

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2026-2027

'Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together, Embracing Community'



Respect • Compassion • Friendship • Service

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity."

Psalm 133:1



Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
Supporting Christian Education



Headteacher:	Larisa Alikhan
Approved by:	Governing Body
Approval date:	10/09/2026
Review cycle:	Annually
Next review:	September 2027

Vision, ethos and aims

At Roehampton Church Forest School (RCFS), every day in school matters. Regular attendance supports pupils' learning, wellbeing, relationships, safeguarding and future life chances. We want school to be a calm, safe, inclusive and welcoming place where children feel they belong and want to attend.

Our approach is support first. We work with pupils and families to understand the reasons for absence, remove barriers wherever possible and put the right support in place early. We also recognise that regular attendance is a legal requirement for pupils of compulsory school age and that formal action may be necessary where support is not successful, not engaged with, or is not appropriate.

This policy reflects our Christian vision and our values of Respect, Compassion, Friendship and Service. It is intended to be clear, fair, consistently applied and responsive to individual circumstances.

1. Our attendance objectives

- Maintain a culture of high expectations for attendance and punctuality, with a whole-school attendance ambition of 96% or above.
- Identify emerging attendance concerns early, before patterns become entrenched.
- Listen to pupils and families and understand the barriers affecting attendance.
- Provide timely, proportionate and individualised support, including reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Use attendance data intelligently to identify patterns affecting individuals and groups, including vulnerable pupils.
- Work effectively with Wandsworth Education Welfare Service, children's social care, health services and other partners.
- Meet all statutory duties for attendance, admission registers, safeguarding and children missing education.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been developed with regard to the current statutory and national framework, including:

- Education Act 1996.
- Education Act 2002.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026).
- Keeping children safe in education 2026 (DfE).
- Working together to safeguard children 2026.
- Children missing education: statutory guidance for local authorities.
- Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions and Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school.
- Equality Act 2010 and the school's duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

Parents who register their child at school have a legal duty to ensure that the child attends regularly. Regular attendance means attending every session for the full duration of that session, unless there is a statutory reason for absence or the school has granted leave in advance.

3. Attendance and safeguarding

Attendance is a safeguarding matter as well as an educational one. Repeated or prolonged absence, and children missing education, can be a vital warning sign of neglect, abuse, sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, radicalisation or other harm. Staff must remain professionally curious about changes or patterns in attendance and must not assume that absence is solely an attendance issue.

- Any unexplained absence that gives rise to a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a deputy without delay.
- Where a pupil has a social worker, unexplained absence will be shared with the social worker promptly and in line with the child's plan and safeguarding procedures.

- Where there is immediate concern for a child's safety or welfare, the school will take safeguarding action straight away; it will not wait for attendance thresholds or staged letters to be reached.
- Where a child is absent for a prolonged period, is severely absent, or the school cannot establish their whereabouts, the school will work with the local authority and follow children missing education and safeguarding procedures.
- Attendance information will be considered alongside other safeguarding information so that patterns, changes in behaviour and wider contextual risks are identified early.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Senior Attendance Champion

The Headteacher is RCFS's Senior Attendance Champion and has overall responsibility for the strategic leadership of attendance. The Senior Attendance Champion will:

- set a clear vision and high expectations for attendance and punctuality;
- ensure effective attendance systems and processes are in place and consistently followed;
- maintain a strong understanding of attendance data, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensure support is appropriately targeted and reviewed for impact;
- work with the Governing Body, Wandsworth Education Welfare Service and other agencies;
- decide, with appropriate advice, when formal or legal intervention should be considered.

