

Royal Alexandra & Albert School



Attendance Policy

This policy was originated by Gary Bendall, Assistant Head

**It was approved by the Pupil Matters Pastoral Committee
on 6 November 2018**

It is next due for re-approval during the Autumn Term 2021

Attendance Policy

Commitment to Attendance

The staff of Royal Alexandra and Albert School are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, pupils, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the local community as well as serving the unique nature of the school community itself.

Regular attendance is key to achieving the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: staying healthy, enjoying and achieving, keeping safe, contributing to the community, and social and economic well-being. Research clearly demonstrates the link between regular attendance and educational progress and attainment. As a school, we will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their children achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems that prevent this are identified and acted on promptly.

Expectations

All pupils must:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss promptly with their Tutor / Class Teacher /Head of Year / Head of House / Head of School any problems that may affect their school attendance

All parents/carers will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- Ensure that they contact the school on the first day of absence or if known in advance, whenever their child is unable to attend school **and** send a note on their return to school
- Contact school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- Notify the school immediately of any changes to contact details
- Notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child

The school will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent/carer's concerns
- Keep regular and accurate records of AM and PM attendance and punctuality
- Monitor individual pupil's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers. Although parents/carers may offer a reason, only the school can authorise the absence. In the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, verifications from a GP or other relevant body may be requested
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through a system of reward and recognition
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all pupils via our half termly reports and the SIMs Parent App.
- Make initial enquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly
- Meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor and support school attendance and punctuality
- Refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to Education Welfare. Failure by the family to comply with the planned support set by Education Welfare may result in further actions, e.g. a Penalty Notice, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order
- Meet the requirements of the UN Convention - The Rights of the Child - by ensuring that whenever possible, pupils are consulted in all the decisions that relate to them

Pupils Leaving During the School Day

- Pupils are not allowed to leave the premises without prior permission from the school
- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time
- Parents/carers are requested to confirm in writing the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving, the expected return time.
- Pupils must sign out on leaving the school and sign back in on their return
- Where a pupil is being collected from the school, parents/carers are requested to report to the school office before the pupil is allowed to leave the site
- Where relevant all pupils leaving with permission will be given a written authorisation slip by the school in case of being stopped by Truancy Patrol
- If a pupil leaves the school site without permission their parents/carers will be contacted as soon as the School becomes aware. Should the school be unable to make contact with the family it may be appropriate, in certain circumstances, to contact the Police and register the pupil as a missing person

Pupils Leaving Lessons During the School Day

Pupils are able to leave lessons to attend various other activities for example, Music lessons or Mentoring sessions. If they have permission to attend an activity during lesson time the pupil must;

- Inform the teacher as they enter the lesson they will be required to leave
- Show the teacher their permission card
- Leave enough time to leave the lesson via the main school reception to sign the out of lesson book.

On returning to lessons the pupil must;

- When leaving the activity go via the main school reception to sign the out of lesson book.
- Inform the teacher as they enter the lesson that they have been at an activity
- Show the teacher their permission card

Encouraging Attendance

The Royal Alexandra and Albert School encourages regular attendance in the following ways;

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child's or parent/carers' concerns about the school or other pupils
- By marking registers accurately and punctually during morning and afternoon registration periods. If pupils arrive at school after the close of registration without a written explanation, the lateness will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and the pupil's name recorded in the late book in case of a fire drill
- By publishing and displaying attendance statistics
- By requiring pupils to regularly record their own attendance and punctuality
- By celebrating good and improved attendance
- By monitoring pupils, informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, arranging meetings with them if necessary and referring the family to the Education Welfare Service if the irregular attendance continues

Responding to Non-Attendance

When a pupil does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- A designated member of office staff inputs notifications of absence on a daily basis. This information is taken from letters from parents/carers, information received from the boarding houses and from the Late/Sickness book. The Late/Sickness book records all phone calls from parents/carers. Also they will update missing marks from lessons pupils where signed out of lessons using the signing out of lessons book.
- When an AM absence has not explained that morning by parents/carers a phone call to the parents/carers will be placed to ascertain the reasons.
- Where a pupil has been absent from school and no information has been received after two days a letter is sent home requesting the reason for absence. These individual letters are filed and, upon

receiving a reply, the information is kept with the original letter and SIMS is updated accordingly. If there is no reply then a phone call is made by the Assistant Head

