists of two sessions, a morning (referred to as AM) and an afternoon (referred to as PM). Therefore, if a child is absent from school for one whole day, this will equate to two sessions of absence. There are two types of absence: authorised and unauthorised. The school is responsible for deciding whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised therefore the information you give us determines the outcome of the absence. As a school, any authorised absences ultimately will be the decision of the

headteacher and the school has the right to request any evidence of any absence. Any absences that have not been reported will be marked as unauthorised.

4.2.1 Notifying the school

Parents/carers must inform the school via the 'Class Charts' app if their child is ill and will be absent from school. A detailed reason for absence must be received before 8:20am on each day of absence. A child simply being 'unwell' is not a reason to be absent from school. The attendance officer will notify the parents/carers of students who are not in school with a message on class charts. Although medical appointments and illness constitute an authorised absence, they will still affect a child's percentage attendance, therefore we require parents/carers to provide documentation for these absences.. For advice and information on whether children are well enough for school, parents/carers are advised to visit the related page on the NHS website ([click here](#)).

4.2.2 Contact details

Ruislip High School must have up-to-date contact numbers for your child so we can contact you when your child is absent or in case of an emergency.

4.3 Working with the local authority

Collaboration between schools and local authorities is crucial for improving attendance. Joint efforts ensure that barriers to attendance are identified and addressed, providing holistic support to students and families. This partnership fosters a community-focused approach, enhancing engagement, resources and interventions, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes and reduced absenteeism.

4.3.1 Issuing of penalty notices

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. If difficulties continue the school may refer the child to the attendance team at the local authority. The team will also try to resolve the situation but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance fail and unauthorised absences persist, the team can use sanctions such as the issuing of a penalty notice as a last resort; this is currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days, a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid penalty notice, which could lead to a prosecution in the Magistrates Court. More information can be found in the Department for Education's statutory guidance: '*Working together to improve school attendance*' ([click here](#)). Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the local authority attendance team themselves to ask for help or information; they are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01895 250858. Attendance advice may be sought at any time by the school and it may be necessary to fast track a referral to them.

4.3.2 Child missing from education

If a child has been absent for 10 school days they are classified as a child missing from education (CME). A referral to the local authority's CME team will be made for further advice and support.

4.4 Exceptional leave during term time

The school will not authorise any leave during term time. Parents/carers who feel it necessary to take their child out of school for an extended period of time due to unavoidable and extreme/exceptional circumstances must make a formal request by completing the '*Exceptional leave form*' document (refer to Letter 8, Appendix B). This should be submitted to the headteacher at least two weeks before the intended period of absence. Any supporting documents should be submitted with the request form, such as flight details or exam letters. There is no right of appeal in regards to any decision made concerning requests for exceptional leave during term time. If the child will be late returning from a period of leave, the school requires parents/carers to produce documentation to evidence this. Where holidays are taken which have not been authorised, the school will inform the local authority attendance team, who may issue a penalty notice of £80 per parent per child if it is paid within 21 days. If it is not paid within 21 days, it advances to £160 per parent per child. If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action. More information can be found on the Department for Education's website ([click here](#)).

Where there is reason to believe that a prolonged absence is the result of a holiday, the school will pursue it as it would if it was informed about the holiday in advance. Suspicion of prolonged absence due to a holiday in term time is enough to pursue a holiday penalty notice through the local authority.

4.5 Extreme/exceptional circumstances

Extreme or exceptional circumstances generally include situations that are rare, significant or unavoidable.

The following scenarios illustrate what is meant by this term:

1. Bereavement: the death of a close family member.
2. Serious illness: when a child or close family member has a serious/critical illness that requires the child to be absent.
3. Family crisis: emergency situations involving members of the child's family that require immediate attention.
4. Religious observances: religious festivals or ceremonies.
5. Examinations: external examinations or assessments.
6. Legal requirements: attending a court hearing, being involved in a custody dispute or other legal obligations.
7. Unexpected travel disruptions: unforeseen travel disruptions that make it impossible for the child to attend school (eg. natural disasters).

These exceptional circumstances typically do not include:

- Holidays during term time.
- Family events like birthdays or weddings.
- Minor ailments (colds, headaches).

4.6 Sixth Form attendance and punctuality monitoring procedures

4.6.1 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/carers. 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/carers 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 head of year for advice and support. They should also inform the assistant headteacher in charge of the Sixth Form. A meeting with the student, their parents/carers, head of year and curriculum leader should take place.