School Attendance Officers - Emma Govier and Emma O'Keefe

- complete and monitor daily attendance processes and first-day contact;
- ensure reasons for absence are recorded accurately and appropriate attendance codes are used;
- follow up unexplained absence and maintain clear records of contact with families;
- produce regular attendance information for the Senior Attendance Champion;
- support meetings, attendance plans and referrals to the Education Welfare Service.
- send attendance letters and other attendance communications to parents/carers at the appropriate stage, maintaining an accurate record of correspondence;
- contact parents/carers by telephone, email or other agreed methods regarding absence and punctuality concerns;
- prepare and send invitations to attendance meetings and School Attendance Panels (SAPs), and follow up agreed actions;
- monitor responses to letters and communications and escalate concerns to the Senior Attendance Champion where attendance does not improve or contact is not established;

All staff

- promote the importance of regular attendance and punctuality;
- take registers accurately and on time where this forms part of their role;
- notice and report changes, patterns or concerns, including safeguarding concerns;
- welcome pupils back positively after absence and avoid language that shames children or families;
- contribute to support plans and reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends school every day the school is open, unless there is a lawful reason for absence;
- ensure their child arrives on time and is ready to learn;
- notify the school as soon as possible on each day of unexpected absence and explain the reason;
- keep the school informed where an absence is likely to continue and work with the school to address barriers;
- provide up-to-date contact details and notify the school promptly of changes;
- request any leave of absence in advance and provide relevant information or evidence.

Governing Body

- recognise attendance as a strategic priority linked to safeguarding, attainment and inclusion;
- hold leaders to account for the school's attendance strategy and statutory duties;
- review attendance data regularly, including trends for vulnerable groups and pupils who are persistently or severely absent;
- ensure staff receive appropriate training and attendance systems are sufficiently resourced.

5. Expectations and daily routines

The school day and registers

The school gates open at 8:40am. Pupils should be in school and ready for registration. The morning register closes at 9:00am. Registers are taken at the same time for all pupils in each session and are completed using the statutory DfE attendance and absence codes.

A pupil arriving after the register has been taken but before it closes will be recorded as late (L). A pupil arriving after the register has closed will be recorded with the appropriate absence code; where there is no other authorised reason, this will normally be U (late after the register has closed). The register will not remain open for longer than 30 minutes.

Unexpected absence and first-day response

- Parents/carers should contact the school office as early as possible on the first day of absence, giving the reason and likely duration.
- If no reason has been received, the school will make first-day contact using the contact details held for the family.
- If contact is not established, the school will continue attempts using available contacts and will consider the pupil's vulnerability, known risks, previous attendance and safeguarding information.
- Where necessary, this may include contacting emergency contacts, making a welfare visit, speaking to relevant professionals or making a safeguarding referral.
- All contact attempts and outcomes will be recorded.

The school will not use a rigid waiting period where there are welfare concerns. Safeguarding action will be proportionate to the individual child and taken at the earliest appropriate point.

