



RUSKIN
JUNIOR SCHOOL

Ruskin Junior School

Attendance Policy

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Ratified by Governing Body:

Review Date: November 2018

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Remember: Good Punctuality Matters!

If a child misses 10 minutes per day they will miss out on the following learning:

50 minutes per week
300 minutes per month (3 hours 20 minutes)
650 minutes per term (10 hours 50 minutes)
1950 minutes per year (32 hours and 30 minutes)

Missed minutes = Missed Learning = Missed Opportunities

1. Introduction

We aim to encourage and enable all members of our community to achieve excellence. For the children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly. Your child should be here on time and every day our school is open unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how we will achieve this in partnership.

2. Why regular attendance is so important

The impact that poor attendance has upon a child's achievement is irrefutable. Poor attendance habits in a child's early stage of education follow through into secondary school and employment. Children's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of other children in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law. This may result in prosecution.

At Ruskin, we use 97% as a measure of good attendance.

3. Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us make sure that this happens, we will:

- Inform you if your child's attendance or punctuality falls below the acceptable level for our school.
- Give families details about attendance in our school newsletter.
- Notify you about your child's attendance in his/her end of year report.

4. Understanding Types of Absence:

School registers are completed, by law, every morning and afternoon. Each half day that your child is absent from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. For this reason, we always need information about the cause of any absence, preferably in writing, so that we make the right decision.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a very good reason. These types of absence include: illness, emergency medical/dental appointments or family-related emergencies.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement in advance of the absence has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Swindon Borough Council) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. These types of absence include:

- Parents/carers keeping children away from school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in the morning/afternoon register
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Excessive illness without medical evidence
- Illnesses which do not require children to stay at home / common illnesses which aren't contagious

If your child is reluctant to attend school, it is always best to speak to us as soon as possible. Covering up their absence or to giving in to pressure to excuse them from attending gives them the impression that attendance does not matter.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Following a routine
- Preparing uniform the night before
- Sharing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Communicating openly and honestly with a member of our staff team
- Being positive about school
- Creating a star/reward chart that helps them to make good choices

5. Persistent Absenteeism

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls below 90%. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Missing 10% of the school year is the equivalent to missing at least half a day per week.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absence mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

6. Threshold for persistent absence

Children who have an attendance rate of less than 90% or children who have developed a pattern of persistent lateness - defined as 12 unauthorised absences due to lateness in any 6-week period – are classed as a persistent absentee.

Children classed as persistent absentees will be tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. The children and their families will be required to attend a meeting with a member of the senior leadership team as well as the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) / Parent Support Adviser (PSA) to devise an action plan to improve the child's attendance.

The plan may include: allocation of additional support through a mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

7. Absence procedures

If your child will be absent you must always:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence to notify us of the reason for your child's absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you to a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss your situation if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the EWO/PSA if attendance moves towards 90%.

8. Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number. If we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

9. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

Parents/carers are expected to contact us at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot

be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Team. The EWO will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the EWO can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices (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) or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. The legislation can be found in the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A):

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Service themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

10. Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they will miss valuable learning opportunities and experiences. They won't be able to spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Children who arrive late also disrupt lessons which can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 08:45 and we expect your child to be in class by that time. Gates open at 08:30. The bell rings at 08:45 and register's taken at 08:50. The children's gates are closed at 08:45. Entry to the school after this time is through the main gate and school office. Children are to register at the office and they will be given a registration slip to hand to their teacher.

Each day, at 08:55 the registers will be closed. If your child arrives after 08:55 they will receive a late mark and minutes late recorded.

11. Exceptional Leave

Exceptional leave is a national term that is used for a request to authorise your child's absence from school in cases such as a holiday for an exceptional and unavoidable reason, to attend a wedding/funeral or visit a sick relative.

There is no entitlement for the school to agree your child's absence from school per academic year and the right for your child to be granted exceptional leave cannot be earned through good attendance. The 1996 Education Act, Section 444 states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend school regularly and punctually.

In an academic year, the terms are planned so that there are 190 teaching days in total. This leaves 13 weeks (Monday to Friday) and 52 weekends (Saturday to Sunday) where leave can be taken with no interruption to the teaching and learning for your child.

Exceptional leave is only granted in extenuating circumstance at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Where a leave request is not authorised the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the register; each day will record two sessions of absence. Schools keep strict records of requests for exceptional leave in term time across all year groups and log the dates and reasons for each request. Patterns of absence from previous years are carefully scrutinized. Requests for exceptional leave are retained by the school and transferred if a child moves school.

If you wish to apply for a period of exceptional leave you must do so in writing to the Head Teacher explaining the reasons for your request. You will be informed of the decision in due course.

Where the leave is unauthorised the letter will explain the implications if the leave is taken anyway with the possibility of the parent/carer being issued with a Penalty Notice (PN) by the Education Welfare Service.

Where leave is authorised, the Head Teacher will notify you in writing of the decision and will confirm the number of days which have been authorised. Repeat applications for exceptional leave may result in your case being referred to the Educational Welfare Officer.

Details of the child and parent/carer who take unauthorised exceptional leave can be notified to the Education Welfare Service who may issue a Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per child per parent/carer. An attendance panel may also be convened. Repeated periods of unauthorised absences will result in summonses to Swindon Magistrates Court for prosecution, which may result in a criminal record.

12. School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated each year about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

We would really like to surpass the 95% target as we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe that our children can be amongst the best in Swindon.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletters.

13. Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school.

We expect all members of Ruskin Infant School's community to be absolutely committed to working together to ensure that attendance is the best it can be.