Our Rock Academy

Attendance Policy

" A nurturing, ambitious and inclusive school where every child feels known, valued and connected."

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Policy statement

Resilience, Ownership, Creativity and Kindness

At Our Rock Academy, regular attendance is essential to safety, belonging, learning and preparation for adulthood. We want every pupil to attend consistently and punctually, while recognising that pupils in a specialist setting may experience significant barriers connected to autism, communication, sensory processing, emotional regulation, mental health, medical needs, transport or previous experiences of education.

Our approach combines high expectations with curiosity, reasonable adjustments and practical support. We do not assume that absence is a matter of choice. We work with pupils, families, local authorities and relevant professionals to understand barriers early and agree support that helps each pupil engage with education safely and successfully.

Attendance is everybody's responsibility. The Proprietor provides oversight, senior leaders ensure consistent systems and support, staff notice and respond to concerns, and families keep the school informed. Safeguarding remains the first consideration whenever a pupil is unexpectedly absent or stops attending.

Purpose

This policy explains how Our Rock Academy will:

- Promote a whole-school culture in which attendance and punctuality are valued
- Maintain accurate admission and attendance registers
- Identify absence and emerging patterns early
- Work with pupils and families to understand and remove barriers
- Support pupils whose physical health, mental health or SEND affects attendance
- Respond safely to unexplained absence and children missing education
- Use attendance information to plan, review and improve support
- Work with local authorities and other agencies when additional or formal intervention is needed.

Our approach to attendance

Our Rock Academy promotes attendance through positive relationships, predictable routines and provision that is responsive to individual need. Our Rock values shape this work. Resilience means helping pupils return after difficulty. Ownership means maintaining accurate records and acting on concerns. Creativity means adapting

provision and removing barriers. Kindness means listening carefully and avoiding blame or stigma.

Pupils are encouraged to understand the connection between attendance, wellbeing, progress, relationships and future opportunities. Recognition focuses on engagement, improvement and overcoming barriers. It will not disadvantage pupils whose disability, medical condition or other protected characteristic affects attendance.

Legal framework and guidance

This policy has regard to the current legal and regulatory framework in England, including:

- the Education Act 1996;
- the Education Act 2002;
- the Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
- Department for Education statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance;
- Department for Education statutory guidance Children missing education;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Department for Education guidance on mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance;
- the Equality Act 2010 and the duty to make reasonable adjustments; and
- the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 when attendance information is recorded, shared and retained.

The pupil registration regulations apply to independent schools. The Proprietor must ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the regulations. Independent schools are not required to submit daily attendance data to the Department for Education, but must provide information and make statutory returns where the law or current guidance requires this.

Definitions

For this policy, parents include a person with parental responsibility and a person who has care of the pupil, in line with the Education Act 1996. References to family include parents, carers and other people who play an agreed role in supporting attendance.

Persistent absence means a pupil misses 10 percent or more of possible sessions. Severe absence means a pupil misses 50 percent or more of possible sessions. The school does not wait for either threshold before offering support.

Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor

The Proprietor will:

- Ensure attendance arrangements meet legal and independent school standards
- Approve this policy and review its effectiveness annually
- Receive attendance assurance and analysis at least termly
- Challenge leaders where patterns, safeguarding concerns or barriers are not being addressed
- Ensure appropriate staffing, systems and training are available.

The Headteacher and senior leadership team

The Headteacher retains overall operational responsibility and will ensure that a senior leader coordinates attendance. Together they will:

- Lead a clear whole-school vision for attendance and punctuality;
- Ensure registers, absence follow-up and statutory returns are accurate and timely;
- Review individual and whole-school attendance information regularly;
- Coordinate early help, reasonable adjustments and targeted attendance support;
- Ensure attendance concerns are considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, health, behaviour and transport information;
- Work with local authority attendance and children missing education services;
- Report attendance patterns, actions and impact to the Proprietor termly; and
- Ensure staff understand their attendance responsibilities through induction and annual refresher training.

Teaching and pastoral staff

Teaching and pastoral staff will:

- Take registers accurately at the start of each required session
- Report a pupil missing from a lesson or expected activity immediately through the school's safeguarding process
- Notice changes in attendance, punctuality, presentation and engagement
- Build trusting relationships and listen to the pupil's experience
- Implement agreed adjustments and attendance support plans
- Share relevant information with the senior attendance lead promptly.

Administration staff

Administration staff will:

- Maintain the electronic registers and associated records
- Record information received from families accurately
- Begin first-day contact when an expected pupil is absent without explanation
- Apply attendance codes only in accordance with current guidance and authorised decisions
- Maintain up-to-date contact information
- Escalate unexplained absence, missing-pupil concerns and registration errors immediately.

