



Attendance Policy

Updated: September 2025

Produced by: Mrs T Allen

Ratified by: Governors

Signed:

Chair of Trustees

Review Date: September 2026

Statement of Intent

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At Ryhope Infant School Academy, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping pupils achieve the best that they can be. Pupils should be at school on time, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents, governors and staff.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a pupil is required to attend regularly at school. Should a pupil fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the school day, 8.45am, and again for the afternoon session at 1.00pm.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a *parent* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the pupil that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

Rights and Responsibilities

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents, governors and staff.

School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- Keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by text phone calls and letters as necessary
- Contact parents on the first day when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason

- Take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support pupils and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

Pupils will:

- Aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year
- Attend school daily.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

Parents will:

- Support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year
- Ensure their child attends school daily and on time (i.e. by 8.45am each morning)
- Ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn
- Notify the school before 8.40am of any absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- Actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent the pupil from attending school.
- Take responsibility for registering at the main school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that

family to understand the root problem. Our Head Teacher would be the first point of contact. She would then assess if the family need the support of outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the school's Attendance and Inclusion Officer. If a child who is subject to a Child Protection or Child in Need plan or who is a Looked After Child has an attendance pattern that is of concern to the school, we will contact Children's Services and make them aware of our concerns.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully; we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to specific support within school to address the underlining reason for absence. This may include the School Nurse, Family Support Worker or Attendance and Inclusion Officer. We may also use individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 8.40am; the school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call. If a child is absent for more than 1 day the parents/carers must contact school each day they are absent.
- Speak to a member of staff at the school gates between 8.30am and 8.45am
- Call into school and report to reception.

If your child is absent and you have not informed school we will telephone you on the first day of absence. Where a child's attendance has become a concern, we will:

- Visit the child's home address, where necessary.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher and/or the Deputy Head Teacher.
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Inclusion Officer if the child's attendance does not improve following contact from the Headteacher.

Attendance and Inclusion Officer

Parents are expected to contact school 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 Attendance and Inclusion Officer from the Local Authority. S/He 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, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent

of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Lateness

Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Poor punctuality has a detrimental effect on children's education. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and important information and news for the day. As well as disrupting lessons, it can be embarrassing for the late arriving child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect our children to be in class by this time.
- Registers are marked by 8.50am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if children arrive after this time they receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this does not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- If children have a persistent late record parents/carers are asked to meet with the DHT/HT to resolve the problem, but parents can approach school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.
- We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Cared for Children (CFC) and children subject to a Child Protection Plan

The attendance of vulnerable pupils such as CFC, those subject to a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need Plan will be monitored closely in order to alert external agencies of potential difficulties as soon as possible and offer support to the pupil and their family.

Children with chronic medical conditions

School supports children who fit into this category by following the statutory guidance provided by the DfE. The guidance documents are:

- Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs: 2013;
- Supporting pupils in school with medical conditions: 2015;
- Alternative provision: 2013

Holidays in Term Time

The 2013 amendment to the 2006 Education Regulations states that a leave of absence during term time shall not be granted unless there are "exceptional circumstances." The Headteacher will view each case on its merit and in most cases will not authorise holidays during term time. Where there is evidence of unauthorised term time leave (currently 10 or more continuous absences) in accordance

with the Local Authority Code of Conduct, the school may request the LA to consider the issuance of a Penalty Notice.

Leavers

If a child is leaving other than at the end of Year 2 parents are asked to:

- Fill in a transfer form giving the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving.
- Confirm the school has your current mobile phone number.
- Let us know when they move.

Children Missing Education

These are children and young people of compulsory school age (aged 5-16) who are not on a school roll: being otherwise educated in alternative provision at home, or in private education, and who have been out of education for a substantial period of time.

Why do children go missing from education?

There are a number of reasons, including:

- they don't start school at the appropriate time and so they do not enter the educational system;
- they are removed by their parents due to disinterest, problems at school or poor attendance;
- they cease to attend, due to exclusion, illness or bullying;
- they fail to find a suitable school place after moving to a new area;
- the family moves home regularly.

When pupils leave (other than at the end of Year 2) and the school does not have the above information a child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child.

The school will follow the Local Authority Guidelines for dealing with children missing from education which include:

- Informing the Attendance Officer: if the child has moved authority and we have an address for them, we will contact the Attendance Officer immediately, as once the receiving authority have taken responsibility for the child, they may be removed from our register.
- Keeping the child on roll for four weeks following their last attendance.
- Following published guidelines in relation to the Prevent strategy.

If a child who is subject to a Child Protection or Child in Need plan or who is a Looked After Child is missing from education, we will contact Children's Services and make them aware of our concerns.

What will happen when I report a concern?

