

Attendance Policy



Policy Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

This policy is effective for all academies within The Mead Educational Trust, the Teaching School, the SCITT and all other activities under the control of the Trust and reporting to the Trust Board.

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Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

Rushey Mead Academy recognises that pupils will only benefit fully from their education if they attend school regularly and on time. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Attendance will be maximised through an effective partnership between pupils, their parents/carers and the school.

The Mead Educational Trust will ensure that this partnership and associated actions are undertaken rigorously; monitoring and evaluating action and impact, through regular analysis of data and review of practice.

2. Principles

To manage and improve attendance effectively we will:

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all leaders, staff, pupils and parents understand
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence
- Regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance, and work with families to remove them
- Support pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Local Academy Councillors (Governors) at our school, work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

3.2 We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Providing an environment for pupils in which they feel valued and safe
- Promoting a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Developing positive and consistent communication between home and school
- Rewarding good attendance and punctuality
- Closely monitoring the attendance of every child
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Enabling parents/carers to play an active role in resolving attendance issues
- Setting targets for improvement to improve the attendance of the whole school
- Offering tiered support in order to improve the attendance of identified pupils
- Working in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential

- Showing understanding of our community's religious and cultural beliefs and the significance of religious observance to our pupils

3.2 This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Local Academy Councillors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance

4. Legislation and guidance

4.1. This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (Feb 2023)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

5. Attendance Bands

At Rushey Mead Academy, we strive for all children to achieve their full academic potential and aim for 100% attendance. Our classification of the different attendance bands are as follows:

100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding (with no unauthorised attendance) • Children are accessing all learning opportunities 	ie Attendance rewards and celebrations. Attendance trophy and competitions.
98.01-99.9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent (with no unauthorised attendance) • Minimal Learning opportunities missed 	ie Attendance rewards and celebration
96.01-98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good (with no unauthorised attendance) • Very few learning opportunities missed 	Positive encouragement to improve attendance/ Year team intervention and incentive
95.09-90%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern/ requires improvement • Risk of under achievement • Up to 10 school days missed in an academic year 	Further monitoring/flag risk to parents/ Team around year group support/Family Support Worker referral/ Pastoral Support Programme for absence/punctuality
90% and below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent absentee • Extreme risk of underachievement • 19 school days missed in the academic year 	Refer to EWS/ Team around child plan/Advanced parental communication and monitoring cycle/ Enhanced Pastoral Support Plan
50% and below	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severely Absent • Critical risk of underachievement 	Escalation / put in place parenting contract/ formalising of support from EWS

6. Daily Routines

6.1 Daily routines for children

External school gates are opened at 8.05am daily, when staff are present, supervising the entrance to the school. Students should not be on site before this time unless invited to do so.

Students are expected to be on site no later than 8.20am. On the first bell at 8.20am students must enter the building and line up outside their classrooms (Years 7 – 10), year 11 enter the classroom and stand behind their chairs.

Any child arriving to school after the gates are locked at 8.30am will be marked as late (L), which counts as present.

Arrivals after 8.55am must report to Student Support Reception and state the reason for lateness.

Lateness after 9.15am will be logged as unauthorised absence and persistent lateness may result in a referral to the Education Welfare Service.

Please note that if a parent/carers reports that there are extenuating circumstances that have prevented the student arriving on time, this will be taken into consideration.

If a student is habitually arriving at school just before the 9.15am cut-off, the Academy have the right to amend the cut-off point for that student as a measure to help improve punctuality and attendance. Parents/carers will be notified of this.

6.2 Daily routines for parents

Parents are expected and encouraged to promote strong attendance habits with their children.

If a student is unwell and unable to attend school, parents should call the school before the school day to inform them of this.

This should be done, no later than 9.15am school should be notified of the reason for the child's absence, and when the child is to be expected back in school (Tel 0116 2663730 option 1) or via the My Child at School (MCAS) App.

Parents can contact Student Support to discuss reasons for absence throughout the school day and the school will be able to signpost/offer advice wherever possible.

Parents are able to contact the school office to discuss reasons for absence throughout the school day and the school will be able to signpost/offer advice wherever possible.

7. The Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

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

7.1 Present at School

Students are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken.