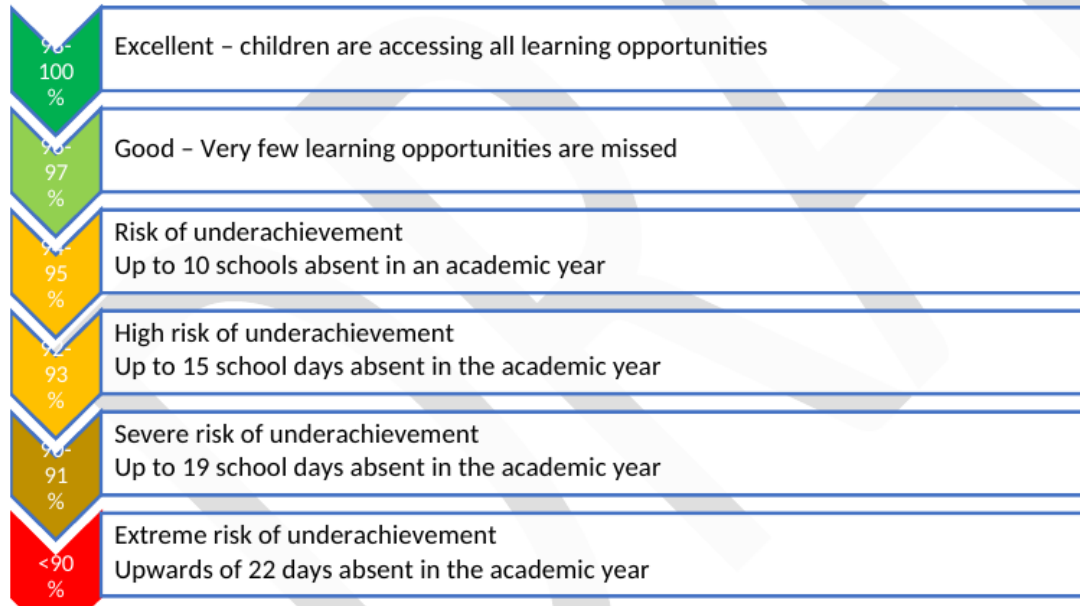
Illness and medical evidence

The school will usually authorise absence where a pupil is too ill to attend. Parents are not routinely required to provide medical evidence for short-term illness. Where the authenticity or frequency of illness is in doubt, or absence is prolonged or recurrent, the school may ask for appropriate evidence after discussing the situation with the family. Evidence may take different forms and will be considered proportionately.

Where health needs are affecting attendance, the school will work with the family and relevant professionals to support access to education. Remote education, where used, does not change the attendance mark and should only be used as a last resort and as part of a plan to reintegrate the pupil into school.

6. Monitoring attendance and thresholds

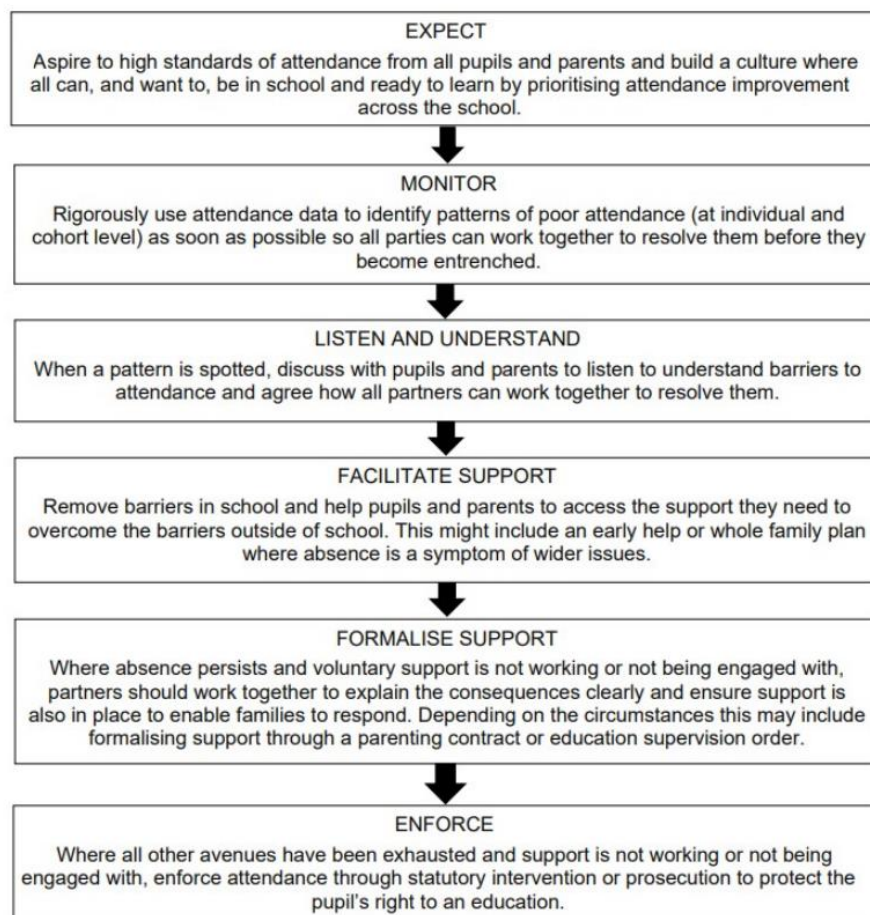
Attendance is reviewed daily, weekly, half-termly and termly. We look at whole-school attendance, individual pupils, year groups and cohorts, reasons for absence, punctuality and emerging patterns. Particular attention is given to pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, looked-after and previously looked-after children, young carers, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with EAL and pupils with medical or mental health needs. The Wandsworth attendance chart below is retained in its original form.



