**Russell Lower School**

Central Bedfordshire Primary Phase Model Attendance and Absence Policy

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date policy last reviewed: | Date: Autumn 2022 |
| Signed by: N Walker |
| Headteacher: N Walker | Date: Autumn 2022 |
| Chair of Governors: Richard Gallagher | Date: Autumn 2022 |

**Statement of intent**

Russell Lower Schoolbelieves that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good

attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school. Missing out on lessons leaves children very vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less through their education.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

We are committed to:

* Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
* Ensuring equality and fairness for all
* Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents
* Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils
* Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
* Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies
* Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise
* Ensuring our attendance policy is clear and easily understood by all staff, parents and pupils
* Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support

The school’s attendance lead is the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher and they can be contacted via the office@russell-lower.co.uk email. Staff, parents and pupils will be expected to contact the school office for queries or concerns about attendance. Pupil absence is reported via email at pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk or via 01525 755664. Leave of absence requests are made via the leave of absence form, found here: <https://www.russell-lower.co.uk/website/leave_of_absence_request/521713>

The school’s local authority attendance officer is: Amanda Akyuz

**Working Together to Improve Attendance**

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:



# Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

* Education Act 1996
* Equality Act 2010
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
* The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
* Children and Young Persons Act 1963
* DfE (2022) ‘Working together to improve school attendance’
* DfE (2022) ‘Keeping children safe in education 2022’
* DfE (2016) ‘Children missing education’

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

* Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
* Complaints Procedures Policy
* Behaviour Policy
* SEND Policy
* Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
* Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance
* Children Missing Education Policy (CBC)
* Attendance Officer Home Visit Policy (CBC)

# Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

* Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
* Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school’s ethos and policies
* Arranging attendance training for all relevant staff that is appropriate to their role
* Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals
* Regularly reviewing attendance data
* Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation
* Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school’s Complaints Procedures Policy
* Having regard to ‘Keeping children safe in education’ when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
* Ensuring that the school follows the CBC Children Missing Education Policy

The headteacher is responsible for:

* The day-to-day implementation and management of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school
* Appointing a member of the SLT to the attendance lead role
* Ensuring all parents are aware of the school’s attendance expectations and procedures
* Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence
* Following their responsibilities in the summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

Staff are responsible for:

* Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too
* Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
* Modelling good attendance behaviour
* Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated
* Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day

The attendance lead is responsible for:

* The overall strategic approach to attendance in school
* Developing a clear vision for improving attendance
* Monitoring attendance and the impact of interventions
* Analysing attendance data and identifying areas of intervention and improvement
* Communicating with pupils and parents with regard to attendance
* Following up on incidents of persistent poor attendance
* Informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers
* Informing the LA of any child missing in education concerns

Pupils are responsible for:

* Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school
* Arriving punctually to lessons when at school
* Following their responsibilities in the summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

Parents are responsible for:

* Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details
* Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number
* Updating the school if their details change
* The attendance of their children at school
* Promoting good attendance with their children
* Following the procedure for signing in and out if arriving late or leaving early
* Following their responsibilities in the summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

The Local Authority is responsible for:

* Following their responsibilities in the summary table of responsibilities for school attendance

# Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

**Absence:**

* Arrival at school after the register has closed
* Not attending school for any reason

**Authorised absence:**

* An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
* Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave
* Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave
* An absence due to a family emergency
* Any other exceptional authorised absence

**Unauthorised absence:**

* Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without approved, acceptable reason
* Truancy before or during the school day
* Absences which have never been properly explained
* Arrival at school after the register has closed
* Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
* Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
* Leaving school for no reason during the day

**Persistent absence (PA):**

* Missing 10 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason. No absence below 90% will be authorised unless in extenuating circumstance (such as long-term illness). All PA will be tracked and reported to the CBC Attendance Officer and Governing Board

**Severe absence (SA)**

* Missing 50 percent or more of schooling across the year for any reason

# Attendance expectations

The school has high expectations for pupils’ attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day starts at 8:55am, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site by at least 8:53am. Pupils will have a morning break, and a lunch break which will last until 1:15pm. Pupils will be expected to have returned from each break and be ready to recommence learning at the stated times.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

* The morning register will be marked at 8:55am, it will close at 9.15am.
* Pupils will receive a late mark (L) if they arrive after 8.55am but before 9:15am.
* Pupils attending after 9.15am will receive a mark (U) to show they arrived after the register closed.
* The afternoon register will be marked by 1:20pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time
* The afternoon register will close at 1:30pm. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present

Pupils will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff.