- Our students must arrive by 8.20am on each school day
- Our morning register is taken at 8:30am and will be kept open until 9:15am
- Our afternoon register is taken between 12.15pm and 1.00pm depending on which lunch sitting students are on

8. Punctuality

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens classroom disruption. Any child arriving after the gates have closed miss the vital settling in period at the beginning of the day.

Students are expected to arrive by 8.30am at their tutor rooms.

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late (L) – which counts as present.

A student who arrives late after the registers close will be marked as absent. If the student is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised.

If the student is late for no good reason, they will be marked with the unauthorised absence code 'Late after registers close' (U).

Summary:

- Registers in class close promptly at 8.55am
- Late registration code (L) between 8.31-9:15am
- Unauthorised lateness code (U) given after 9:15am leading to an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- If a student leaves the school premises after registration for an appointment, they must be signed out of school by an appropriate adult
- The Inclusion Team will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late to school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.
- Pastoral Support Plans may be put into place to outline agreed targets, actions and sources of support

9. Following up absence

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by text, email, telephone, or letter to try and establish the reason for a child's absence.

When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence.

If we are unable to establish the reason for absence by the end of the first day of absence, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the O code.

If we are concerned about a student's absence or are unable to contact the parent/s, we will contact the student's emergency contacts and/or other professionals, or contacts of the family, who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the student's whereabouts.

If we are still unable to reach a family member, a home visit will be made by school staff, designated safeguarding leads and external agencies, as appropriate.

10. Following up Unexplained Absences

Where no contact has been made with the school, the school will contact parents by telephone to try and establish the reason for a child's absence.

When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence.

If we are unable to establish the reason for absence by the end of the first day of absence, we will mark the absence as unauthorised, using the O code.

If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts.

If we are still unable to reach a family member, a home visit will be made by school staff.

11. First Day of Absence Response

If the school has not been informed as to the reason for a child's absence, then they will contact the person allocated as priority 1 on the child's emergency details by sending out a text/App message. The school aim to do this by 9:30am each day. The school will prioritise those children considered vulnerable e.g., Looked After Children; children subject to Child Protection Plans; children open to Social Care as a Child in Need; children who have previously been reported missing; primary aged students who make their own way to school. If a child is deemed particularly vulnerable, a home visit may take place on the first day.

Parents are expected to supply details of at least three people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed on a termly basis through parents' evenings and or newsletter reminders. If the school is unable to contact any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the student, we may make a home visit or request a Welfare Check from the police.

12. Recording Information on Attendance and Reasons for Absence

The school will record reasons for absence using the school data system; Bromcom. Staff will include as much detail as needed. If a phone call is made home, then the time and details of the phone call and any details of messages left will be recorded.

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

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

13. Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

Medical evidence may take the form of:

- A doctor's note,
- A medical appointment card,
- A letter from a healthcare professional stating that a condition prevents your child from attending school regularly,
- A copy of a doctor's prescription or photographs of prescribed medication for any short-term illness (eg antibiotics for tonsillitis), with the name of the student and the date clearly visible,
- Any letters concerning upcoming hospital/clinic appointments,
- Many doctor's reception teams will now print off a record of a patient's last few consultations if requested by a parent/carer.

The presence of evidence for a medical appointment will lead to the authorisation of the appointment date but does not necessarily cover recovery time or subsequent days following this to take prescribed medication. All of our schools have Administration of Medication Policies and are able to support pupils/parents with completing courses of medication.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent. Absences due to illnesses which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

Parents should telephone the school, ideally by 8:30am, but no later than 9:15am on the first day of absence. There is a dedicated absence line and parents are encouraged to leave a message. Alternatively, parents can leave absence messages my My Child at School.

If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

It is the responsibility of Student Support to record absences from the absence line and make an accurate recording of these on the attendance register.

Pupils taken ill during the school day (I Code)

If a student needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the student must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No student will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation

It is the responsibility of Student Support to record any children who are sent home during the school day and to make an accurate recording of these on the attendance register.

Medical/Dental Appointments (M Code)

Parents should try to make appointments outside of school hours, wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a pupil must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent or another authorised adult and signed out in 'signing out' book. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental approval.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter.

