RUSSELL LOWER SCHOOL
Attendance Policy
Autumn 2026 - 2027

The name and contact details of the Senior Attendance Champion – the senior leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in our school, is:
Louise Bunney
louisebunney@russell-lower.co.uk

The name and contact details of the school staff member pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis is:
Colette Davies
pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk 01525 755664

Pupils and parents should contact their class teacher, Phase Leader, Inclusion Lead or Deputy Head for more individual support with attendance via:
classname@russell-lower.co.uk
send@russell-lower.co.uk
louisebunney@russell-lower.co.uk

The name of our linked Governor with responsibility for monitoring attendance is:
Scott Allen (Chair of Governors)

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

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Legislation and guidance

By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (last updated July 2026)) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Equality Act 2010

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools
- Ofsted's 2025 framework toolkit

It has been developed in consultation with school governors, teachers, parents, pupils. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Introduction

Attending school regularly and on time has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for pupils. Research shows that attendance and punctuality are important factors in school success. See appendix 1.

Russell Lower School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are essential in order for pupils to get the most of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. We believe 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 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, safeguarding and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. **It is a rule of this school that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting children's welfare and safeguarding
- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Making attendance a priority for everyone
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence (see appendix 2)
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families in order to work effectively with parents, pupils, and partners to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Improving children's attainment through good attendance

To achieve these aims for our pupils, we are committed to the following:

- Providing welcoming, stimulating and safe learning environments supporting our children in wanting to be in school
- Raising and maintaining a whole school awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- 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
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

    - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
    - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance, so that staff understand:
    - The importance of good attendance
    - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
    - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
    - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy
- Ensuring that the school follows the CBC Children Missing Education Policy

The Full Governing Body will be responsible for monitoring pupil attendance.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the senior attendance champion (Deputy Head) to be able to do so
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels

The designated senior leader attendance champion is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary as authorised by the Headteacher
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues

- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Informing the LA of any child missing in education concerns

The Inclusion Lead is responsible for:

- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated

Class teachers (or those covering in place of a class teacher) are responsible for:

- Recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office via Integris
- Communicate with parents/carers where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

School office staff will:

- Take calls/receive emails from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the relevant person (class teacher, phase leader, Inclusion Lead, Attendance Champion etc.) where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Inform the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call/email the school to report their child's absence before 8.55am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return. **Pupil absence is reported via email at pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk or via 01525 755664**
- Ensure their child returns to school as soon as possible and they provide any medical evidence, if requested, to support the absence. Medical evidence will be requested where their child is having multiple periods of absence which are reported as being due to medical reasons. When determining whether a child is too ill to attend school, both parents and school staff can consider the advice contained in the following NHS website https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/
- Provide accurate and up-to-date contact details including a minimum of 2 emergency contact numbers for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Follow the procedure for signing in and out if arriving late or leaving early
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school on 01525 755664 or office@russell-lower.co.uk
- Work with the school and local authority to address any attendance concerns. Parents should proactively engage with the support offered, aiming to resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may consider more formal support and/or refer the child to the Local Authority. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/deputy headteacher (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer can be contacted via 0300 300 5869

See the following link for more information on this.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65e8ae343649a2001aed63aa/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

Recording attendance

Attendance register

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

The times of the start and close of the school day for all pupils at Russell Lower School are:
Doors open: 8.40am
Doors close and registration starts: 8.55am
Registration closes: 9.15am
Second registration of the day: 1.15pm
End of the school day: 3.30pm

The school uses an electronic attendance register, and places all pupils onto this register. It will be completed using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (see Appendix 3), whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

When staff are completing the register, they will use the N code to signify that a pupil is not present. This will be followed up by the office staff.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not

- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence – such as illness

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day (and each subsequent day of absence) of an unplanned absence by 8.55am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling/emailing the school and advising when they are expected to return. Pupil absence is reported via email at pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk or via 01525 755664.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental (with medical evidence) illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence – such as health appointments

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent **notifies the school in advance** of the appointment with the details. This can be done by contacting the school office on 01525 755667 or via email pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Lateness and punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can sometimes lead to irregular school attendance patterns. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

Pupils who arrive late disrupt lessons and, if a child misses the start of the day, they can feel unsettled and embarrassed and risk missing vital work and important messages from their class teacher.