4.6.2 Pastoral

Attendance tracker is updated regularly through each term and checked regularly by the head of years and the attendance manager.

- 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, assistant heads of year and heads of year follow-up students whose attendance is becoming a cause for concern with their parents/carers in order to agree on improvement strategies.
 - Stage 1: a phone call home to agree how to work together to improve attendance.
 - Stage 2: attendance letter 1 (Appendix A) will be sent home and a meeting arranged with parents/carers. 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 assistant headteacher in charge of attendance for advice and support. Attendance letter 2 (Appendix A) will be sent at this stage and a further meeting will be

arranged with the parent/carer. Any existing Attendance Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary.

- o 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 head of Sixth Form and attended by a member of the leadership team, the respective head of year, the student and their parents/carers. If appropriate, individuals from appropriate outside agencies may be invited to attend e.g. police 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 (Appendix A) 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/carer and per child concerned.
- If a student truants a lesson they will receive a 60 minute after-school detention in the first instance.
- Students' attendance will be reviewed at the end of each half term. All students with attendance for the year below 92% will be asked to spend all of their study periods in the study room with 1:1 learning mentor guidance and support to help them catch up until their attendance exceeds 92%.

5. Identifying trends and patterns

It is important to note that consistent attendance is essential for a student's academic and social development. Ruislip High School will work with parents/carers and other professionals as needed to support students in attending school regularly and meeting their full potential. The school uses the following procedures for monitoring daily attendance and informing parents:

- daily attendance reminder messages are sent via class charts to all parents/carers who have not notified the school of their child's absence;
- if there is still no improvement, if parents/carers do not respond to the school's letters, or if parents/carers fail to show up for arranged meetings, then the school will refer the family to the local authority's attendance team; and
- school staff may undertake home visits if absences are not reported, to check that the child is safe and well.

5.1 'Attendance Tracker'

The school's attendance monitoring procedure, '*Attendance Tracker*', is designed to support students in attending school regularly and making the most of their educational opportunities. To ensure that attendance concerns are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner, the following actions will be taken:

- Stage 1: a phone call home to agree how to work together to improve attendance.
- Stage 2: attendance letter 1 (Appendix B) will be sent home and a phone call home from the 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 attendance manager. Attendance letter 2 (Appendix B) will be sent at this stage and a meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer. Any existing Attendance Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary.
- Stage 4: if the student's attendance continues to decline, a meeting with the attendance champion will be arranged.

Table 3: Tracker dates

Friday 11th October 2024
Friday 29th November 2024
Friday 24th January 2025
Friday 14th March 2025
Friday 9th May 2025
Friday 20th June 2025

6. Celebrating good attendance

Ruislip High School recognises the importance of celebrating and incentivising good attendance to encourage students to maintain consistent and punctual attendance. As such, the school utilises a variety of strategies to reward students who demonstrate excellent and/or improved attendance. The school rewards good attendance in the following ways:

- The tutor group with the highest weekly attendance receives a tutor group breakfast during form time.
- Class rewards are given on the 'Class Charts' reward system.
- Certificates are awarded to students in celebration assemblies who have achieved 100% attendance on a termly basis.

By celebrating both outstanding attendance and meaningful improvements, the school aims to create a positive and motivating atmosphere that highlights the value of regular school attendance and supports students in their journey towards academic success.

6.1 Celebrating improved attendance

Ruislip High School recognises that celebrating and rewarding students for improving their attendance can be a great way to motivate them and reinforce positive behaviour. The methods of celebration taken by the school include acknowledging students during school assemblies, on tutor group displays and on the digital signage. The school also rewards improving attendance through providing attendance certificates for achieving specific milestones and half termly awards for significantly improved attendance. Additionally, assistant heads of year run various incentive programmes for students who have significantly improved their attendance.

7. Students who may need additional support

Ruislip High School is committed to providing tailored support to students facing various challenges that affect their attendance. The school recognises that certain groups of students may require additional assistance to overcome these barriers and ensure their regular participation in school.