Percentages are indicators, not automatic triggers for a fixed response. The school will consider the child's circumstances, the pattern and reason for absence, previous support, vulnerability and safeguarding information. Action may be taken earlier where concerns are significant.

7. A support-first graduated response

RCFS follows the Wandsworth/DfE attendance improvement approach shown below. The flowchart is retained from the Wandsworth Education Welfare Service Attendance Policy Content Guide.



School Attendance Panel (SAP)

Where attendance remains a concern, the school may invite parents/carers to a School Attendance Panel. The purpose is to review the attendance record, understand barriers, agree specific actions, identify support and set a review period. The Education Welfare Officer and other relevant professionals may attend. A written record and agreed actions will be kept.

8. Pupils requiring additional or tailored support

SEND, disability, mental and physical ill health

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance. The school will be particularly mindful of pupils absent because of mental or physical ill health or SEND. We will work with pupils, families and professionals to understand needs, make reasonable adjustments where required and avoid a 'one size fits all' response.

- Support may include changes to routines, a trusted adult, a safe or quiet space, transition support, reasonable adjustments, pastoral or SEND intervention, phased reintegration or referrals to appropriate services.
- Any part-time timetable will be exceptional, time limited, agreed with the parent, have a clear plan and review dates, and be used only where it is in the pupil's best interests and supports a return to full-time education.
- Waiting for external assessment or diagnosis will not prevent the school from putting appropriate school-based support in place.
- Attendance rewards and communications will be applied sensitively so that pupils with illness, disability or SEND are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Pupils with a social worker, looked-after children and young carers

Attendance is a key protective factor. The school will share relevant attendance concerns with social workers and other professionals, contribute to child in need, child protection, looked-after child and family help planning, and ensure attendance is considered within wider safeguarding and support arrangements. Unexplained absence for a pupil with a social worker will be communicated promptly.

9. Leave of absence during term time

The Headteacher may grant a leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances. Each request will be considered individually on its own facts and circumstances. There is no entitlement to a family holiday during term time, and the school will not operate a blanket rule that automatically grants or refuses leave based solely on a pupil's previous attendance.

- Requests should be made in advance using the school's leave of absence form and should explain why the circumstances are exceptional.
- Parents should not make travel arrangements until a decision has been received.
- The Headteacher will determine whether leave is granted and, if so, the number of school days authorised.
- Cost of travel, availability of accommodation, or a preference to travel during term time would not normally amount to exceptional circumstances.
- Absence beyond an authorised return date will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code and may be unauthorised.

10. Penalty notices and legal intervention

Legal action is not the starting point for attendance work. Where appropriate, the school and Wandsworth will first seek to understand barriers and provide support. Legal intervention may be used where support is not appropriate, has not been successful, or has not been engaged with.

National penalty notice threshold

A penalty notice may be considered when the national threshold is met: 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions can be consecutive or non-consecutive and the period may span different terms or school years. The local authority may also consider a penalty notice in other circumstances permitted by the national framework and its Code of Conduct.

Penalty amounts

- First penalty notice to a parent for a particular pupil: £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within three years: £160, payable within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same pupil within three years of the first; where the threshold is met again, other legal action may be considered.

Notice to Improve

Where the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, a Notice to Improve may be used as a final opportunity for a parent to engage with support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. A Notice to Improve is not required where support is not appropriate in the circumstances, for example some unauthorised term-time leave cases, or where support has already been provided and has not worked or been engaged with.

