



Responsible, Caring & Secure

Attendance Policy

Aims

- To achieve an attendance target of 96% or above.
- To work closely with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor the attendance of children and respond to concerns about levels of absence promptly.
- To encourage parents not to take their children out of school during term time.

Purpose

Roehampton Church School (RCS) wants each and every child to have the best possible attendance at school to enable them to reach their full potential. There is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results for children. Children who frequently miss school may fall behind in their work which may affect their future prospects. Absence may also have an effect on friendships. Young people who are frequently absent from school are more likely to become involved in, or be a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour. At RCS, we work closely with families to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children.

Promoting Good Attendance

Roehampton Church School encourages regular attendance in the following ways:

- Every half term we will hold an attendance ceremony. Children that have achieved 100% attendance receive a certificate, attendance badge and a small prize. Children who have the most improved attendance also receive a certificate.
- Every Monday the class with the best attendance for the week is given an extra 5 minutes play at playtime.
- Every day that the whole class are on in and on time, the class receives a letter. Once the class has spelt 'Roehampton Church School', then that class receives a non-uniform day.
- By publishing and displaying attendance statistics.
- 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.

At the end of the year, any child achieving 100% attendance will receive an extra prize. If a child achieves two years' attendance at 100%, they are rewarded with a £10 voucher at the end of year service. This prize will be increased each year that the child achieves 100%. If the child gains a 100% attendance for the whole 8 years at RCS, then they will receive a prize of their choice, e.g. lunch, cinema or theatre trip. (letter to parents – Appendix 1)

Monitoring Attendance

The Three Letter System

Introduction:

The three-letter system is intended to enable schools and colleges continuously and consistently to monitor and address poor school attendance. The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be necessary. The system is based on three model letters which schools can send to parents when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

It is intended to apply essentially to absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification (and appropriate rewording of the letters) it might in certain circumstances be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised but which are beginning to cause concern. Schools should, however, decline to continue to authorise such absences once doubts arise as to their legitimacy.)

Key Features and Potential Benefits:

- Headteacher/SENCo can focus on the attendance of all pupils at least once a fortnight. Headteacher/SENCo can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern.
- In most cases Letter 1 (Appendix 2) brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required.
- The system provides a clear record of the school's own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve the Education Welfare Service.
- As the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent with Letter 2 (Appendix 3), parents are made aware of the existence and role of the Education Welfare Service prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary.
- The school can readily identify emerging attendance problems and therefore target support accordingly.
- The school builds up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and is able to ensure that when they do need to involve the Education Welfare Service they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful.
- The school produces a record of attendance every week for all pupils whose attendance has fallen beneath 96%.
- These pupils are discussed fortnightly by the Headteacher & Schools' Attendance Officer (SAO), who then discuss any issues with the EWO, looking for emerging trends and patterns. Families are then targeted by the Headteacher / SENCo for support. A family worker is made available if lateness and attendance continues to be an issue.

Letter 1

- For those pupils who have been identified for the first time, a copy of Letter 1 (Appendix 2) is sent to the parents.
- Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fail to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent again at a later date.
- This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance folder.

Letter 2

- Following the sending of Letter 1, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, a copy of Letter 2 (Appendix 3), together with a copy of the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent to the parent.
- This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the attendance folder. The parent / carer will be invited for a discussion with the Headteacher & SAO.

Letter 3 - School Attendance Panel (SAP) Meeting

- Should the pupil's attendance still fail to improve or should it fall to a lower level, then a copy of a SAP letter (Appendix 4) is sent to the parents (and copied to the Education Welfare Officer). A record of each letter sent is kept in the attendance folder for each class. The case is formally referred to the Education Welfare Officer and the parent / carer will be invited for a SAP meeting.
- Should the pupil have been absent for two continuous weeks without a satisfactory explanation having been received, or should there be child protection or other immediate welfare concerns then the school may of course make an earlier referral to the Education Welfare Officer, Parent Support or Social Services. Should the child be currently involved with Social Services, the child's social worker will be notified immediately.

Responding to Non-Attendance

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

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carers by 11am the school will endeavour to contact them that day. If the family are not on the telephone, a letter will be sent.
- If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carers. If by the end of the second day, there has still been no contact made (third day if waiting for a response to a letter), 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 a referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS).
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the EWS can result in further or legal action, an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will only be issued in accordance with the terms within the Code of Conduct set out for Wandsworth. They will only be issued in relation to absence from school, which is unauthorised. At Roehampton CE Primary, Penalty Notices will be issued to parents / carers when their child's attendance

falls below 90% over the previous 4-week period or after all other procedures have been followed and no improvement in attendance has occurred. Before issuing a Penalty Notice, the school will deploy other strategies to help the family improve attendance rates. Such strategies might include:

- writing to the child's parents / carers to remind them of their legal responsibilities
- meeting with the child's parents / carers;
- first day absence phone calls;
- setting targets for improvement;
- referral to the Education Welfare Officer;
- involvement of other services/agencies e.g. family worker.

