

# Rutlish School



## Student Attendance and Punctuality Policy

<b>Committee ownership for this policy:</b> F&P, Curr, Incl, Prem, RR6, FGB	Inclusion
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<b>Required by:</b>	Statutory
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<b>Responsible</b>	Assistant Headteacher
<b>This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, where appropriate.</b>	

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## 1. AIM OF POLICY

Rutlish School aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Providing clear guidelines for students, parents/carers, staff and governors.
- To keep accurate and up to date records of attendance and punctuality

## 2. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Acts 1996 and 2002
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Sentencing Act 2020
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024 ([legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk))
- The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013
- The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963
- The Equality Act 2010

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold. The law requires all schools to have an admission register and an attendance register. All students must be placed on both registers.

## 3. ATTENDANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Regular and punctual attendance is essential. Any absence affects schooling and has a serious impact on learning. The school is responsible for ensuring an attendance register is taken morning and afternoon.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Additionally, regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, social development, future opportunities and further development.

Under Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, for the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a 'parent' and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

Parents/carers should advise the school if they are aware of concerns that are affecting their child's attendance. Their first point of contact would normally be the Form Tutor.

It is the Local Authority's responsibility to ensure parent/carer meet their responsibilities. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will work with the school and parent or carer.

Headteachers are required to inform the Local Authority if a student fails to attend regularly or has been absent for a continuous period of ten days and is unauthorised.

### **3.1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Appendix 1 details the roles and responsibilities of the following stakeholders:

- The Governing Body
- The Headteacher
- The Senior Leader responsible for attendance
- The Attendance Officer
- The Pastoral Team
- Subject teachers
- Administration staff
- Parents/Carers
- Students

## **4. ATTENDANCE TARGET**

The school attendance target is set annually and is monitored by the governor's Inclusion Committee. The minimum expected attendance for the school is 96%.

## **5. AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE**

### **5.1. UNPLANNED ABSENCE**

Parents/carers must notify the school via the Rutlish App on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health. This should be before 8am or as soon as practically possible. If you are unable to use the Rutlish App, please contact the school attendance officer.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Students should return to school as soon as they are well enough. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the student's attendance is a cause for concern, the school may ask parent/carer to provide medical evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parent/carer will be notified of this.

Other types of unauthorised absence may be:

- Parent/carer keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy
- Days trips and holidays in term time
- Looking after other children/siblings

### **5.2. MEDICAL OR DENTAL APPOINTMENTS**

Where possible, medical and dental appointments should be made out of school hours. If this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. These absences will normally be authorised but advance notice is required. Parents/carers should notify the school of any medical appointments, with supporting evidence, via the Rutlish App. Where possible, the date and time of the appointment should be written in the student's planner and shown to the Form Tutor.

Students should sign out with the Attendance Office prior to leaving the school for a medical or dental appointment. On occasion, it may be appropriate for the Attendance Officer to request an appointment letter/card.

### **5.3. LATENESS AND PUNCTUALITY**

Students should arrive at school prior to registration at 8.30am. Students arriving late should sign in at the attendance office or in Manor House. Students who arrive late but before 9.30am will be marked as late. Students who arrive after 9.30am will be marked as absent for the morning session (U code which is an unauthorised absence); this will negatively impact their attendance.

Students who are late will be sanctioned by their tutor. Students who are repeatedly late will be sanctioned by the Head or Deputy Head of Year. It may also be necessary to meet with parents/carers to address punctuality concerns.

#### **5.4. REQUESTS FOR LEAVE DURING TERM TIME**

The School Attendance (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2024 state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

With regard to the regulation outlined above the school policy is as follows:

1. Parents/carers must request leave for exceptional circumstances as far in advance as possible.
2. The request should be made in writing using the Leave of Absence Form. (Available via the school website). Verbal requests will be recorded in writing.
3. This must include the reason why you feel that it is necessary to take a leave of absence. This may include any extenuating or compassionate reasons, including evidence of circumstances such as medical certificate or letter from employers.

On receipt of an application for leave on the appropriate form together with any supporting documentation, consideration will be given to the circumstance. A letter outlining the decision of the school will be sent to you within 7 days.

Any leave of absence that is not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice being issued and/or prosecution under s4441 Education Act 1996, by the London Borough of Merton. The Penalty Notice carries a fine of £160.

Each request for absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion and will take into consideration:

- the circumstances for the request
- supporting evidence

Usually term-time holiday will not be authorised. If an absence request has not been agreed by the Headteacher and the student still goes on holiday, this absence will be unauthorised.