A pupil who arrives late (after 8.55am once the school doors have closed) will be recorded as N by the member of staff in class. The following will therefore apply:

- The parent will be expected to sign the child in at the office, providing a reason for their lateness
- If they arrive before the register has closed (9.15am) they will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- If they arrive after the register has closed (9.15am) they will be marked (U) to show they are on site for safeguarding reasons but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence.

- In the case of late arrival due to mental health issues after the register has closed this will be coded as (I)

Unauthorised lateness could result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. If your child has a persistent lateness record, you may be asked to meet with the Head/Deputy Head, but you can approach us at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may visit the house or contact the relevant professionals such as the police or safeguarding team
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the school attendance officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- A referral may be made to Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point their child could be considered to be "missing from education." In certain circumstances this could result in their child being removed from our school roll and parents would need to reapply for a place, were one was still available
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with and in liaison with the school attendance officer, we may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section on sanctions below).

Authorised absences

Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher/deputy headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview for admission to another educational institution
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

At Russell Lower School we define 'exceptional circumstances' as one-off events which are unavoidable. They should be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time (as determined by the headteacher). The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are events that are

"rare, significant, unavoidable and short". By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time, outside of school term time, regardless of who has planned or paid for the holiday or absence (including grandparents or other family or friends).

Examples of exceptional circumstances may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The headteacher/school may discuss the leave of absence request with other education settings and/or the Local Authority to determine any exceptional circumstances.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, irrespective of the child's overall attendance, it is **unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday**, **unless there are highly exceptional circumstances** for example, a terminal diagnosis in the case of a parent.

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.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form (appendix 4), accessible via the school website or office. The headteacher/deputy headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary and complete Doodle Maths/TTRS while they are away.
Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and Central Bedfordshire Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

Other reasons for authorised absence

Other valid reasons for **authorised** absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness and medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. The pupil's parent should **notify the school in advance** of the appointment with the details. This can be done by contacting the school office on 015252 755667 or via email pupilabsence@russell-lower.co.uk. We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart for religious observance
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes a pupil is a mobile child if their parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. In these circumstances a pupil will be considered as a mobile child, provided they are of compulsory school age and have no fixed abode and whose parent is in a trade or business that requires them to travel from place to place.

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Absences from the school site (which are not classified as absences)

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings. These are not classified as absences. Reasons include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

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.

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been granted. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes, (however this list is not exhaustive):
- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U';
- looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments;
- their own or family birthdays;
- holidays taken during term time, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher/deputy headteacher, including any arranged by other family members or friends;
- day trips;
- other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

Strategies for promoting attendance

At Russell Lower School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.
Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff. Good attendance will be celebrated and communicated in a variety of ways, including assemblies, newsletters and displays.

To help us all to focus on this, we will:
- Promote the benefits of high attendance through all possible channels
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families
- Give parents/carers details on attendance on our school website and in newsletters

- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance and the impact on their progress
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education and Local Authority, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence as required by law

Supporting pupils with poor attendance

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Attendance contract

During a support meeting a personalised action/support plan, such as an attendance contract will be completed. An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school to address irregular attendance at school. An attendance contract is not legally binding, but it provides a more formal route where previous support has not worked or would not have been appropriate.

Where an attendance contract would be an appropriate form of support, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent (and pupil if they are old enough to understand) to discuss how we can work in partnership to improve the pupil's attendance.

Where parents fail to comply with an agreed attendance contract, the school may seek an alternative course of action. In the first instance, this will include discussions with the parents to seek explanations and determine whether the attendance contract remains useful. Where there is further non-compliance following these discussions, the school may take further action.

Education supervision order

In cases where voluntary early help plans and attendance contracts have been unsuccessful, we may work with the local authority to issue an education supervision order. If an education supervision order is considered, the local authority will inform the parent(s) in writing and will set up a meeting.

An education supervision order is a formal intervention but not criminal prosecution.

An education supervision order initially lasts for 1 year, but it can be extended within the last 3 months for a period of up to 3 years at a time.

In cases where parents persistently fail to meet the directions given under the education supervision order, they may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000 upon conviction.

Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the LA code of conduct.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far

- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

The school will issue a penalty notice in line with the LA's code of conduct. See appendix 5 for LA poster.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks, this includes term time holidays). The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence. 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.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the

National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Once a Penalty Notice has been issued, there is no statutory right of appeal.

Reporting to parents

Russell Lower will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels.

This will be done via regular reports and letters.

Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

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.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. We will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We may use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health Service, Early Help Worker/Social Worker/Family Support Worker or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Child meeting (TAC) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. An individual support plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from mental or physical ill health, who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain in place for these pupils, however we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners, where appropriate. All pupils will be supported with their mental health; the Pastoral Team may be involved in providing this.

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

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, the school will inform the local authority.

Under the DfE's statutory guidance, schools are required to submit a sickness return to the Local Authority for all pupils who have missed/are likely to miss 15 or more school days (consecutive or cumulative) due to medical reasons/illness.

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence including EYFS
In cases of prolonged absence, or when a child is absent without notification, we will attempt to contact the child's parents and alternative emergency contacts.

When deciding whether a child's absence should be considered prolonged, we will consider the:

- Patterns and trends in the child's absences and their personal circumstances
- Vulnerability of the child and their parents, as well as the circumstances of their home life

We will also implement our safeguarding procedures (see our child protection/safeguarding policy and refer any concerns to local children's social care and/or request a police welfare check.

Attendance monitoring, analysis and support

We monitor and analyse attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level in order to identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve or may be a cause for concern. The school has granted the DfE and Local Authority access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Persistently and severely absent pupils are tracked and monitored more regularly and supported accordingly. (Appendix 2)

We conduct thorough analysis of our data to identify patterns and trends as well as look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence to support us in developing strategies to address these patterns.

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners. The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Following the analysis of our data we will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils we have identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium lead)
- Use further data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

For more information on our monitoring, analysis and support procedures see appendix 6.

Training staff

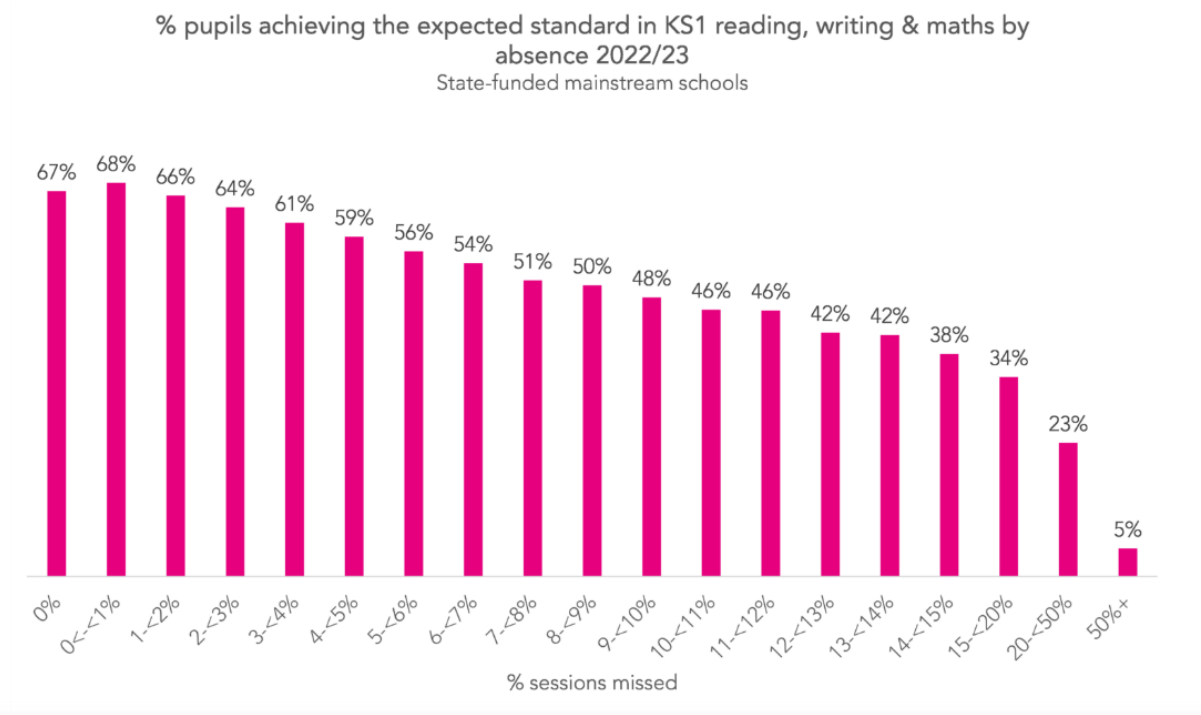
The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction and refresher training.
The governing board will ensure that teachers and support staff receive training in line with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