- If there is still no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer. If there has still been no contact made, the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers or invite them into school to discuss their concerns. The school will tell parents/carers that if the absence persists that a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Education Welfare Officer may result in further action such as;

Penalty Notices

The Education Welfare Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

Pupils identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which becomes law on 1st September 2013 state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 85% and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Education Welfare will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Punctuality /Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial and being on time to Period one at 8.30 a.m. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

- Period one starts at 8.30 a.m. and pupils who arrive after 8.35 a.m. (five minutes later) will be recorded as late to school.
- registers close at 9.00 a.m. (Monday to Saturday) and after this lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority
- persistent lateness by a pupil will be dealt with through school detentions and may be referred to Education Welfare

School Organisation

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the School has the following responsibilities for the Headteacher, Governors and designated member of school staff with overall responsibility for attendance to:

- Adopt the whole policy
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the Education Welfare Officer and appropriate access to attendance data
- Consult and liaise closely with the Education Welfare Officer on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- To work in close collaboration with the Education Welfare Officer during their termly/half termly register analysis
- Ensure that attendance percentages/graphs are displayed and to set whole school attendance targets
- Monitor and evaluate attendance with the Education Welfare Officer

Key Stage Co-ordinators and Heads of Year are expected:

- To oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- To liaise with the Assistant Head to feed information through to the Education Welfare Officer regularly
- To reinforce good practice at year group meetings
- To share the form tutors' concerns regarding the early identification of disaffection with the Assistant Head.
- To contact parents / carers when a pupil's attendance becomes an issue.

Assistant Head is expected;

- To send out absence letters on a weekly basis to parents.
- To co-ordinate the attendance issues from the Key Stage Co-ordinators and Heads of Year.
- To meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer.
- To Refer pupils when needed to the Education Welfare Officer.

Class Teachers/Form Tutors are expected:

- To complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily
- To follow up any unexplained non-attendance
- To inform the designated person in charge of overall attendance of concerns
- To be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the designated person in charge of overall attendance

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send their child to a different school they inform the school as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from the school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving the school and starting the next
- The address of the new school
- A new home address if appropriate

The pupil's school records will then be sent to the new school. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the local authority Tracking Officer and Education Welfare.

Holidays/Leave of absence

- The school holiday dates, external exam dates and INSET days are published a year in advance
- Family holidays/leave will not be authorised during external examination periods
- Only in exceptional circumstances will family holidays/leave in term time be authorised
- Where a family holiday/leave in term time is unavoidable, a leave of absence application form must be requested from the Headmaster's PA and submitted for consideration by the Headmaster on behalf of the school governors no less than 7 days prior to the requested date. Consideration will then be given to the pupil's previous school attendance and that the time requested does not exceed 10 school days in any one academic year
- If a holiday is taken without prior authorisation by the school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and Education Welfare will be notified

Penalty Notices for Holidays

- In line with the guidance from the DoE, holidays during GCSE exams, Mocks and other external exam periods will not be authorised by the school and a Penalty Notice may be issued
- The Headmaster can now request that the local authority issue a Penalty Notice to parents/carers when pupils are taken out of school for 4 or more days' holiday or leave of absence without school authorisation
- The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £ 120 if paid after 28 days but within 42 days
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 42 days, the local authority is then obliged to prosecute for failing to ensure regular school attendance

Penalty Notices

In addition to Penalty Notices issued for unauthorised holidays, Penalty Notices may also be issued when a pupil is stopped by Truancy Patrol or if a parent/carer fails to ensure regular school attendance.

Truancy Patrol

When a pupil comes to the notice of a Truancy Patrol, the pupil's pattern of school attendance is investigated. If there are unauthorised absences in the preceding 4 months, a warning letter may be sent to the parent/carers. If there are further unauthorised absences during the subsequent 15 school days, a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer.

If there is no significant improvement in attendance in the 3 subsequent weeks, a Penalty Notice will be issued. Again, the Penalty Notice fines are as follows:

- £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.
- If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Failure to ensure regular school attendance

Education Welfare may also issue a Penalty Notice to parent/carers who are failing to secure their child's regular school attendance and not engaging with supportive measures to improve attendance proposed by the school or Education Welfare Officers. Before a Penalty Notice is issued, parents/carers will be warned of their liability to receive such a notice.