Rooks Heath College

Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy replaces any previous policy and follows DfE regulations and guidance. All members of staff are affected by and expected to adhere to this policy.

In line with the College's Equal Opportunities and Special Educational Needs policies, we aim to give all students equal opportunities to take part in all aspects of the college life, as far as is appropriate, practicable and compatible with giving regard to health and safety and the efficient education of other students.

This policy takes account of our aim for children to have the support they need:

- to be healthy
- to stay safe
- to enjoy and achieve
- to make a positive contribution
- to achieve economic well-being

The policy will follow the five principles of the Children's Plan:

- to support parents and families;
- to allow children to reach their full potential
- to enable children to enjoy their childhood whilst preparing for adult life
- to provide services in response to children and family needs
- to use preventative measures to help students to avoid the possibility of failure

This policy is founded in the College's commitment to the development and maintenance of good behaviour and a positive and inclusive ethos for all members of the College community. It reflects the College's commitment to safeguard children, as well to encourage diversity in all aspects of College life.

Ratified by Board of Trustees: 3.4.19
To be reviewed every 3 years

Foreword

Rooks Heath College is a mixed 11 to 18 multicultural comprehensive in the London Borough of Harrow. This policy is formulated by senior leaders in consultation with relevant staff and is monitored by other members of the senior leadership team. The policy is subject to review every 3 years by the College's senior leadership team and is subject to approval by the Trustees of the College.

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1. Aims

Our college aims to meet its obligations with regards to college attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Maintaining an attendance rate of a minimum of 95%. This target is set annually by the Board of Trustees.
- Equipping our students with the skills necessary to cope with adult life.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

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:

- The Education Act 1996

- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

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

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. College procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of each session during the college day. It will mark whether every student is:

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

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.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in college by 8:45am on each college day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:50am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:10pm and will be kept open.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the college on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 8:30am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Please contact the college on 020 8872 8900.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the college has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the college may ask parents to provide 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 college is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

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

Parents are asked to contact the Attendance Officer in advance of such appointments on 020 8872 8900.

Parents will be expected to collect their child from college if they are to attend a dental or medical appointment during college time or if they are going home due to sickness.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

The College uses an electronic system of registration (Bromcom). Attendance and punctuality data is monitored weekly by the attendance officer and Head of Year. Trends and patterns are analysed termly, feedback given to relevant staff and appropriate action taken. Annual data and analysis is given to Governing Body and Board of Trustees.

Sanctions are in place for students who are late.

Additional Support

In the first instance, the College offers support and advice for those parents / carers facing difficulty getting their children to attend College regularly. Meetings can be arranged with the Attendance Team.

3.5 Following up absence

The college will follow up unexplained absences by phone calls, text messages or emails on the first day of absence. Where appropriate other college staff, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead, will also follow up absences by involving other agencies.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Parents / carers have access to live attendance data through our online parental portal (MCAS). Parents are also given attendance information in termly reports.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time for family holidays.

The college considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the college will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the college but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. In cases where there is more than one poorly attending pupil in a family, a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent in respect of each child.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- A number of unauthorised late marks (after registration closes) within a 10-week period.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Leavers

If a child is leaving the college, other than at the end of year 11, parents are asked to complete a Notification of Student Leaving Form. The college needs full information including dates of move, reason for moving, new address and the name of the new school and start date when known.

If this information is not received, and a parent/carer cannot be contacted, the child is considered to be a child missing in education. The Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations which will include, liaising with Children's services, the Police and other agencies to track and locate the child.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Heads of Year work with other college staff promoting good attendance. Students are taught the importance of good attendance which relates to higher achievement, better progress, and enables students to develop essential life skills necessary for future economic wellbeing. A reward system is in place to recognise exceptional attendance effort.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the college in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents are expected to call the college each day if their child will be absent.

Parents/Carers will be contacted on the first day of absence to discuss the reasons for this (unless the absence is pre authorised).

If after contacting parents a student's absence continue to rise, the matter will be referred to Harrow Council's Court Attendance Officer.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with Trustees.

Rooks Heath records attendance data in our management information systems (Sims and Bromcom). This data is used to track attendance and to identify whether or not particular students or groups of students have absences which become a cause for concern. Rooks Heath uses this data to monitor and evaluate children identified as students of intervention and support.

8. Roles and responsibilities

8.1 The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole college on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the college, and for monitoring college-level absence data and reporting it to Trustees.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues education penalty notices, where necessary.

8.3 The attendance officer

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the college and individual student level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue education penalty notices

8.4 Class teachers / form tutors

Class teachers / form tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis on the college system, using the correct codes.

8.5 Office / Admin staff

Office / Admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the college system or pass it to the Attendance Officer for recording.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Headteacher in charge of attendance. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Board of Trustees.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day