By making a referral you are ensuring the safety and wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable youngsters within our community. The longer a child misses education, the more likely it is for their problems to become entrenched. When children go missing from Sunderland we will use the 'national network of children missing from education coordinators' to find out whether they have arrived safely at a new school.

Appendix 1 Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance

Appendix 2 Attendance at Ryhope Infant School Academy

Appendix 3 Table - 'Days off school add up to lost learning'

Appendix 4 Attendance Triggers and Interventions

Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.

Under the 2006 Education Regulations it is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day. Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a pupil checklist in respect of health and safety issues – e.g. Fire Drill the school

School gates open at 8.30am and school starts at 8.45am when all pupils should be in their classroom in preparation for the register being taken. At this time pupils should collect items for the day and make sure that they are aware of any changes / arrangements to the day's activities. The afternoon register is taken at 1.00pm. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions.

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes. This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- approved education off site

Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if their child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone. If no message is received we will make every effort to contact you by text or phone call.

It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the pupil is unwell the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card.

The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as ***it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised.*** (Regulation 7 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.)

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a range of measures to support pupils where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a pupil's attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties, you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful.

If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service. They will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

Punctuality/Lateness

Parents of pupils who arrive after registration ***must*** sign them in – giving reasons for lateness.

Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded "U" in the register. Parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, will be invited to attend a meeting in school and discuss the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted.

It is important to note that any pupil who arrives at school after 9.30am will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice.

Holidays in Term Time

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 makes clear that the Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances. Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. The Headteacher has the discretion; in exceptional circumstances to authorise short periods off school.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the Headteacher; on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parents has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. The school will follow the Sunderland Local Authority procedures and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each pupil.

Attendance at Ryhope Infant School Academy

Good school attendance gives your child the opportunity of success and helps develop skills for life. Your child should attend school every day unless there is an unavoidable cause or illness. Missing school is **detrimental** to your child's learning and **disrupts** their routines.

Types of Absence

- **Authorised** absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.
- **Unauthorised** absence is where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence or you have not contacted school at all.

If we have not had any contact from you, are unable to contact you or we are unhappy with the reason for absence you have provided, we may ask our DSL/DDSL to make a home visit. We may also ring the police to carry out a **Safe and Well check** on your child and we may make a referral to Social Care.

Whether your child's absence is authorised or unauthorised it still counts towards their overall attendance.

School Attendance Target

You will be updated every half term on your child's attendance.

Our whole school attendance target is **96%**.

- 95% attendance equates to your child missing half a day each week of the school year
- 90% means that the Government consider your child to be a **persistent absentee**.
- 80% attendance equates to your child missing a day each week of the school year.

Attendance below 95%

You will be sent a letter to make you aware that your child's attendance is a **concern** and it is being **monitored**.

If your child's attendance falls to be 90% or below you will be asked to attend a meeting regarding the matter with the Head Teacher. Where appropriate, a contract will be drawn up between school/parents/pupil. The contract will set out the expectations placed on the school, family and pupil. This will be monitored and reviewed.

If your child's attendance does not improve you may be asked to attend an attendance panel with the School Governors.

If your child's attendance still has not improved, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service. Referrals to the Local Authority will be made if the following thresholds are met:

The child is of statutory school age (the term after their 5th birthday).

No improvement in the pupil's attendance following intervention by school.

In some cases, unauthorised absence may result in **prosecution** under Section 444 of Education Act 1996.

Application for Leave of Absence

Applications for leave of absence **will not** be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.

Please be aware that applications must be submitted at least **4 weeks in advance of the requested absence**. You can get an application form from the office.

If you choose to take your child out of school during term time and it is **not** deemed as exceptional circumstances and has therefore not been approved by the school, then this will be coded as an unauthorised absence and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued for the period of absence.

Our school is not linked to Ryhope Junior School and will therefore not be communicating with them or any other schools about your child's attendance. Therefore, if a sibling's absence has been authorised by another school it doesn't necessarily mean that it will be authorised by our school.

Request for absence for religious purposes

We will consider authorising requests from parents to take their children out of school on religious grounds. Please be aware however, that weddings, christenings and funerals are not classed as religious ceremonies for the purpose of authorisation.