7.1 Students with complex barriers to attendance

For students with complex barriers to attendance, Ruislip High School takes a comprehensive approach by closely collaborating with families and external agencies to address the root causes of absenteeism. The school conducts thorough assessments to identify specific challenges these students face, whether they stem from home, social or economic factors, or a combination thereof. Working with families, the school develops individualised support plans that may include flexible scheduling, pastoral support or access to community resources via a referral to local 'early help' services. The school also strives to remove any barriers by

providing a welcoming and inclusive environment, offering personalised learning plans and ensuring that these students have access to necessary support services such as counselling, mentoring and/or therapies where appropriate.

7.2 Students absent due to mental and/or physical ill health, or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Students who are absent due to mental and/or physical ill health, or an issue related to their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), receive targeted support to help them maintain their educational progress. The school's SEND co-ordinator (SENDCo) can liaise with a wide variety of specialists including counsellors and healthcare professionals, who work together to create and implement individualised education plans (IEPs) or health care plans. The school will maintain regular communication with these students and their families, providing necessary adjustments. The goal is to ensure that these students receive a continuous and supportive education, tailored to their unique needs and circumstances.

7.3 Students returning after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

When students return to Ruislip High School after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, the school implements a structured reintegration process to help them transition smoothly back into the school environment. This process includes an initial meeting with the student and their family to discuss any concerns and create a personalised reintegration plan. Key strategies may include a phased return to school, catch-up sessions and/or additional academic support to bridge any learning gaps. The school may also provide emotional and social support to help these students readjust and reconnect with their peers and teachers. By offering comprehensive reintegration support, the school aims to ensure that students feel welcomed, supported and ready to re-engage with their education.

8. Mental health

Ruislip High School recognises the critical importance of mental health and its impact on student attendance. In accordance with the Department for Education guidance '*Working together to improve school attendance*' (2024, [click here](#)), the school has established clear responsibilities and proactive measures to monitor, promote and support mental health within the community. To effectively support mental health, the school regularly monitors the well-being of students through various means, including surveys, wellbeing check-ins along with observations by teachers and staff. The school evaluates the effectiveness of mental health initiatives by gathering feedback from students, parents/carers and staff and by reviewing attendance data to identify patterns that may indicate underlying mental health issues. This ongoing assessment allows the school to adapt and refine its approach to ensure that the school's support for mental health is meeting the needs of all students.

8.1 Emotional resilience

Building emotional resilience is a key component of the school's long-term strategy and it is thoroughly integrated into the curriculum and provision of pastoral support. The school delivers a personal, health and social education (PSHE) programme that includes social and emotional learning activities, mindfulness exercises and resilience training. These programmes are designed to equip students with the skills they need to manage stress, build positive relationships and navigate challenges effectively. Additionally, the school's pastoral care team provides personalised support and mentoring to students who may need extra help in developing their emotional resilience.

8.2 A holistic approach

Ruislip High School takes a holistic approach to promoting and supporting mental health and well-being, fostering a strong ethos and culture of care. This approach includes creating a safe and inclusive environment where every student feels valued and supported. The school prioritises open communication, encouraging students to voice their concerns and seek help when needed. The school also collaborates with external mental health professionals and organisations to provide additional resources and support for students and

their families. By integrating mental health awareness and support into all aspects of school life, the school aims to create a nurturing and resilient community that prioritises emotional well-being. Appendix C illustrates the support and approaches taken to support students at each stage of its attendance monitoring and intervention strategy.

9. Feedback

Ruislip High School values the input of the whole community in helping to shape and refine the attendance policy. The school collects feedback through regular surveys distributed to students, parents/carers and staff, as well as during parent-teacher meetings and school council sessions. This feedback is carefully reviewed and considered in policy evaluations to ensure it remains effective and responsive to the needs of the school community.

10. Further support

To provide comprehensive support for students, Ruislip High School actively engages with 'early help' services and other external agencies. These collaborations enable the school to access a wide range of resources and expertise in order to address the various challenges that may affect students and their attendance. Effective partnerships with local health services, social care and mental health organisations (such as CAMHS) ensures that students and families receive the necessary support and interventions promptly and effectively. For additional support, the school recommends the following helplines and websites:

- **Childline:** A free, confidential service for young people seeking help and support (website: <https://www.childline.org.uk>, phone: 0800 1111)
- **YoungMinds:** A mental health charity offering advice and support to young people and parents (website <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>, parent helpline: 0808 802 5544).
- **NSPCC:** Provides support and information for children and families (website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>, helpline: 0808 800 5000).
- **Samaritans:** Offers emotional support for anyone in distress (website: <https://www.samaritans.org>, phone or text: 116 123).