# Absence procedures

Parents will be required to contact the school office via email (pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk) or by telephone (01525 755664) before 9am the first day of their child’s absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, e.g. one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by 9:15am to report the absence, administrative staff will contact the parent by making a telephone call as soon as is practicable on the first day that they do not attend school.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

* Ascertain the reason for the absence
* Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken
* Identify whether the absence is authorised or not
* Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system

The school will not request medical evidence in most circumstances where a pupil is absent due to illness; however, the school reserves the right to request supporting evidence.

In the case of **extended absence** (not holiday), the school will inform the LA, using the mandatory absence alert e-form [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/mandatory-absence-alert](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/mandatory-absence-alert) , of the details of pupils who have accumulated either 10 days of unauthorised absence (not holiday) or 15 days authorised absence (for a medical reason) in one block. If a pupil’s attendance drops below 90%, as with all children, the attendance lead and LA attendance officer will be informed and an appropriate communication made with the pupil’s parent. This could be a phone call, letter or meeting, depending on the circumstance. The on-going attendance will be monitored further, with further actions considered. See below (Attendance Intervention).

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the school will remove the pupil from the admissions register **if** the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries. This cannot be backdated to the date of the last attendance.

# Attendance register

The school uses RM Integris to keep attendance registers to ensure they are as accurate as possible and can be easily analysed and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at 8:55am and 1:15pm. This register will record whether pupils are:

* Present
* Absent
* Attending an approved educational visit
* Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

* / = Present in the morning
* \ = Present in the afternoon
* L = Late arrival before the register has closed
* C = Leave of absence granted by the school
* E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
* H = Authorised holiday
* I = Illness
* M = Medical or dental appointments
* R = Religious observance
* B = Off-site education activity
* G = Unauthorised holiday
* O = Unauthorised absence
* U = Arrived after registration closed
* N = Reason not yet provided
* X = Not required to be in school
* T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
* V = Educational visit or trip
* P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
* D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
* Y = Exceptional circumstances
* Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for at least three years.

# Authorising parental absence requests

Parents will be required to request certain types of absence in advance. All requests for absence will be handled by the headteacher, or nominated member of Senior Leadership. The decision to grant or refuse the request will be at the sole discretion of the headteacher, taking the best interests of the pupil and the impact on the pupil’s education into account. The headteacher’s decision is not subject to appeal; however, the school will be sympathetic to requests for absence by parents and will not deny any request without good reason. Parents will receive a formal written response to any application.

**Leave of absence**

The school will only grant a pupil a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. In order to have requests for a leave of absence considered, the school will expect parents to contact the headteacher using the LOA form on the school website at least 2 weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur.

Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil’s previous attendance record will be taken into account. **Absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.**  Where the absence is granted, the headteacher will determine the length of time that the pupil can be away from school. **The school is NOT likely to grant leaves of absence for the purposes of family holidays, unless there are highly exceptional circumstances.** For example, a terminal diagnosis in the case of a parent.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

* Immediately before and during statutory assessment periods
* When a pupil’s attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
* Where a pupil’s authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If term-time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may result in sanctions, such as a penalty notice. The school cannot grant leaves of absence retrospectively; therefore, any absences that were not approved by the school in advance will be marked as unauthorised.

**Illness and healthcare appointments**

Parents will be expected to make medical or dental appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where this is not possible, parents will be expected to obtain approval for their child’s absence to attend such appointments as far in advance as is practicable.

Parents will be responsible for ensuring their child misses only the amount of time necessary to attend the appointment.

**Performances and activities, including paid work**

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances or activities, whether they receive payment or not, which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school’s absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve one to one catch up sessions.

Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil’s attendance would fall below 90%. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

**Religious observance**

Parents will be expected to request absence for religious observance at least 2 weeks in advance.

The school will only accept requests from parents for absence on grounds of religious observance for days that are exclusively set apart for religious observance by the relevant religious body. The school will define this as a day where the pupil’s parents would be expected by an established religious body to stay away from their employment to mark the occasion.

The school may seek advice from the religious body in question where there is doubt over the request.

**Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

Where a pupil’s parent belongs to a community covered by this code and is travelling for occupational purposes, the parent will be expected to request a leave of absence for their child at least 2 weeks in advance. Absences will not be granted for pupils from these communities under this code for reasons other than travel for occupational purposes.