Other legal interventions may include an attendance contract, Education Supervision Order, prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and, following conviction, a parenting order where appropriate.

11. Attendance and admission registers

RCFS will maintain its admission and attendance registers in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and DfE guidance.

- Attendance registers will be an accurate record of attendance at the time they are taken.

- Where a register entry is amended, the original entry, amended entry, reason, date and person making the amendment will be retained as required.
- Where the reason for absence is not established when the register is taken, code N may be used temporarily and will be replaced with the appropriate code as soon as the reason is established.
- Where a pupil arrives after the register has closed, the appropriate absence code will be recorded; where no authorised reason applies this will normally be U.
- Remote education does not count as attendance at school and the pupil will be marked absent using the appropriate absence code.
- Code B will only be used for an approved educational activity that meets the statutory requirements, including appropriate physical supervision.
- Educational visits arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by school staff are recorded using code V.
- For pupils below compulsory school age, absence will be recorded using the appropriate code for sessions they are expected to attend; code X is used only where their agreed timetable does not require attendance.

12. Children missing education and changes of school

A pupil will not be removed from the admission register simply because they have stopped attending. Deletion from roll will take place only when a statutory ground is met and the required enquiries and notifications have been completed.

- Parents should tell the school promptly if their child is moving school and provide the new address, destination school and expected start date.
- If a pupil stops attending and their whereabouts or education cannot be established, the school will make reasonable enquiries with the local authority and follow children missing education procedures.
- Where safeguarding concerns arise, the DSL will be involved and information will be shared with relevant agencies in line with safeguarding procedures.
- Deletion from the admission register will not be backdated to the date a pupil stopped attending.

13. Promoting and recognising attendance

RCFS promotes attendance through positive relationships, a strong sense of belonging, clear routines, engaging learning and consistent communication with families. Recognition will be inclusive and will value improvement as well as sustained good attendance.

- Class and whole-school attendance may be celebrated where this is appropriate and does not create pressure on children to attend when they are genuinely unwell.
- Individual recognition will include improved attendance, punctuality, resilience in overcoming barriers and positive engagement with school.
- We will avoid systems that shame pupils or imply that authorised illness, disability or unavoidable absence is a personal failure.
- Attendance messages will be clear, accessible and sensitive to individual circumstances.

14. Data, information sharing and confidentiality

Attendance information will be recorded, analysed and shared lawfully to support pupils, fulfil statutory duties and safeguard children. Relevant information may be shared with the Department for Education, Wandsworth Council, other schools and safeguarding partners where there is a lawful basis to do so.

Data protection law does not prevent appropriate information sharing for safeguarding. Attendance concerns, actions, decisions and outcomes will be recorded clearly, including the rationale for safeguarding or attendance decisions.

15. Monitoring and review

The Senior Attendance Champion will review the impact of the school's attendance strategy and processes throughout the year. The Governing Body will receive regular attendance information and challenge leaders on trends, vulnerable groups, persistent and severe absence, the impact of interventions and statutory compliance.

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance, local authority procedures or the needs of the school require it.

Appendix A - Key contacts

Role	Contact
Senior Attendance Lead	Headteacher - Larisa Alikhan
Day-to-day attendance queries	Emma Govier and Emma O'Keefe - School Attendance Officers
Safeguarding concerns	Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) / Deputy DSL
External attendance support	Wandsworth Education Welfare Service

Appendix B - Attendance response at a glance

Situation	RCFS response
Unexplained first-day absence	Contact parent/carers promptly; consider vulnerability and safeguarding information; record all attempts.
No contact / concern increases	Continue contact attempts; use emergency contacts; consider welfare visit, DSL action and agency contact as appropriate.
Emerging pattern / attendance declining	Meet pupil and family; understand barriers; agree and review support.
Persistent absence (<90%)	Individual plan and regular review; involve Wandsworth and other services where appropriate.
Severe absence (<50%)	Priority multi-agency response; safeguarding and statutory intervention considered.
Unauthorised absence reaches national threshold	Consider support, Notice to Improve and/or penalty notice in line with Wandsworth Code of Conduct and national framework.