Study leave for exams is not granted by default. For Year 11 and RR6 students, study leave is at the discretion of the Headteacher; students and parents/carers will be advised in advance.

#### **5.5 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**

Absence to take part in any day set apart exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong, including religious festivals, should be requested through completion of a Leave of Absence form. The list of days set apart exclusively for religious observance are published and the school may seek advice or confirmation from the religious body of the parents/carers.

#### **5.6 FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE**

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

#### **5.7 PART-TIME TIMETABLES**

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the student is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision.

Students on a part-time timetable will be formally reviewed every two weeks with the appropriate school staff, parents/carers and the student.

### **5.8 TEN DAYS' UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE AND FIFTEEN DAYS ATTRIBUTED TO ILLNESS**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME). The Education Welfare Officer will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents/carers are asked to help us by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **5.9 ENSURING A GOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WHO CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL BECAUSE OF HEALTH NEEDS**

The school attendance officer will work together with the Local Authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. This includes Public Exam provision and the education of siblings where the family have had to travel and stay away from the home for medical reasons. Please see Supporting Children with Medical Needs policy for further information

## **6. CHILDREN AT RISK OF MISSING EDUCATION**

The school will notify Children's Services and the Education Welfare Service of any child missing education for five consecutive days via an EWS and/or a Children and Families Hub referral where there has been no communication from the parent/carer or if the absence is unauthorised. The school will also continue to make attempts to contact the parent/carer to establish the location, safety and well-being of the child following the DfE Children Missing Education guidance.

If a student moves too far from Rutlish to attend the school/moves out of the area/abroad the parents/carers must complete a school leavers form, available from the school office. This will provide us with the student's new home address, potentially their new school name and contact details and contact information for their parents/carers. If no/insufficient detail is provided to the school, the student will be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Missing from Education and the Local Authority will need to make appropriate checks.

## **7. ATTENDANCE MONITORING**

The Attendance Officer monitors student absence. If a student's absence goes above 2 days we will contact the parent/carer to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting the parent/carer, a student's absence continues to rise we will consider involving the Education Welfare Officer.

The Attendance Officer reports attendance information:

- Daily to the Head of Year with details of who is absent and the reason
- Weekly to the Head of Year absence by session with known reasons.

The Persistent Absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a Persistent Absentee. The Heads of Year will follow up any attendance concerns with the student and parent/carer.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and Local Authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and report this to the Governing Body.

Attendance is reported termly to parents/carers in a student's school report.

## **8. INTERNAL SANCTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS**

The school has sanctions for lateness and poor attendance, which include:

- Form Tutor, Department or Head of Year detention
- Referral to the Family Liaison Officer
- EWO involvement and referral to EWS
- Attendance contracts
- Referral to the Children and Families Hub

Please see Appendix 2 for the internal process of managing declining attendance.

## **9. LEGAL SANCTIONS**

The Local Authority can fine/prosecute parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, on behalf of the school, where the child is of compulsory school age. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice fine may result in prosecution. After 2 fines, per parent/carer, per child, in a rolling three-year period, the Local Authority may prosecute the parent(s)/carer(s) under s444 Education Act 1996.

If issued with a fine, the penalty is £160 per parent/carer per child if paid within 28 days reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Any subsequent fine will be £160 with no option to pay a reduced amount and any further enforcement action will be via prosecution under s444/4441a Education Act 1996.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice, the Headteacher may consider:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling 10-week period
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where a student is suspended or excluded and is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## **10. STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EXCELLENT ATTENDANCE**

The school celebrates good attendance with assemblies, certificates and letters home.

Tutors, Heads of Year and the Senior Leadership Team promote good attendance through regular assemblies, discussions at tutor time, praise or one-to-one conversation when an individual student may have attendance concerns.

Pastoral meetings are attended fortnightly by the representatives from safeguarding, SEND, EWS and the school pastoral leads to identify attendance concerns and triage support or interventions needed to ensure attendance is good.

## **11. REMOVAL FROM THE SCHOOL ROLL**

The school will inform the Local Authority of any student who is going to be removed from the admissions register. Where a student has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence the student may be removed from the admission register. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the student is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. We will work closely with the Local Authority from the fifth day of absence and make decision jointly with the LA.