Religious Observance (R Code)

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise up to one day of absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Where more than one festival/observance falls within an academic year, we ask that parents consider carefully which of these days they wish to request off for their child.

Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.

This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In such cases, the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

Exclusions

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions.

Only the Principal (or Acting Principal) can exclude a pupil.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the pupil is a Looked After Child, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

See TMET Exclusions Policy for full details.

14. Roles and responsibilities

Good attendance is a foundation for success, and we believe that supporting and promoting good attendance is a whole school responsibility. The Academy Council, Principal and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Rushey Mead Academy.

Key staff

Senior leader with responsibility for attendance: Faisal Lohar, Vice Principal

Family Support Worker: Marion Bullivant

Senior Administrator for Attendance: Tejuka Patel

All staff at Rushey Mead Academy recognise the role they play in promoting good attendance:

- Form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.
- Office staff are the front line in highlighting the daily absence of identified vulnerable children to the DSLs or Attendance Officer so that actions can be followed up in a timely manner.
- The Principal and DSLs ensure that the office staff are aware of vulnerable children to monitor their daily absence and punctuality. If there is no reason given or there is reason to think that a child may be at risk, then a DSL will contact children's social care or the police to do a welfare check.
- The Principal is responsible for:
 - The implementation of this policy at the school
 - Ensuring the monitoring of school-level absence data and reporting it to the Academy Council
 - Authorising the issue of fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will ensure the Early Help process is instigated for families with issues that impact on attendance and that support is put in place to improve attendance. This may be in conjunction with other professionals; such as, the attendance lead.

- The DSL regularly checks attendance data for children on CIN (Child in Need) or CP (Child Protection) plans and takes appropriate action based on any concern. Regular liaison with parents will include the implementation of timely action plans and regular meetings to review progress against targets.
- The Attendance Officer carries out the role of attendance officer and the role includes:
 - Monitoring attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
 - Reporting concerns about attendance to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), as appropriate.
 - Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
 - Co-ordinating requests for term-time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the DSL and Safeguarding Team) and advises the Principal as requested.
 - Follow-up action-plans for pupils with low attendance
 - Timely liaison with home – this may be through letter, phone call or email.
 - Referral to outside agencies
 - Works with Education Welfare Officers to tackle persistent absence
 - Advises the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- The academy council is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis through scrutiny of attendance data included in the Principal's report. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

15. Promoting good attendance and Incentives

At Rushey Mead Academy we recognise the importance of building good habits of attendance and support pupils in doing so. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

- *There is a tutor competition for Attendance, Behaviour and Rewards. Each week there is a reward for the highest performing tutor group. There is also a prize for the best performing tutor group for each half term.*
- *On occasions, additional attendance incentives are run for individual students, classes, and cohorts to promote strong attendance patterns.*
- *Children with 100% attendance for the whole academic year, receive a special attendance badge for their school lanyard.*

16. Safeguarding and Attendance

At Rushey Mead Academy, it is our legal responsibility to ensure that every child is safe and receives a suitable education. We will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare.

If we have not received a reasonable explanation for a child's absence; have reasonable grounds to doubt an explanation received; or have been unable to contact a parent or carer to explain an absence,

a 'safe and well' check will be carried out at the child's home address. This will be undertaken by a member of the Inclusion team accompanied by another member of staff; or by the Education Welfare Officer; or member of the Police.

For pupils with a social worker, we will inform the social worker if there any unexplained absences, or if their name is to be deleted from the school register.

17. Children absent from school or missing from education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Principal and the Education Welfare Service, when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area, but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

18. Support for pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

We are committed to supporting pupils and families of pupils with a medical condition or special educational needs or disabilities to maximise their attendance.

Pastoral support staff and the SEND team will work with families and pupils to identify and reduce any barriers to attendance. Where required, we will put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed.

This support may come from external partners, through timely referrals.

We will proactively and regularly monitor data for such groups, including at Trust and Academy Council level to ensure attendance for these vulnerable groups is maintained and maximised.

Where a child requires support for a mental health condition, the school will take necessary steps to promote regular attendance. The school will ensure that the school is a calm, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

It is important to recognise that, in many instances, attendance at school may serve to help with the underlying issue as much as being away from school might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten their anxiety about attending in future. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, exams or variable moods. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly. For pupils facing anxiety, the school will mitigate these as much as possible by creating a plan to implement reasonable adjustments to alleviate specific barriers to attendance; including the support of the Pastoral Team.