Appendix C - Sources and guidance

- DfE, Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026).
- DfE, Keeping children safe in education 2026.
- DfE, Attendance toolkit for schools.
- Wandsworth Education Welfare Service, Whole School Attendance Policy Content Guide.
- DfE, Keeping of school attendance and admission registers - frequently asked questions.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

Appendix D - Initial attendance concern letter

School-stage template: early, supportive contact. Adapt to the pupil's circumstances; avoid blanket wording.

Roehampton Church Forest School

Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together, Embracing Community

245 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4AA | 020 8788 8650

info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk



Date: [DATE]

Parent/Carer: [NAME]

Address: [ADDRESS]

Re: Attendance information for [CHILD NAME]

Dear [PARENT/CARER NAME],

We are writing because [CHILD NAME]'s attendance is currently [PERCENTAGE]%. This means they have missed [NUMBER] school days / [NUMBER] sessions so far this academic year.

Regular attendance supports children's learning, friendships, wellbeing and sense of belonging. We also recognise that absence can have many causes, and our first step is to understand whether there are any barriers that we can help to address.

Please contact the school office or one of the School Attendance Officers, Emma Govier or Emma O'Keefe, if there is anything affecting [CHILD NAME]'s attendance or punctuality. We can discuss what support may be helpful and involve other members of staff or services where appropriate.

We will continue to monitor attendance and hope to see an improvement over the coming weeks. A copy of [CHILD NAME]'s attendance record is enclosed for your information.

Kind regards,

Emma Govier / Emma O'Keefe

School Attendance Officers

Appendix E - Further attendance concern and meeting invitation

School-stage template where concerns continue or attendance is approaching/past the persistent absence threshold.

Roehampton Church Forest School

Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together, Embracing Community

245 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4AA | 020 8788 8650

info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk



Date: [DATE]

Parent/Carer: [NAME]

Address: [ADDRESS]

Re: Attendance concern and meeting for [CHILD NAME]

Dear [PARENT/CARER NAME],

We previously contacted you about [CHILD NAME]'s attendance. Their attendance is now [PERCENTAGE]%, with [NUMBER] sessions missed. Attendance below 90% is classed nationally as persistent absence.

We would like to meet with you to understand the reasons for the absence and agree what we can do together to improve attendance. The meeting is intended to identify barriers and put the right support in place; it is not a punishment.

Please attend a meeting on [DATE] at [TIME] with [NAME/ROLE]. If this time is not possible, please contact the school as soon as possible so that an alternative can be arranged.

At the meeting we will review the attendance record, listen to any difficulties you or [CHILD NAME] are experiencing, agree actions and support, and set a review date. Where appropriate, this may include an Attendance Support Plan and involvement from other services.

If attendance does not improve despite support, or support is not engaged with, the school may need to seek advice or intervention from Wandsworth Education Welfare Service in line with the local authority process.

Kind regards,

Emma Govier / Emma O'Keefe

School Attendance Officers

Appendix F - School Attendance Panel (SAP) invitation

School-stage formalised-support template. Copy to the allocated Education Welfare Officer where appropriate.

Roehampton Church Forest School

Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together, Embracing Community

245 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4AA | 020 8788 8650

info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk



Date: [DATE]

Parent/Carer: [NAME]

Address: [ADDRESS]

Re: School Attendance Panel meeting for [CHILD NAME]

Dear [PARENT/CARER NAME],

Despite previous contact and support, [CHILD NAME]'s attendance remains a serious concern. Their current attendance is [PERCENTAGE]%, with [NUMBER] sessions missed.