Rutish school is aware that off-rolling is unlawful. Ofsted defines off-rolling as, "the practice of removing a student from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent/carer to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the student." We are committed to following all statutory exclusions procedures to ensure that every child receives an education in a safe and caring environment.

## **12. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION**

Parents/carers have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full-time education but this does not have to be at a school. A child is of compulsory school age from the school term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they reach the age of 16. Additionally, the Government requires young people to participate in education or training, which can include home education, until the age of 18.

Schools should not persuade parents/carers to withdraw their child from the school roll to avoid exclusions or because of a poor attendance or behaviour record. Schools should ensure that they refer any parent/carer who may be contemplating educating other than at school to the Education Welfare Service so that they can be provided with detailed information, and offered support and advice from the Local Authority about the requirements before they make any commitment to this route. The school should not remove the student from roll until the parent/carer has confirmed in writing that they are accepting responsibility for their child's education.

## **APPENDIX 1: Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Governing Body**

The governing body will monitor attendance for the whole school on a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **The Headteacher**

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

The headteacher supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and liaises with the Educational Welfare Officer for the issuing of fixed-penalty notices.

### **The Designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance, leads attendance across the school, offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, and evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes. The designated senior leader holds oversight of data analysis, devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance.

The designated senior leader for attendance will support pastoral teams in creating intervention plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers, including part time timetables.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Rebecca Doherty and can be contacted via 0208 542 1212.

### **The Attendance Officer**

The attendance officer monitors attendance and punctuality data at the school and individual student level alerting form Tutors and heads of year when concerns arise. They report concerns about attendance to the senior leadership team and work with the education welfare officer to tackle persistent absence. They provide regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance.

The attendance officers monitor the school app for notifications from parents/carers about student absence, and they make calls and send app communication, daily, to parents/carers if a student is absent and the school has not been notified.

### **The Pastoral Team**

Form Tutors should actively promote good attendance and punctuality. They should take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation.

They are responsible for completing the register on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the attendance office.

The wider pastoral team are responsible for monitoring attendance and supporting interventions needed to improve school attendance.

### **Subject teachers**

Subject teachers should complete the register within the first 15 minutes of the lesson starting. They should reinforce that poor punctuality has a detrimental effect on the learning of students. Teachers should ensure students catch up work missed during absence.

### **Administration staff**

The attendance officer is expected to: manage absence notifications sent to the Rutlish App; send daily communications about attendance and punctuality through the Rutlish App; take calls from parent/carer about absence and record it on the school system. If other administration staff take a call from a parent/carer they should ensure details are passed to the attendance officer.

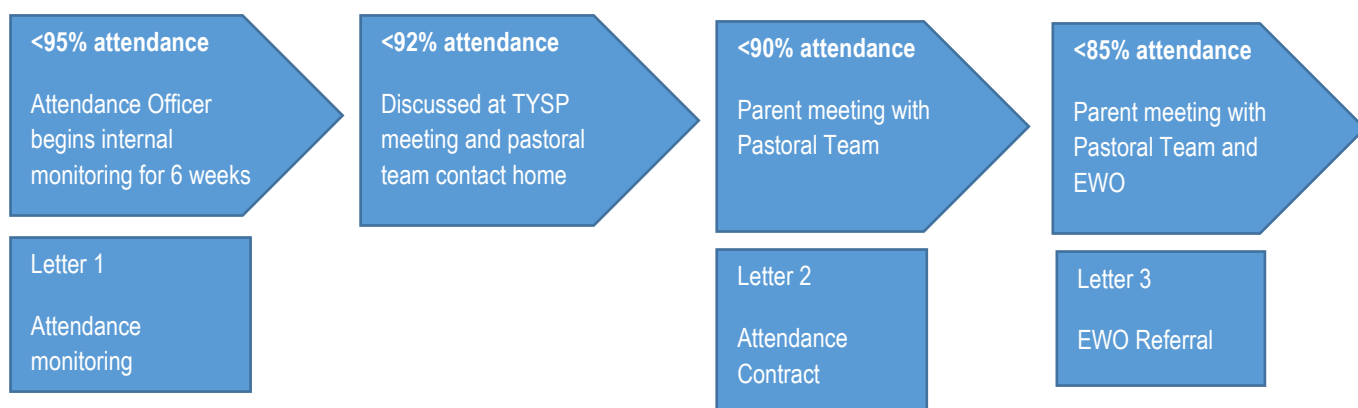
**Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers are expected to ensure their child attends school every day on time. They should ensure they report any absence to the school (including each subsequent day of absence, with the reason and expected date of return). Parents/carers should also ensure that where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

**Students**

Students are expected to attend school regularly, ensuring that they arrive on time and are appropriately prepared for the day (e.g. with the right equipment and/or kit).