# SEND- and health-related absences

The school recognises that pupils with SEND and/or health conditions, including mental health issues, may face greater barriers to attendance than their peers, and will incorporate robust procedures to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

In line with the SEND Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy, the school will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for disabled pupils to reduce barriers to attendance, in line with any EHC plans or IHPs that have been implemented. The school will secure additional support from external partners to help bolster attendance where appropriate.

Where the school has concerns that a pupil’s non-attendance may be related to mental health issues, parents will be contacted to discuss the issue and whether there are any contributory factors to their child’s lack of attendance. Where staff have a mental health concern about a pupil that is also a safeguarding concern, they will inform the DSL and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed. All pupils will be supported with their mental health; the Pastoral Team may be involved in providing this.

If a pupil is unable to attend school for long periods of time due to their health, the school will:

* Inform the LA if a pupil is likely to be away from the school for more than 15 school days
* Provide the LA with information about the pupil’s needs, capabilities and programme of work
* Help the pupil reintegrate at school when they return
* Make sure the pupil is kept informed about school events and clubs
* Encourage the pupil to stay in contact with other pupils during their absence

The school will incorporate an action plan to help any pupils with SEND and/or health issues cope with the stress and anxiety that attending school may cause them. Such plans will be regularly monitored and reviewed until the pupil is attending school as normal and there has been signs of significant improvement.

To support the attendance of pupils with SEND and/or health issues, the school will consider:

* Holding termly meetings to evaluate any implemented reasonable adjustments.
* Incorporating a pastoral support plan.
* Carrying out strengths and difficulties questionnaire.
* Identifying pupils’ unmet needs through the Common Assessment Framework.
* Using an internal or external specialist.
* Ensuring a pupil can have somewhere quiet to spend lunch and breaktimes.
* Implementing a system whereby pupils can request to leave a classroom

 if they feel they need time out

* Temporary late starts or early finishes
* Phased returns to school where there has been a long absence
* Small group work or on-to-one lessons
* Tailored support to meet their individual needs
* Making a BRIF referral for the family under Early Help

# Leave during lunch times

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher. It is at the headteacher’s discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises. Leaving at lunchtime is not encouraged as it affects children’s social and emotional development.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the headteacher. The headteacher will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time and their child’s behaviour when not on the school premises. The headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision within 1 week of the request.

Where permission has been granted, the parent will be responsible for ensuring the signing in and out procedure is followed.

Pupils will leave the school premises within 10 minutes of the start of lunch and will return no later than 10 minutesbefore the end of lunch.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will need to be signed out and back in. A member of staff will be available at the school office before the pupil leaves the premises and upon their return to escort them to where they need to be. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff at the school office has given their permission.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the headteacher’s decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the headteacher.

Permission will be updated on a termly basis – letters will be sent to parents at the beginning of each term to confirm whether they would like their request to continue.

# Truancy

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil’s learning. All pupils are expected to be in their classes by 8:55am and 1:15pm, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at the school office and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

* In the first instance, parents will be contacted informing them of the truancy and stating the action being taken
* If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice
* A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school

The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

# Missing children

Pupils will not be permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the school. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

* The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the headteacher immediately
* The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search
* A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the headteacher
* The following areas will be systematically searched:
	+ All classrooms
	+ All toilets
	+ School halls
	+ The library, computing suite etc.
	+ Any outbuildings
	+ The school grounds
* Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted
* If the pupil has not been found after a thorough search, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
* The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided
* If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted
* A member of staff will record this on CPOMS, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing and the outcome
* If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a looked-after child, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed
* When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well
* Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located

The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary. Appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

The headteacher will carry out a full investigation and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. Policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome, where necessary.

# Attendance intervention

In order to ensure the school has effective procedures for managing absence, the attendance lead, supported by the SLT, will:

* Establish a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
* Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work
* Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures
* Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
	+ Sending letters to parents
	+ Having regular attendance reviews
	+ Engaging with LA attendance teams
	+ Using fixed penalty notices

The school will use attendance data, in line with the ‘[Monitoring and analysing absence](#_Attendance_officer)’ section of this policy, to develop specific strategies to improve attendance where patterns of absence are emerging. These strategies will be developed on a case-by-case basis, and will consider the particular needs of the pupils whom the intervention is designed to target.