In the first instance, Roehampton CE Primary will send a warning letter via the EWO (Appendix 5). If a family continue to take leave of absence without authorisation by the Headteacher, then a Penalty Notice Letter will be issued.

Holiday Leave during Term Time

Introduction

A minority of parents continue to cause disruption to their children's education by withdrawing them from school during term-time for the purpose of a family holiday / weddings etc. Many of these parents mistakenly believe that they have a 10-day holiday 'entitlement'. This is compounded by holiday companies offering out-of-season (i.e. outside of school holidays) bargains.

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Roehampton CE Primary School therefore aims to discourage parents from arranging family holidays / wedding etc. during term time.

Whilst it is acknowledged that for some parents the issue of choosing when to arrange annual family holidays may be problematic due to particular working patterns and restrictions on when leave can be taken in some occupations, Roehampton CE Primary School nevertheless believes that the vast and overwhelming majority of parents should be able to arrange for their annual family holiday to take place within the published dates for school holidays.

It is recognised that some parents may persist in taking their children out of school for the purposes of a family holiday regardless of the view and response of their child's school. Roehampton CE Primary School intends to make a clear statement regarding the issue of term-time holidays, to positively and proactively ensure that the amount of teaching and learning time lost to term-time holidays is, as a result, minimised.

Guidance for Parents

A child does not have a 'right' or 'entitlement' to term-time leave for the purposes of an annual family holiday and that term-time leave, like all leave, can only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Parents should understand that any request for leave of absence in term-time leave will be treated on an individual basis. Decisions to authorise absence will be based on individual family circumstances. The school will not, as a rule, agree to leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. In all cases, absence will not be authorised unless the authorisation form has been completed (Appendix 6) a child's prior attendance has been 100% and the Headteacher deems the

circumstance to be exceptional. Exceptional circumstances will not include financial restraints and making use of holiday discounts.

Any parent who takes a child out of school for term time leave, not authorised by the school (under exceptional circumstances rule), may receive a Penalty Notice. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave taken in the last 3 years and evidence of parents being warned about a potential Penalty Notice.

Roehampton CE Primary School will communicate the details of leave of absence taken in term time through:

- the school's overall attendance policy;
- the school brochure;
- school newsletters;
- translations into community languages as necessary;
- parent tours/parents' evenings.

Roehampton CE Primary School will use an 'Application for Leave of Absence' form (Appendix 6). Occasionally parents take their children on holiday without requesting a leave of absence. If the school suspect that this has happened a suspected holiday letter (Appendix 7) will be sent.

School Response

Roehampton CE Primary School will make clear to parents the likely educational impact upon their children if extended leave is taken during term-time. The importance of being at school near and during SATs will also be stressed.

Should absence be agreed we will consider: -

- seeking to establish, and make explicit, if appropriate, the potential educational value of the visit;
- explaining what work the child will miss in school, how it can be made up on return if necessary, and how the parents can help the child;
- asking the pupil to make notes/observations in relation to a class topic or to keep a diary;
- sharing the experience, on return, in a positive way with other children;

Should the school feel unable to comply with the request for leave the reasons for this will be explained to the parents. This explanation should show an understanding of the parents' perspective.

Persistent Lateness

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. The school gates open at 8:40am and the registers close at 9:00am. If a child arrives at school after 9:00am this will affect their attendance rate as they will be marked absent at registration. This applies in all cases for being late, including travel delays.

The Headteacher will meet with parents of those children who are regularly late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance. If there is no improvement in punctuality, then a late letter (Appendix 8) will be sent.

Changing Schools

It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school they inform the Headteacher at Roehampton CE Primary 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 this school and starting the next.
- The address of the new school.
- The new home address, if it is known.
- The reasons for the transfer.

The pupil's school records will then be sent on to the new school as soon as requested. If a parent/carer appears to have removed their child from school or the child has completely stopped attending without providing the above information, the family will be referred to the Education Welfare Service and will be reported as a child missing in education.

School Organisation

In order for the School's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff will make attendance and punctuality 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 a consistent message about the value of education.

In addition to this, the school has the following responsibilities:

- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently and that appropriate resources are provided.
- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents on the first day of absence.
- Ensure that key staff have time-tabled periods for liaison and follow-up work with the EWO and appropriate access to attendance data.
- Consult and liaise closely with the EWS on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay.
- Work in close collaboration with the EWS during their termly/half termly register analysis.
- Institute an attendance / punctuality aware scheme with assemblies, certificates and rewards.
- Ensure that attendance / punctuality percentages/graphs are displayed around the school and to set whole school attendance targets.
- Monitor and evaluate attendance / punctuality with the EWO.
- Hold School Attendance Panel (SAP) meetings where appropriate in liaison, with the school EWO.