**APPENDIX 2: Process for managing declining attendance**



## APPENDIX 3: Entertainment (Performance) Licences and Children Missing School

### CHILDREN, LIFELONG LEARNING AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT

Bev Hendricks– Executive Director



Education Welfare Service  
London Borough of Merton  
Merton Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden SM4 5DX

Direct Line: 0204 605 3650

My Ref : Children in Entertainment  
Please Ask For: Avril Borg  
Your Ref:

Date: 25 November 2025

Dear Colleagues

### **Entertainment (Performance) Licences and Children Missing School**

From time to time you may get requests to authorise absence from school for a child to be granted a performance licence. In some schools and with some children this will occur more frequently than with others.

The licence to perform is issued from the borough in which the child lives.

### **What should I consider before agreeing to a child being absent for modelling/ performance?**

Some modelling agencies ask schools to give a commitment to grant permission for absence at anytime. Others request that the school commit to a number of absences over the academic year. Schools are advised not to give this commitment but to consider each request as they arise and not to sign carte blanche requests.

Before you consider authorising the absence you should look at the amount of time the child has missed from school. If the child has below 95% attendance for the previous and current years you will want to consider whether this child should have more time away from school. If you agree that the child can take part in the performance then the school can give permission via an email to [education.welfare@merton.co.uk](mailto:education.welfare@merton.co.uk). Please ensure the e-mail states the name of the child and that you clearly identify your school. Permission can only be granted by the Headteacher/Principal and they must sign the e mail/letter.

### **Can schools say no to leave to take part in a production?**

(1) *The Licencing Authority shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied that the child's education will not suffer by reason of taking part in the performance or activities for which the licence is requested and have approved the arrangements (if any) for the education of the child during the currency of the licence.*

If the School wishes to say no we would expect the School to demonstrate that the child's education (attainment) is suffering, i.e. by missing homework, declining grades, inability to catch up on work, missing additional days due to tiredness or unexplained absences.

If this is the case and this is confirmed in writing, then the Licencing Officer will look at the evidence provided and make a decision based on the evidence to grant or refuse the licence. If the licence is refused the applicant (Production Company) and the school will be informed. If the school does not provide any educational information

outlining why they wish the licence to be declined the Licencing Officer will proceed to licence the child to perform as we are legally bound so to do.

It should be noted that there are some children within Merton schools who have performed under licence on a regular basis where there has been no evidence of a negative effect on their education (attainment). Reduced/low attendance alone does not allow a licence application to be refused even if this will make the child a persistent absentee.

### **How do I mark the register?**

If you have agreed to the child being absent from school for a performance the absence should be recorded as "C1", *pupil has been granted leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking employment abroad.*

If the Licencing Officer issues a licence then school should authorise the absence as "C1".

### **What else do I need to know?**

Sometimes you may be approached by a production company for pupils in your school to take part in activities that may fall into the area of child performance. Please contact me if you want to check whether these activities may require licencing under Child Licencing Regulations. Please be aware that all processes that fall under Child Licencing take time to work through and if there is not sufficient time given the child/ren may not be able to take part.

Open auditions tend to be during school holidays and weekends. However some auditions are during school time but these should be kept to a minimum. Where a pupil has lots of days off because of auditions there should be a discussion with the parent about the disruption this is causing to their child's education.

For children taking part in theatre work performing the previous night should not be an excuse for late arrival to or absence from school. If they are frequently arriving late after a performance then this is having an impact on their education. You can ask the parent for a copy of their schedule so you can see if the lateness or absence follows a performance.

Siblings should not be absent while the child is performing. If parents are having difficulties with getting children to the production and siblings to school then they should ask the production company to provide a Chaperone to take the child to the performance.

From time to time as the Child Employment Officer for Merton I make inspections of productions taking place within the Borough and if there are concerns then they will be raised with the authority who issued the licence to perform. Parents may mention in their child's school concerns about productions. If this occurs please encourage them to contact me so they can be followed up. If you are concerned as a school about what you have been told then you should contact me directly.

Please contact me on 020 6405 3650 or if you have any queries about the information provided above or want to discuss an individual case.

Yours sincerely



Avril Borg  
Senior Education Welfare Officer