19. Tracking and monitoring attendance

19.1 Data & Monitoring

In order to support good attendance, we will monitor attendance on a regular basis through a range of measures.

Attendance data will be generated, analysed and actioned in order to ensure that effective intervention strategies are implemented as a matter of routine. This data will be used to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify pupils who need support
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and full year data
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Devise strategies based on the data
- Benchmark against local, regional and national levels

19.2 Attendance monitoring

The Year Teams will be provided with regular updates to monitor patterns of attendance. Regular liaison occurs in school with key members of staff including staff Senior Staff links and the Inclusion Team to discuss and implement strategies for dealing with poor attendance/punctuality.

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a on a weekly basis.

Where an unauthorised absence has been recorded, the Attendance Officer/Administrator will write to parents informing them that this has happened and highlighting that further unauthorised absence could result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice.

In the case of a pattern of unauthorised absence developing, a face-to-face meeting will be held with parents to engage the family in supporting the pupil in resolving any difficulties whilst also informing them of the possible consequences. In some cases, this may result in a formal action plan being produced in the form of an Attendance Contract or support from the Inclusion Team, being offered.

If parents fail to attend the meeting, this would provide further evidence of lack of engagement and would not in any way hinder the process of referring the case to the Local Authority Court Officer.

If a pupil's absence is a cause for concern, taking account of the point in the year, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this and to understand the barriers to attendance.

19.3 Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at National and Local levels through the DfE's 'School Absence National Statistics Releases'. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the National Average and share this with the Academy Council on a termly basis.

19.4 The Trust reviews attendance through the academy data dashboard. Directors of Education review the overall attendance reported for each Academy, reporting to the Education Committee on four occasions each academic year.

20. Reporting to parents

Parents can access and monitor their child's attendance via the My Child at School app. Their child's attendance is also included in their termly achievement reports.

21. Escalation of procedures

Sometimes, pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse.

As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

When we have concerns about the attendance of a pupil, we will do our best to make the parent/s aware of the concerns about their child's attendance and give them the opportunity to address this. One of the strategies we have in place is the use of our PSPs for attendance. This allows parents to stay informed and ensures strong liaison with both the year teams and Family Support Workers.

However, if parents do not make use of the support offered to improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions.

21.1 Formalising support

We will support pupils and parents to address any in-school barriers; however, if a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will intensify support. Where absence does not improve, or earlier support is not engaged with, we will engage the Education Welfare Service and other local partners to support families (Tier 3 of our Graduated Response).

The school will use a range of strategies to engage families and support them in meeting their responsibilities regarding attendance. This could include Parenting contracts, Education supervision orders and/or engaging social care.

22. Penalty Notices

The Penalty Notice is designed to be an early intervention.

A Penalty Notice will only be applied if the progress being made either by the pupil or their parents/carers is deemed unsatisfactory.

Pupils who obtain more than 10 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 5 full school days) in any term or 20 unauthorised absences (the equivalent of 10 full school days) over two consecutive terms may be subject to a Penalty Notice issued by the Local Authority.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

This will at least be evidenced via the sending of an Attendance Concern Letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances without first exhausting our internal support systems.

In such circumstances, our school will take a holistic approach to the issue and involve other agencies as necessary.

In cases where attendance is below 65% but includes unauthorised absence of more than 10 unauthorised absences in any term or 20 unauthorised absences over two consecutive terms, a Penalty Notice would be deemed inappropriate and court proceedings may well be actively pursued leading to prosecution.

Where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies or fail to implement the suggested changes, we will also look to escalate this through the Education Welfare Service. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If a child has more than 20 continuous days of absence and parents are not able to provide medical evidence or a reasonable justification, action will be taken in line with the Education Welfare Service to remedy this. Parents will be appropriately challenged in line with council procedures and Safeguarding Legislation. If a child is removed from school roll in conjunction with Education Welfare Procedures, there will be no automatic entitlement to a place back at the school. Parents would be required to follow the usual in year admissions process if they wish their child to return to Rushey Mead Academy.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent, we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

23. Persistent Absenteeism & Severe Absenteeism

Persistent Absentees are defined as children with an attendance percentage below 90%. This is equivalent to having one day off every two weeks. Severe Absenteeism is defined as children with an attendance of 50% or below, equivalent to missing over half of all educational sessions. Persistent and Severe Absentees miss significant amounts of their education and are in danger of falling behind academically, socially and emotionally. These children will be monitored fortnightly by the EWS and Attendance Team to ensure support and strategies are put into place to help improve their attendance.