The school will acknowledge improved/outstanding attendance and punctuality in the following ways:

* Praise and in school rewards
* Correspondence home

School trips and events will be considered a privilege. Where attendance drops below 90 percent, these privileges may be taken away. The school will develop strategies for ensuring that pupils with health needs or home circumstances that result in additional absences are not unfairly excluded from attendance rewards, e.g. by setting individualised targets.

# Working with parents to improve attendance

The school will work to cultivate strong, respectful relationships with parents and families to ensure their trust and engagement. Open and honest communication will be maintained with pupils and their families about the expectations of school life, attendance and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. The school will liaise with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, e.g., social services.

The school will ensure that there are two sets of emergency contact details for each pupil wherever possible to ensure the school has additional options for getting in touch with adults responsible for a pupil where the pupil is absent without notification or authorisation.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of their legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and to facilitate their child’s legal right to a full-time education – parents will be made aware that this means their child must attend school every day that it is open, save for in certain circumstances, e.g., sickness or absences that have been authorised by the headteacher in advance. The school will regularly inform parents about their child’s levels of attendance, absence and punctuality, and will ensure that parents are aware of the benefits that regular attendance at school can have for their child educationally, socially and developmentally.

If a pattern of absence becomes problematic, the attendance lead will work collaboratively with the pupil and their parents to improve attendance by addressing the specific barriers that prevent the pupil from being able to attend school regularly. The school will always take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for pupil absence and will approach families to offer support rather than immediately reach for punitive approaches.

Where these barriers are related to the pupil’s experience in school, e.g., bullying, the attendance officer will work with the headteacher and any relevant school staff, e.g., the DSL and SENCO, to address this. Where the barriers are outside of the school’s control, e.g., they are related to issues within the pupil’s family, the attendance lead will liaise with any relevant external agencies or authorities, e.g., BRIF, Early Help, children’s social care or the LA, and will encourage parents to access support that they may need.

# PA

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA, such as:

* Children in need
* LAC
* Young carers
* Pupils who are eligible for FSM
* Pupils with EAL
* Pupils with SEND
* Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of

PA to attend school. These include:

* Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps
* Meeting with pupils and parents to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having
* Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support
* Leading regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
* Making regular contact with families to discuss progress
* Assessing whether an EHC plan or IHP may be appropriate
* Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

The school will focus particularly on pupils who have rates of absence under 90% and will work with the LA and other partners to engage all relevant services needed to identify and address the wider barriers to attendance these pupils are facing.

Where a pupil at risk of PA/SA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g., social services, to support the pupil in line with the school’s duty of care. The school will also bear in mind that the continuation of PA/SA following intervention may, in itself, constitute neglect, and will escalate any concerns in this regard in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

# Legal intervention

The school will allow sufficient time for attendance interventions and engagement strategies to improve pupils’ attendance; however, where engagement strategies to improve attendance have not had the desired effect after the agreed period, the attendance lead will consider:

* Holding a formal meeting with parents and the school’s point of contact in the Access and Inclusion Service
* Working with the LA to put a parenting contract or an education supervision order in place.
* Engaging children’s social care where there are safeguarding concerns

Where the above measures are not effective, the headteacher will consider issuing issue a fixed penalty notice in line with the LA’s code of conduct if appropriate.

**A Penalty Notice may be issued when:**

* **a pupil is taken out of school during term time for a holiday which has not been authorised by the school.**
* a child’s school attendance has been poor and his/her school believe that the issuing of a Penalty Notice may lead to an improvement in the child’s attendance (for example, when a child is persistently late for school and his/her parents/carers fail to address the situation).

When a Penalty Notice is issued, it is issued on a per child/per parent basis. This means that if a mother and father have two children and take both children out of school they may be issued with a total of 4 Penalty Notices – one to each parent of each child.

**Issuing a Penalty Notice**

* **A Penalty Notice will be issued when the number of unauthorised absences a child has had amounts to at least 10 sessions (5 days) during a 12-week school period.**
* Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal, although there are circumstances in which the council may withdraw the Notice, such as the parent providing satisfactory retrospective medical evidence for any absences.

**Payment of Penalty Notices**

A Penalty Notice is initially for £60 (this may be per child, per parent.)

If this is not paid within 21 days from the date of issue it rises to £120.