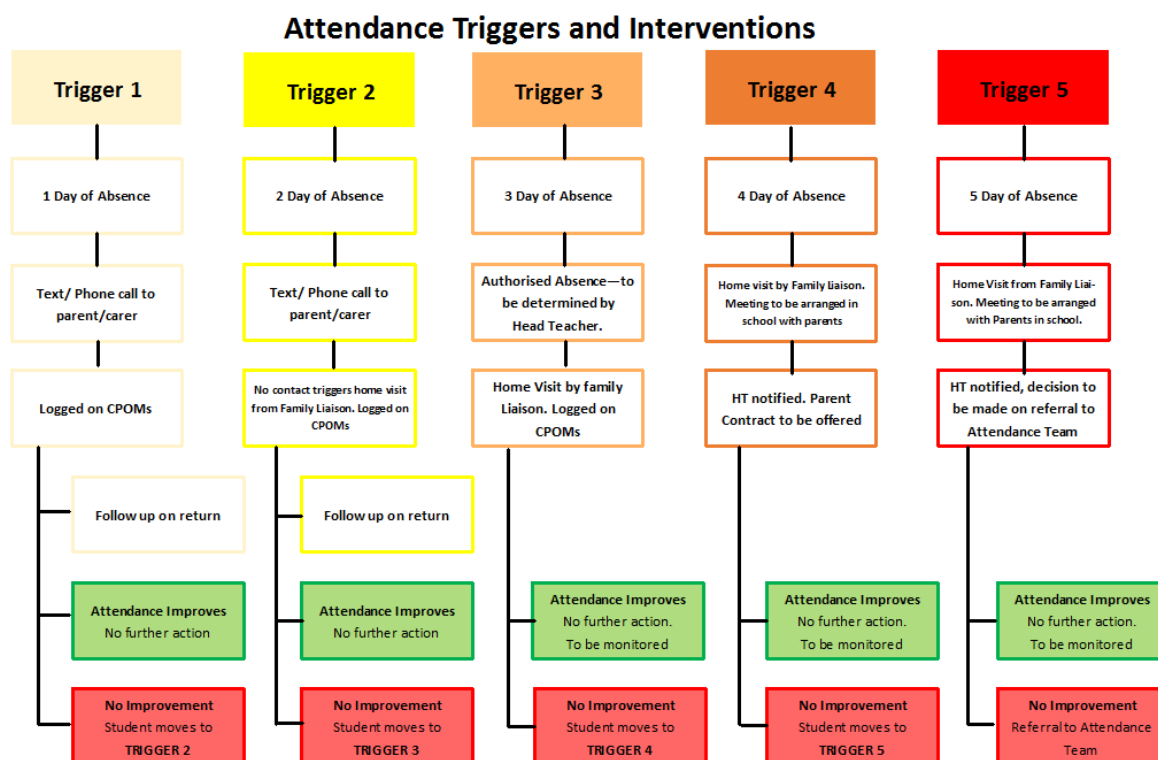
Days off school add up to lost learning

365 DAYS
IN EACH
YEAR



175 NON SCHOOL DAYS IN A YEAR				
To spend on holidays, visits and other appointments.				
190 DAYS OF EDUCATION	184 DAYS OF EDUCATION	180 DAYS OF EDUCATION	175 DAYS OF EDUCATION	171 OR LESS DAYS OF EDUCATION
100%	Above 97%	95%	92%	90% and below
Pupils in this group will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.		Pupils in this group are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a 10 days holiday during term time every year can only ever achieve 95% attendance.	Pupils in this group are missing three weeks of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best. The school may consider referring pupils with this level of attendance to Sunderland Local Authority	The Government classifies pupils in this group as "Persistent Absentees" and it will be almost impossible for them to keep up with work. Parents of pupils in this group could also face the possibility of legal action being taken by Sunderland Local Authority.

Attendance Triggers and Interventions



5 episodes of lateness, will hit Trigger 4 and steps will be followed.



Ryhope Infant School Academy
Shaftesbury Ave, Ryhope, Sunderland SR2 0RT
Tel: 0191 917 1910
Email: info@ryhopeinfantschool.org.uk
www.ryhopeinfantschool.org.uk

Headteacher: Mrs T Allen

Application for leave of absence

Before completing this form, please read the following information which reflects the regulations set out in:

“School Attendance: Statutory guidance” Department for Education, March 2014.

Please also refer to our Attendance Policy and procedures on our school website for further information.

Leave of Absence can only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, which does **NOT** include family holidays. We will consider issues related to terminal illness/bereavement, however, difficulties associated with parents’ or carers’ employment unfortunately cannot be taken into account.

Regulations place this at the discretion of the Headteacher. If the Headteacher does not authorise Leave of Absence, but the child is still taken out of school or kept away for longer than was first agreed, the absence is unauthorised.

**Application for leave of absence from
Ryhope Infant School Academy**



(Please complete and return to the school office at least four weeks in advance of the absence)

Name of Child _____ Class _____

Address _____

I wish to apply for leave of absence for my child from Ryhope Infant School Academy

From _____ to _____

Number of school days requested _____

Reasons for absence

What is the reason for this request? (include any circumstances you feel are exceptional).

Signature of parent/carer: _____ Date: _____

(The Headteacher may request a meeting with you to discuss further.)