We adopt a tiered system of support so to ensure pupils facing difficulties receive the right level of support at the right time; this could include working with partners and external agencies and other local schools (where siblings might attend) to offer support.

We will work in partnership with parents, but if parents fail to engage with this process, we will hold more formal conversations and inform them about the need for legal intervention in the future.

If there are safeguarding concerns, we will intensify support through children's social care.

For Severely Absent pupils, we will work with the EWO and Local Authority to agree a joint approach.

See Appendix 1

24. Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not. Unauthorised absence might include but is not limited to:

- Absences which have not been properly explained (O code)

- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark (U code)
- Confusion over school dates
- Shopping /Birthdays /Waiting at home for a delivery
- Long weekends and holidays in term time
- In the case of term time leave - if a pupil is kept away from school longer than was agreed, the additional absence is unauthorised

25. Leave of Absence Requests – ‘Exceptional Circumstances’

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The legal reference states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless both of the following apply:

1. The Principal considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application
AND
2. An application has been made in advance by the parent

The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance.

The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Principal’s discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times. Where these situations occur, a proportionate and minimal amount of time away from school is advised.

Parents must complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks; such as, risk of FGM or Forced Marriage, we will follow the necessary protocols.

26. Holiday Absence Policy

There is an established, proven link, between good attendance and effective progress. Rushey Mead Academy aims to encourage and develop all our pupils’ learning across their school career by avoiding term time holidays which can seriously jeopardise pupil progress. For this reason, pupils will not be given authorisation to take holiday leave except in exceptional circumstances. It is very unlikely that requests for holidays or extended leave will be authorised. However, if parents wish the school to consider such a request, they must complete leave of absence request form. Parents must be aware that family work patterns or the financial implications of going on holiday in term time, do not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances. Following this, parents will receive a response informing them of the school’s decision. If parents/carers still take their child out of school, then the absence is deemed unauthorised and is likely to incur a Penalty Notice (see above policy relating to unauthorised absence).

If the school suspects that a pupil or family have taken unauthorised term-time leave without notification, they will follow safeguarding procedures to locate the child; including, a home visit and referral to the Education Welfare Service. If parents are unable to provide sufficient evidence that a holiday was not taken then absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice will be issued. Once a Penalty Notice has been issued by the Local Authority, it is the responsibility of the parent to provide evidence to support the reason for absence.

27. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

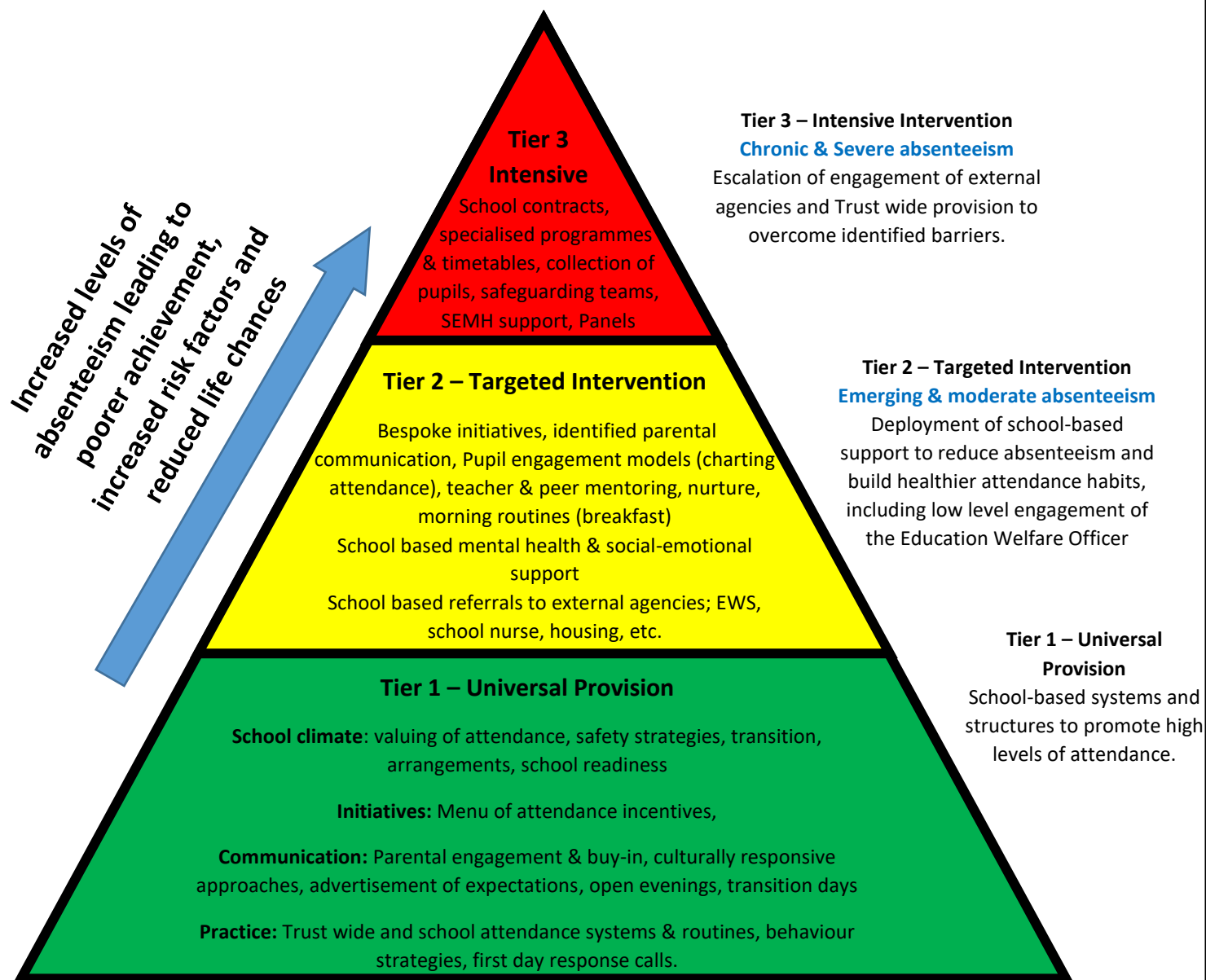
- Child protection and safeguarding policy

- Behaviour policy

- Exclusion policy

Appendix 1 – TMET’s Shared approach to promoting high levels of Attendance

TMET’s Shared approach to promoting high levels of Attendance



Appendix 2 – Department for Education (DfE) Attendance Codes

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING	Frequency
/	Present (AM)	In school	Daily
\	Present (PM)	In school	Daily
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity	Rarely – only used with approval of SLT
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) E.G., bereavement, home office appointment, funeral	Authorised absence	Occasional
D	Dual registration (i.e., present at another school or PRU)	Approved Education Activity	Rarely – only used with approval of SLT and written agreement
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence	Rarely – only used with approval of Principal
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence	Rarely
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence	Rarely
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence	Frequent
J	Interview Approved	Education Activity	Rarely
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present	Frequent
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence	Frequent
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence	Frequent – follow up required
O	Other unauthorised absence (not covered by other codes or descriptions)	Unauthorised absence	Frequent – follow up required
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity	Rarely
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence	Once a year
S	Study leave	Authorised absence	Year 11 – Summer 2
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence	Rarely
U	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence	Frequent – follow up required
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity	Rarely
W	Work experience (not work based training)	Approved Education	Rarely - Year 10/11

X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances	Nursery children
Y	Where the school site, or part of it, is closed due to unavoidable cause; or the transport provided by the school or local authority for pupils (who do not live with walking distance) is not available; or where a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school; or a pupil is detained in custody for less than four months.	Not counted in possible attendances	Rarely – Snow Days, Industrial Action Days
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances	Prior to beginning at the school – in year admissions/transfers
#	School closed to all pupils	Not counted in possible attendances	INSET Days, half-term and holidays, Bank Holidays