By continuously gathering feedback and leveraging external support, the school strives to create an effective and supportive attendance policy that promotes the well-being and success of all students.

Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of home/school communication regarding attendance

Appendix B: Template letters to parents/carers

Appendix C: Materials used to illustrate the school's steps to monitoring and support.

Appendix A: Example of home/school communication regarding attendance

Good morning,

Please can you report the reason for your child's absence using the following procedure in 'Class Charts':

- 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 you do not report your child's absence to the school before the end of the school day the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This will not be changed retrospectively.

Appendix B: Template letters to parents/carers

Letter 1 (Stage 2) - Letter about the importance of attendance

Dear parent/carers,

Re: student name (Form) D.O.B. xx/xx/xxxx

Regular and punctual attendance is vital in order for students to reach their full academic potential and I am writing to notify you that XXX's attendance is currently XX%. All students' attendance is reviewed regularly and each student is expected to reach 95% target attendance for the academic year. Attendance below 90% is considered persistent absence.

Whilst I appreciate that there may be contributing factors to your child's attendance figure, including sickness or other authorised circumstances, we are obliged to notify all parents of students whose attendance falls below the guideline figure.

I am also obliged to remind you of your legal duty to ensure that your child attends school on a regular and punctual basis.

XXX's Head of Year will be in contact to arrange a meeting for you to discuss and agree a support plan for XXX.

Should you have any queries, please could you direct them to the attendance officer in the first instance.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

Senior lead for attendance

Letter 2 (Stage3) – Concerns about a student's high level of absence

Dear parents/carers,

Re: Student name (Form) D.O.B. xx/xx/xxxx

I am writing further to my letter sent last term. XXX's attendance has not improved and is a continuing cause for concern; XXX's current attendance level is XX%.

Ruislip High School's aim is for all students to attend school every day they are fit to do so; good attendance is essential for students to achieve their full potential. I would like us to work together to improve XXX's attendance and XXX's Head of Year will be in contact to arrange a meeting for you to discuss and agree a support plan for XXX.

The government guideline for attendance is 96%, therefore, from this date forward, any further absences will now have to be recorded as unauthorised unless supported by the appropriate medical/or other proof.

I must again remind you of your legal duties. You have a legal responsibility to ensure your child attends the school on a regular and punctual basis. If your child's attendance does not improve, the school will refer the case to the Hillingdon Early Intervention & Prevention Service for legal action.

It is a criminal offence and parents/guardians can be prosecuted under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act or receive a Fixed Penalty Notice, under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, if they fail to secure regular attendance of a registered student at the school. On conviction, the magistrates' court may impose a fine up to £2,500 or imprisonment for up to three months, or both. In addition, a criminal record may be imposed.

Thank you for your support in this matter

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

School senior lead for attendance

Letter 3 - Invitation to attendance panel meeting

Dear [Parent/Carer's Name],

Re: Attendance Panel Meeting for [Child's Name]

I hope this letter finds you well. We are writing to inform you that there are concerns regarding [Child's Name]'s school attendance. As a school, we are committed to ensuring that every student receives the best possible education and regular attendance is crucial to achieving this goal.

Over the past [insert time period], [Child's Name] has been absent for [insert number] days. These absences have accumulated to a point where it is affecting their academic progress and social development. We understand that there may be valid reasons for these absences and we wish to discuss how we can support [Child's Name] in improving their attendance.

To address these concerns, we would like to invite you to attend an Attendance Panel Meeting. The details of the meeting are as follows:

Date: [Insert Date]

Time: [Insert Time]

Location: [Insert Location]

During this meeting, we will review [Child's Name]'s attendance record, discuss any underlying issues contributing to their absences, and work together to develop a plan to improve their attendance. Your input and co-operation are vital in helping us to support [Child's Name] effectively.

Please confirm your attendance by contacting the school office at 01895 464064 by [insert RSVP date]. If you are unable to attend on the scheduled date, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can arrange an alternative time that is convenient for you.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to support [Child's Name]'s education. Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

Letter 4 - Concerns about a student's unauthorised absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Unauthorised absence from school

We have noticed that [name] has recently taken an unauthorised [absence/absences] from school. [Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] days on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

It is important that [name] attends regularly so that they can get the best out of their education. We know that every family's circumstances are different and want to work with you to provide the best education for your child. Please let us know if there is anything going on at home or at school which might be making it difficult for [name] to attend regularly.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on 01895 464064 as soon as you can so that we can arrange a meeting to discuss any reasons for these absences, as well as how we can work together to help [name] catch up on any missed schoolwork.