Appendix 1 – Attendance and attainment



In general, attainment falls as absence increases. 67% of pupils without any absences achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. This compares to 48% of those with an absence rate of between 9% and 9.99% (the pupils with the highest absence rates but who would not be classified as persistent absentees).
Source FFT Education Data Lab - https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2023/09/absence-and-attainment-in-primary-schools-in-2023/

Appendix 2 - Persistent and Severe absence

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

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance. The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school. These include:

- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available

    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Assessing whether an EHC plan or MAP may be appropriate
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Appendix 3 – register coding

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school

W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open

Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session

Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 4 - leave of absence request form

RUSSELL LOWER SCHOOL

Request for leave of absence from school during term time

This should be completed at least two weeks before the absence and ideally before booking any travel arrangements

To be completed by the Parent/Guardian

Pupil's Name_____ Class _____

Date of birth_____

Date of absence From ____ /____ /___ To___ /_____ /___ No. of school days _____

Reason for application_____

_____

Travelling abroad? Yes/No* Country_____ Return date: ____/____/_____

1st Parent/Guardian details

First name_____

Surname_____

Address_____

_____

Telephone_____

Telephone_____

2nd Parent/Guardian details

First name_____

Surname _____

Address_____

_____

Please indicate if your child has siblings in any of our Redborne Partnership schools			
The Firs	Russell	Maulden	Alameda
Templefield	Kingsmoor	Flitwick	

Parent/Guardian signature_____
Date_____

Name_____

Current attendance _____ No. of term days requested _____

Previous term time leave, dates and number of days taken

_____

Authorised/Not authorised/Partly authorised*
Reason:_____

Date of letter/email confirming the decision sent to parent_____

The government's statutory guidance **"Working Together to improve school attendance"** comes into effect from **19th August 2024 (last updated July 2026)** and will include the following changes:

Per Parent/Per Child Penalty Notices
Penalty Notices for absences will be issued per child, per parent. This means that if multiple siblings are absent during term time and the absences are unauthorised by the school, each parent will receive a separate fine for each child's absence. Penalty Notices will be issued by the local authority, and the payment will be made directly to them.

First Offence Penalties
The first penalty notice issued to each parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160.00 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 per parent if paid within 21 days.

Second Offence (within 3 years)
A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160.00 per parent if paid within 28 days.

Third Offence and any further offences (within 3 years)
A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering

prosecution but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

10 Sessions (5 days) of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period
Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions (which is the same as 5 days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. The 10 school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Appendix 5 – LA Penalty Notice poster



Appendix 6 - monitoring, analysis and support procedures

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

A spreadsheet is used by the attendance champion and shared with the SLT detailing half-termly, termly and annual attendance to date including attendance %, reasons for absence and actions taken/required.

Attendance is discussed with classroom teachers. Any attendance/punctuality trends noticed by staff are passed immediately to the attendance champion/SLT.

Trigger Point 1 met – attendance is ≤90% (autumn term) or ≤95% (spring and summer terms) attendance is a cause for concern or patterns/trends are noted - the attendance champion will make contact with parents/carers via **phone/email/letter/meeting** to discuss any issues or problems to ascertain how the school can help to improve the pupil's attendance. The attendance will continue to be closely monitored for improvement by the school.

Trigger Point 2 met – attendance does not improve or declines – the attendance champion will make contact with parents/carers via **phone/email/letter/meeting**. At this stage a **support meeting** may be held (this may involve an **attendance contract** being created). The attendance will continue to be closely monitored (weekly) for improvement by the school. School attendance officer will be informed during attendance check.

Attendance improves – send home improved attendance letter

Trigger Point 3 met - attendance does not improve or declines further – the attendance champion–will make contact with parents/carers via **phone/email/letter.** At this stage a **support meeting will** be held and an **attendance contract will** be created). The attendance will continue to be closely monitored (weekly) for improvement by the school. If there is no improvement this will lead to **education supervision order** being issues by the LA.

Appendix 7 - 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.

Appendix 8 - Deletion from Roll

For any pupil leaving Russell Lower School, other than at the end of year 4, parents/carers are required to complete a 'Pupils moving from school' form which can be obtained from the school office. This provides the school with the following information: Child's name, class, current address, date of leaving, new home address, name of new school, address of new school. This information is essential to ensure that we know the whereabouts and may appropriately safeguard all of our pupils, even those who leave us.

It is crucial that parents keep school updated with current addresses and contact details for the pupil and key family members, in case of emergency.

Under Pupil Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of **every new entry** to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, **every deletion** from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in any event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed the final year of education normally provided by that school.