Parents and carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child attends every required school session and arrives punctually;
- Tell the school before the start of the school day, or as soon as reasonably possible, when their child cannot attend;
- Explain the reason for absence and keep the school updated throughout an ongoing absence;

- Provide at least two emergency contacts wherever possible and tell the school when details change;
- Arrange routine appointments outside school hours where possible;
- Request leave of absence before the proposed absence and provide relevant information; and
- Work openly with the school and other professionals when attendance support is needed.

Pupils

Pupils will be supported to:

- Attend each required session and arrive punctually
- Tell a trusted adult about barriers, worries or changes that affect attendance
- Take part in agreed support and reintegration planning
- Reflect on progress and identify what helps them feel safe, connected and ready to learn.

Admission and attendance registers

The school will maintain electronic admission and attendance registers for every pupil in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. A backup copy will be made at least monthly. Entries and backup copies will be retained for the statutory period of six years. Access will be restricted to authorised staff and records will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The school will publish its session times separately. The register will close 30 minutes after the start of each morning and afternoon session. The registration period will be the same length for every session. A pupil arriving after the register starts but before it closes will be recorded as late. A pupil arriving after registration closes will be recorded absent using the appropriate national code. Administration staff will contact parents of absence pupils where no communication from home has happened to ascertain the reason for absence.

Each register entry will use the national attendance or absence code that accurately reflects the pupil's circumstances. Any amendment will preserve the original entry and

record the change, reason, date and person making it. Staff must consult the current Department for Education guidance whenever a code is uncertain. The policy does not reproduce the full code list because codes and definitions may change.

Where the reason for absence is initially unknown, code N will be replaced with the correct code as soon as the reason is established and no later than five school days after the session. If the reason remains unknown, it will be changed to code O.

When a pupil attends an approved education away from the school site, the school will confirm that the activity is supervised and educational, record the required information and put suitable safeguarding and monitoring arrangements in place. Remote education provided for an absent pupil does not change the requirement to record the pupil as absent using the appropriate code.

Reporting and following up absence

Planned absence

Parents and carers should notify the school about planned medical or dental appointments and request any other leave through the school's published communication channels. Appointments should take place outside school hours where this is reasonably possible. When an appointment must occur during the school day, the pupil should attend for as much of the session as their circumstances allow.

Leave during term time will be granted only where the Headteacher or authorised senior leader considers the request to meet the circumstances permitted by current regulations and guidance. Each request will be considered individually, taking account of the pupil's needs, the reason for absence and the available evidence.

Unplanned absence

Parents and carers should report unplanned absence before the school day begins or as soon as reasonably possible. The school will record the reason and expected return, keep in contact during longer absence and decide whether the absence is authorised in line with current regulations and guidance.

Illness includes physical and mental health needs. The school will not request medical evidence routinely. Evidence may be sought where it is needed to understand the absence, plan support, resolve a concern about authenticity or work with the local

authority. Requests will be reasonable, proportionate and sensitive to the family's circumstances.

The school will make a sickness return to the local authority when it has reasonable grounds to believe that a pupil recorded absent due to illness will miss 15 school days, either consecutively or cumulatively during the school year.

Unexplained absence and safeguarding

If a pupil who is expected to attend is absent without explanation, the school will begin contact with parents or carers promptly on the same day. Staff will check available information, use emergency contacts where necessary and establish the pupil's safety and the reason for absence. Contact will continue while an absence remains unexplained.

Where contact cannot be made, information is inconsistent, or there is a safeguarding concern, the matter will be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The school will consider proportionate action such as contacting involved professionals, arranging a welfare check, making a home visit under an agreed risk-assessed process, or contacting children's social care, the local authority or police. Immediate risk will be treated as an emergency.

The school will make statutory notifications to the local authority when a pupil is added to or removed from the admission register outside standard transition points and in other circumstances required by the pupil registration regulations. Concerns that a pupil may be missing education will be managed under the school's safeguarding procedures.

The school will also make an attendance return to the local authority when a pupil of compulsory school age has had 10 consecutive school days of unauthorised absence, and will provide regular attendance returns at the frequency agreed with the local authority.

Punctuality

Punctuality supports regulation, safety and a settled start to learning. Staff will record late arrival accurately, welcome the pupil without public criticism and seek to understand repeated lateness. Emerging patterns will be discussed with the pupil and family, with reasonable adjustments or targeted support agreed where appropriate. Punctuality will be

reviewed alongside transport arrangements, sensory needs, sleep, medication, anxiety and other relevant factors.