Please note that the Department for Education ([click here](#)) states that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). You can find more information about penalty notices in Part A of our trust's attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Letter 5 – Invite parents/carers of a student with SEND in to discuss attendance

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Invitation for a meeting to discuss attendance

We would like to invite you to come in to have a conversation about [name]'s attendance at school. We would like to find out whether there is/are:

- Anything happening at school that makes it difficult for [name] to attend
- Any issues around the level of support we are offering [name] to support their special educational needs
- Anything happening at home that we can help with, or that you think we should be aware of
- Anything we can do to make it easier for [name] to attend school regularly

Please contact the school office on 01895 464064 as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss the above, as well as what support we can offer to make regular attendance easier.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
SENDSCO

Letter 6 - Request for leave of absence during term time

Parents do not have the right to take their children out of school during term time. By law parents/carers must request permission from the headteacher for your child to miss school for any reason.

This form must be completed for any form of planned absence (with the exception of medical and dental appointments) and it should be submitted for authorisation at least 10 school days before the proposed absence. Copies of details relating to the request such as flight details or exam correspondence should be included in the request.

A request must be made for each individual child.

A request for leave of absence during term time for non-urgent medical and dental appointments does not require the completion of this form. However these appointments should be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible the school must be informed in writing explaining the reason for absence and giving as much notice as possible.

FAO Headteacher

I/We request of the Headteacher that leave of absence be granted to:

Child's name:	
Class:	
From:	
To:	
Reason for leave request:	
If the leave is for a holiday, please state why the holiday needs to be taken during term time:	
Parent/Carer Name:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Return to parent/carer

Child's name:	
Class:	
Attendance %:	

The period of absence that has been requested from to
has/has not been agreed and will be treated on the child's record as authorised/unauthorised.

There is no right of appeal to this decision as all absences are recorded at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Signed: (Headteacher)

Date:

Letter 7 – Accepting a request for a leave of absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Your request for a leave of absence

Thank you for your request to take [name] out of school between [date] and [date].

Having considered the exceptional circumstances set out in your application, I am able to agree to your request.

I have not come to this decision lightly. At Ruislip High School we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment. We consider each request for a leave of absence on its merits and the family's specific circumstances.

Please be aware that the fact that I have agreed to this request does not mean I will necessarily be able to agree to any similar request from you, or other parents/carers, in the future.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Letter 8 – Declining a request for a leave of absence

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Your request for a leave of absence

Thank you for your request to take [name] out of school between [date] and [date].
In this case I am afraid I cannot consent to your request.

At Ruislip High School we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its specific circumstances and I have taken many factors into consideration.

As each request is different, this decision cannot be compared with decisions made by the school in the past and it will not affect any decisions made in the future.

I am sorry to have to disappoint you on this occasion.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Letter 9 – After an unauthorised holiday

Dear parent/guardian,

Re: Holiday absence

I am writing about your action in taking [name] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date]. We are treating this as an unauthorised absence because [explain the evidence you have].

At Ruislip High School we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We have the power to grant leaves of absence under exceptional circumstances and a holiday is not generally considered to come under those circumstances. As outlined in the Trust's attendance policy, we expect parents/carers to consult the school before making any plans that will involve their child's absence from lessons or other commitments. Absences like these could have a detrimental effect on their education.

Insert the following if the child's absence has reached the threshold for a penalty notice and you have decided it's appropriate to issue one (see paragraph 181 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) for questions to consider when making this decision):

[Name] has now had 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). In line with our attendance policy and the local authority's code of practice, you will be issued with a penalty notice. When you receive the notice, you must pay:

- £80, if it's paid within 21 days
- £160, if it's paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action. More information can be found on the Department of Education's website ([click here](#)).

Insert the following if the threshold for a penalty notice has not been reached:

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks (10 sessions is equivalent to 5 days). You can find more information about penalty notices in the trust's Attendance Policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website and are available from the school office.