If after 28 days of the date of issue the £120 is not paid the council will prosecute the parents/carers under *Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.* This will lead to an appearance in the magistrates’ court and may result in a fine of up to £1,000.

Where attendance still does not improve following a fixed penalty notice or is it has been deemed that a fixed penalty notice is not appropriate, the school will work with the LA to take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort.

# Monitoring and analysing absence

The attendance lead will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address habitual absence at the first signs.

The school will collect data regarding punctuality, truancy, and authorised and unauthorised absence, for the following, as required:

* The school cohort as a whole
* Individual year groups
* Individual pupils
* Demographic groups, e.g., pupils from different ethnic groups or economic backgrounds
* Other groups of pupils, e.g., pupils with SEND, LAC and pupils eligible for FSM
* Pupils at risk of PA

The attendance lead will conduct a thorough analysis of the above data on a half-termly, termly and full-yearbasis to identify patterns and trends. This will include identifying, for each group:

* Patterns in uses of certain codes
* Particular days of poor attendance
* Historic trends of attendance and absence
* Barriers to attendance

The attendance lead will provide regular reports to staff across the school to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures. The attendance lead will also be responsible for monitoring how attendance data changes in response to any interventions implemented to increase attendance in future.

The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including examinations of recent and historic trends, and will support the SLT in setting goals and prioritising areas of focus for attendance support based on this data.

The school will also benchmark its attendance data against local-, regional- and national-level data to identify areas of success and areas for improvement and will share practice which has been shown to be effective with other schools.

# Training of staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.

The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with this policy as part of their induction. Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development. A key message will be that ‘Attendance is everyone’s responsibility’, just as it is for Safeguarding.

Training will cover at least the following:

* The importance of good attendance and the impact of poor attendance
* That absence is almost invariably a result of wider circumstances
* The legal requirements on schools, e.g., the keeping of registers
* The school’s strategies and procedures for monitoring and improving attendance
* The school’s procedures for multi-agency working to provide intensive support for pupils who need it

The governing board will provide dedicated and enhanced attendance training to the attendance lead and other staff with specific attendance functions in their role – this will include training regarding interpreting and analysing attendance data and supporting pupils to overcome barriers to attendance.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern and know how such concerns should be managed.

**Attendance Monitoring Procedures**

Russell Lower School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils’ attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils’ attendance falls below the standard:

1. A spreadsheet is sent to the SLT and attendance lead detailing half-termly, termly and annual attendance to date
2. Attendance is discussed with classroom teachers. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by staff are passed immediately to the attendance lead
3. Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. ‘N’ codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the SLT and attendance officer daily
4. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence
5. If a pupil’s attendance falls and is a concern, the attendance lead speaks to the pupil in school to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve their attendance. The attendance lead will also discuss this with parents, either by telephone, meeting or letter. The attendance will then be monitored for improvement
6. If a pupil’s attendance falls below 90 percent, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil’s attendance is now being monitored by the school and the Local Authority, and the attendance lead contacts the parents to discuss this
7. The pupil’s attendance is monitored for an agreed period and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in school where targets are set. If parents are unwilling to co-operate, or genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the Local Authority School Attendance Officer (this will be discussed with them prior to accepting a referral)
8. Monitoring and communication with the family will continue until attendance stabilises **–** if targets are not met, the attendance lead will discuss further actions with their Local Authority School Attendance Officer (See the section on Legal Interventions)

**Attendance Actions**

The Attendance lead will monitor attendance as above. They will follow the procedure below:

1. Trigger Point 1 met – attendance is below 90% (autumn term) or 95% (spring and summer terms) – trigger letter 1 sent home and attendance monitored, class teacher informed
2. Attendance improves – send home improved attendance letter
3. Attendance does not improve or declines – medical evidence now requested, Trigger letter 2 sent home, correspondence log kept, arrange support meeting where necessary, class teacher involved, alert LA Attendance officer
4. Attendance improves – send home improved attendance letter
5. Attendance does not improve or declines – Attendance lead, class teacher and SLT informed of pupil’s attendance weekly, Trigger letter 3 sent home, arrange meeting with parent and LA Attendance officer. Hold regular review meetings (at least 4 weekly). Consider legal interventions with LA Attendance officer

# Monitoring and review

Attendance and punctuality will be monitored throughout the year. The school’s attendance target is 97 percent – full details of the school’s absence levels can be found on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and at least every 4 years by governors.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.