Supporting attendance

Our Rock Academy will use a support-first approach. Staff will listen to the pupil and family, identify the barriers within and beyond school, agree practical action and review whether it is helping. Support may include:

- A trusted adult, predictable arrival routine or supported transition into school
- Sensory, communication, curriculum or environmental adjustments
- Pastoral, therapeutic or SEND support
- Work with transport providers and the placing local authority
- Support with friendships, bullying, safety or behaviour concerns
- A structured reintegration plan following absence
- Coordination with health, social care, early help or other professionals
- Support for families to access relevant services
- An individual attendance support plan setting out barriers, actions, responsibilities and review arrangements.

Attendance support will be personalised and reviewed regularly with the pupil and family. The school will not use a one-size-fits-all response or reduce support simply because a pupil's attendance begins to improve.

Mental health medical needs and disability

Where physical health, mental health, disability or SEND affects attendance, the school will consider its Equality Act duties and make reasonable adjustments. Staff will work with the pupil, family and relevant professionals to understand what the pupil can manage safely and what support will enable attendance. A formal diagnosis will not be required before reasonable steps are considered.

The school will balance encouragement to attend with professional advice and the pupil's welfare. Where health needs prevent attendance or cause intermittent absence, leaders will remain in contact, support access to education and liaise with the placing local authority about any duty to arrange suitable alternative education. Reintegration will be planned carefully and reviewed frequently.

Temporary part-time timetables

Every pupil is entitled to a full-time education. A part-time timetable will be used only in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest period that is appropriate, and as part of a plan to return to full-time attendance. It will not be used to manage behaviour, staffing difficulties or an unmet need without a clear support plan.

Any temporary part-time timetable will be agreed with the parent the pupil normally lives with, recorded in writing, risk assessed and linked to clear support and reintegration arrangements. The plan will identify the sessions the pupil is expected to attend, a proposed end date, how education and safeguarding will be maintained and when progress will be reviewed. Any part-time timetables will be shared with the relevant local authority where a pupil has an EHC plan. Reviews will take place frequently and the timetable will increase as soon as the pupil can safely access more education. The correct national attendance code will be used.

Persistent and severe absence

The school will review attendance before a pupil reaches the persistent or severe absence thresholds. When absence is persistent, severe or rapidly worsening, the senior attendance lead and Designated Safeguarding Lead will consider the pupil's needs together and coordinate a more intensive response.

The school will meet regularly with the pupil and family, review the effectiveness of previous support, involve the placing local authority and other agencies where appropriate, and agree a written attendance support plan. Severe absence will receive particular priority because of the increased safeguarding, wellbeing and educational risks.

Formal and legal intervention

Support is the usual route to improving attendance. Where voluntary support has not been effective, has not been engaged with, or is not appropriate, the school will work with the local authority to consider formal support or legal intervention. Decisions will be based on the individual circumstances, current law and the local authority's code of conduct.

The school does not issue penalty notices. Where the legal criteria are met, it may provide evidence or ask the local authority to consider the appropriate intervention. Legal

action will never replace safeguarding action or reasonable adjustments, and it will not be pursued where absence is authorised or the legal test is not met.

Monitoring attendance and reviewing support

Attendance information will be reviewed at different levels so that concerns are identified early and action remains proportionate:

- Register accuracy and unexplained absence are checked every school day
- Individual absence, punctuality and emerging patterns are reviewed at least weekly by the attendance team
- Pupils receiving targeted attendance support are reviewed at the frequency recorded in their plan
- Whole-school and group patterns are analysed at least half-termly, including persistent and severe absence
- The senior leadership team reviews attendance strategy and the impact of support at least half-termly
- The Proprietor receives attendance information, challenge and assurance at least termly.

Analysis will consider attendance alongside safeguarding, SEND, health, transport, behaviour, equality and pupil voice. Small-group information will be handled carefully so that individuals are not identifiable. Leaders will record actions arising from review and check whether those actions improve attendance, safety and engagement.

Communication with families

Attendance expectations and reporting arrangements will be explained during the admissions process and made available through the school's usual communication channels. Families will receive attendance information at least termly and earlier whenever a concern or emerging pattern needs discussion. Communication will be clear, respectful and accessible, with reasonable adjustments made for communication needs.

Policy review

The Headteacher will review this policy annually and whenever relevant legislation, statutory guidance or school arrangements change. The Proprietor will approve material revisions. Operational attendance procedures, contact routes and session times may be updated separately so that they remain accurate and responsive to the school's needs.

Links with other policies

- Safeguarding Policy
- Children Missing Education procedures
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Accessibility Plan
- Equality Information and Objectives Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Risk Assessment Policy