We would like to arrange a meeting so that we can discuss this absence further. Please contact the school office as soon as possible on 01895 547036.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Letter 10 – Accepting a request for absence for religious observance

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Your request for absence for religious observance

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school on [date] because of [religious occasion]. In this case, I am prepared to agree to your request and it will be considered an authorised absence. Each request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time. We recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity.

However, please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not necessarily mean that I will agree to a similar request, from you or other parents/carers, in the future.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Headteacher

Letter 11 – Concern about punctuality

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Poor punctuality

I am writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe]. They arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

They also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

- [date]
- [date]
- [date]

The school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time]. Afternoon registration takes place between [time slot].

Arriving promptly makes sure that your child does not miss schoolwork and prevents disruption to the teacher and other students. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice, if your child arrives late after the register closes in 10 sessions in a rolling period of 10 weeks. More information can be found on the Department for Education's guidance '*Working together to improve school attendance*' ([click here](#)).

We would like to invite you to come in for a chat about [name]'s punctuality. We would like to find out whether there is anything:

- Happening at school that makes it difficult for [name] to get to school on time
- Happening at home that we can help with, or that you think we should be aware of
- We can do to make it easier for [name] to be on time for school

Please contact the school office on [number] to arrange a meeting.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]
Senior lead for attendance

Letter 12 – Congratulations for improving attendance rate

Dear parent/carer,

Re: Well done [name]!

I am writing to you to let you know that [name] should be very proud of improving their attendance rate. Since [date], their attendance rate has improved from [percentage] to [percentage]; this is equal to [number] days of education no longer being missed.

Well done to [name] and to you at home for your support.

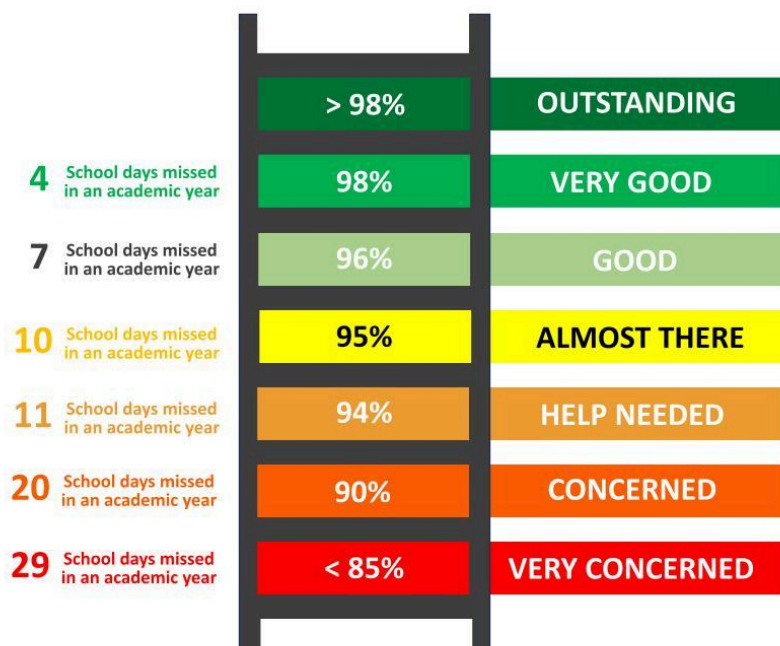
[If you have any schemes to reward students for improving their attendance, explain how the student will be rewarded here.]

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

Senior lead for attendance

Appendix C: Attendance ladder that is used to illustrate levels of good attendance



Attendance Tracker

The school's attendance monitoring procedure, '*Attendance Tracker*', is designed to support students in attending school regularly and making the most of their educational opportunities. To ensure that attendance concerns are addressed in a timely and appropriate manner, the following actions will be taken:

- Stage 1: a phone call home to agree how to work together to improve attendance.
- Stage 2: attendance letter 1 (Appendix B) will be sent home and a phone call home from the 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 attendance manager. Attendance letter 2 (Appendix B) will be sent at this stage and a meeting will be arranged with the parent/carer. Any existing Attendance Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary.
- Stage 4: if the student's attendance continues to decline, a meeting with the attendance champion will be arranged.

Tracker dates

Friday 11th October 2024
Friday 29th November 2024
Friday 24th January 2025
Friday 14th March 2025
Friday 9th May 2025
Friday 20th June 2025