You are invited to a School Attendance Panel meeting at Roehampton Church Forest School on [DATE] at [TIME]. The meeting will be attended by [NAMES/ROLES] and, where appropriate, the Education Welfare Officer.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the reasons for absence, consider the support already offered, identify any further help that may be required and agree a clear attendance plan with actions and review dates.

It is important that you attend and work with us. Wandsworth follows a support-first approach. Where absence continues and appropriate support has not resulted in improvement, or is not engaged with, the case may progress to the local authority for consideration of formal intervention.

Please contact Emma Govier or Emma O'Keefe if you need to discuss the meeting or require any reasonable adjustment to enable you to attend.

Kind regards,

Emma Govier / Emma O'Keefe

School Attendance Officers

Appendix G - Application for leave of absence during term time

Parent request form. Leave may be granted only in exceptional circumstances and each request is considered individually.

Roehampton Church Forest School

Nurturing Individuality, Growing Together, Embracing Community

245 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4AA | 020 8788 8650

info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk



Parents/carers should avoid taking children out of school during term time. There is no entitlement to a holiday during term time. The Headteacher may grant leave of absence only where exceptional circumstances apply and will decide the number of school days, if any, that may be authorised.

Please submit this form in advance and give enough information for the circumstances to be considered. Do not make travel arrangements on the assumption that leave will be authorised. Unauthorised absence may be referred to the local authority where the national threshold and local criteria are met.

Information	Details
Pupil name	
Class / Year group	
Parent/carer name	
Relationship to pupil	
First day of requested absence	
Last day of requested absence	
Date pupil will return to school	
Number of school days requested	
Reason for request and why the circumstances are exceptional	
Supporting information/evidence attached	Yes / No
Parent/carer signature	
Date	

For school use only

Decision	Authorised / Partly authorised / Unauthorised
Dates authorised	
Reason / decision notes	
Headteacher signature and date	

Appendix H - Request for information about suspected unauthorised term-time leave

School-stage template where information suggests an absence may have been a holiday/leave but the reason has not been established.

Roehampton Church Forest School

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245 Roehampton Lane, London SW15 4AA | 020 8788 8650

info@roehampton.wandsworth.sch.uk



Date: [DATE]

Parent/Carer: [NAME]

Address: [ADDRESS]

Re: Absence of [CHILD NAME] from [DATE] to [DATE]

Dear [PARENT/CARER NAME],

We are writing about [CHILD NAME]'s absence from school from [DATE] to [DATE]. The information currently available to the school suggests that the absence may have been connected with term-time leave or a family holiday, but we need to establish the reason before the attendance register is finalised.

Please provide the reason for the absence, together with any relevant information, within 7 calendar days of this letter. If the absence was due to illness, medical evidence is not routinely required for a short illness; however, the school may ask for proportionate evidence where there is genuine doubt about the reason for absence or where absence is prolonged or recurrent.

Leave of absence during term time can only be authorised by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. If the absence is established as unauthorised leave, it will be recorded using the appropriate attendance code and may be referred to Wandsworth Education Welfare Service where the national threshold and local criteria are met.

If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact Emma Govier or Emma O'Keefe, School Attendance Officers.

Kind regards,

Emma Govier / Emma O'Keefe

School Attendance Officers

Appendix I - Attendance correspondence and escalation record

Internal record to evidence the school's support-first response and correspondence before escalation.

Record	Details / date
Pupil	
Class	
Current attendance	
Persistent/severe absence status	
Date of initial concern letter	
Parent/carers response	
Support offered / referrals	
Date of further concern letter / meeting invitation	
Meeting held and actions agreed	
Attendance Support Plan start/review dates	
Date of SAP invitation	
SAP outcome and review date	
EWO advice/referral date	
Other safeguarding / agency action	
Recorded by	

Important: The School Attendance Officers issue and record school-stage attendance correspondence. Any statutory or local-authority notice must be issued or progressed in accordance with the current Wandsworth Education Welfare Service process and Code of Conduct; school staff should not substitute these templates for a local-authority notice.