

Rowhill School Attendance policy

Rowhill School is proud of its success regarding pupil attendance. We provide a broad, balanced and engaging curriculum differentiated to the individual needs of our statemented learning and behaviour pupils. 50% of our pupils are entitled to free school meals. 10% of our pupils are Looked After Children. In these times of local and national recession the challenges of engagement and attendance will increase. As part of our staff restructuring program the roles of the Children & Families Department have been reviewed. We have an inclusion team that works towards supporting the families and pupils with any issues around attendance.

Since the appointment of the Children & Families Department we have, and continue to, improve our relationship with other agencies. The complex needs of our pupils often require a complex support package. We frequently work with The Attendance and Behaviour Service, Social Services, YOT, YISP CAMHS, ARC, GP's, Housing Associations, Parish Councils, the Police, Fire Service, Write Trak, Step Ahead, TN2, Dandelion Project, 121 Befriending Centre Class, Milestone School, AEN, the CAF teams, various charitable organisations, Connections, Burning 2 Learn, Feagans, Play Therapy programs and Transitions Plus UK.

Many of our pupils have enrolled as a result of permanent exclusion. The rejection and the build-up to exclusion often lead to disengagement and persistent absence.

We currently have 36 pupils attending at a higher rate than the last academic year. In 2009/2010 we had 29 persistent absenters. This year (2010/2011) 2 of these have shown an improved attendance rate.

Attendance:

- Key part of ECM and the children's plan
- Promotes Child Welfare and Safeguarding
- Ensures entitlement to full time education
- Ensures pupil success
- Ensure pupils have access to widest possible range of opportunities when they leave

"Persistent absence" refers to absence of more than 20%, whether authorised or unauthorised. Pupils with persistence absence are often those unlikely to attain at school and stay in education after the age of 16. They are also significantly more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour and youth crime and are more at risk of other negative outcomes (including teenage pregnancy and drug/alcohol abuse). It follows that schools and local authorities that focus on this high-risk group will be in a strong position to make progress in the range of outcomes for children and young people for which they are accountable. This is an area where the school standards agenda and the Every Child Matters agenda strongly reinforce each other.

All members of staff are responsible for taking each and every daily opportunity to stress the importance of, and encourage, school attendance. Termly assemblies will recognise excellence through certificate and prize giving. All new and persistent absenters will have attendance targets set. The attendance target for every pupil within the school is 90%, this is in line with the national expectation. Persistent absenters from the previous academic year will have an individual attendance target; this will be set at 50% of the current year's figure up to the national expectation (90%).

Attendance will be celebrated on reports and at Annual Reviews. The Student Council will regularly discuss ways of encouraging attendance and improvements to our attendance procedures.

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient, full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. Rowhill takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts the continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment, and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

The policy has been developed in consultation with Governors', Teachers, Attendance and Behaviour Services and pupil's Parents and Guardians. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The policy will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising the awareness of the importance of a differentiated and relevant curriculum
- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Ensuring the attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

Recording

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school by 9.20am. All registers are entered electronically on SIMS. Any late pupils should then enter the school through the main entrance. If a child arrives unaccompanied by a parent the office staff will complete the record, asking the pupil to offer a reason. All staff need to be aware that if a child arrives late they must be registered on SIMS for the purpose of fire regulations and so that a lunch may be ordered for them from the kitchen.

The register officially closes at 9:30am, pupils arriving between 9am and 9:30am will be marked as Late (L). If pupils arrive after 9:30 will be marked as U. The register is then taken again electronically on SIMS in the afternoon; for Primary Children this is 1pm, any pupil arriving after 1:15pm will be marked as L. For Secondary Children this is 1:35pm, any child arriving after 1:50pm will be marked as L, if a child arrives 40 minutes late to afternoon class they will be marked as U.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone but must be followed by a letter on the child's return to school. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. The decision will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education Act, which identifies the following reasons as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence:

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith
- The child is absent "with leave". This refers to leave being granted by the school, not by the parent, and would not normally relate to no more than 10 days in any 1 year.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a 3 week process will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided.

Statement of expectations:

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

What is expected of the pupils:

- To respect themselves and others
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel they are being bullied
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. Parents may be prosecuted if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This will be done under the 1996 Education Act and aims to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, education welfare services and the social services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

What is expected of the parents:

- To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum
- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness
- To work closely with the school and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional/special circumstances
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as SATS or the numeracy and literacy hour
- To support their child and recognise their achievements

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive in educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported wherever possible and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

What is expected of the school:

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- To meet the legal requirements set out by government

- To give high priority to punctuality and attendance
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the Education Act 1996
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees
- To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the EWO
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum

The Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Welfare Office (EWO) the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The EWO is the enforcement agency of the LEA and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

Rowhill has regular involvement with the Attendance and Behaviour Service:

- The main contact is with Sue Sherrin, however the school works with other officers on individual cases
- Consultations are every 2 weeks, either at Rowhill or Joynes House. This affords a different perspective
- The ABS are supportive to the school in terms of alternative curriculum opportunities
- Good working relationships with the ABS ensure that earlier interventions can be made, such as;
 - Attending Annual reviews
 - Family group conferences
 - Joint School and ABS home visits
 - ABS interface with other agencies e.g. CAMHS, Parents Consortium etc
 - Attending Core Groups – Multi Agency Meetings
 - Multi Agency Attendance Panels (MAAP) used as a last resort
 - ABS support of individual pupil targets
 - Maintaining contact with parents when case close in a supportive manner if standards slip a little