

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

2024/25

This Policy makes direct references to the DfE document, 'Working together to improve school attendance' 2024. Further information can be found in this document and will be referred to by the college in all instances of attendance concerns.

We want to support all of our students and their parents/guardians/carers so that they have the best possible experience at Rochester Independent College and reach their full potential. Students with excellent attendance are more successful in school and achieve significantly higher outcomes. Low attendance can be seen as a safeguarding concern (KCSIE 2024) and is a whole school responsibility and priority.

Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the college's efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources. Improving attendance must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

The law entitles every child of a school age to a full time education suitable to their age and any additional needs. Whilst we recognise that some medical conditions or SEND may provide barriers to education, the student's right to education remains the same as their peers. We will strive to work with families and students to minimise the barriers students face and put in additional support where necessary to ensure that all students are able to access their full time education.

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in college or more broadly requires collaborative working with families. We work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all students and families. Building a culture where all can, and want to, be in college and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the college.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with students and parents/carers/guardians to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in college and identify the support students need to overcome the barriers outside of college. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, we will explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through accessing additional external services or creating attendance contracts.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

- Monitor attendance figures and hold the Principal accountable for policy implementation.
- Review the attendance policy and attendance figures regularly.

Principal:

- Implement the policy and ensure awareness among staff, students, and parents/guardians/carers.
- Report attendance statistics and issues to the governing body.

Safeguarding and Pastoral Director:

- Oversee the implementation of the policy.
- Monitor absence data and report to the Principal and governors.
- Support staff in monitoring individual student attendance.
- Work with the parents/carers/guardians to ensure appropriate referrals to services and agencies that can provide support are made, this could include Early Help or Children's Social Care.



- Consider Legal Action in relation to school attendance, with the Local Authority where appropriate.

Attendance Manager:

- Contact parents/guardians/carers on the first day of a student's absence or lateness and follow up on unexplained absences.
- The Attendance Manager is on the Safeguarding team and regularly reports concerns to the team. They monitor attendance data across the college, supporting early intervention and reducing absence before it becomes habitual.
- Communicate with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Ensure accurate and complete registers using DfE absence codes are recorded on ISAMS, including whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. An AM and PM register is recorded each day. An AM register will be marked if a student has been marked as present at any academic register point before lunch, and a PM register will be marked if a student has been marked present at any academic register post lunch.
- To gather medical evidence relevant to the absence where necessary.
- Ensure appropriate training for staff at least annually.

Heads of Lower School and Sixth Form:

- Collaborate with the Safeguarding and Pastoral Director and Attendance Manager to address persistent absence and support early identification, whilst having knowledge of attendance data in their respective areas of the college.
- Support communication with parents/guardians/carers regarding attendance issues.
- Ensure that attendance figures are reported to parents/guardians/carers within the whole school report.

Tutors:

- Monitor and support tutees regarding attendance.
- Communicate with parents/guardians/carers and teaching staff about attendance issues.
- Support students to catch up on any missed work.

Boarding Team::

- Responsible for checking that residential/boarding students arrive at registration and lessons on time.
- Support unwell students to see the college nurse.
- Liaise with tutors/parents/guardians/carers when patterns of absence are identified.
- Support any students signed out for medical reasons.

Medical Team:



- To work with day and boarding students responding to immediate medical needs and supporting long term plans to ensure good college attendance.
- Liaise with parents/guardians/carers where there are medical concerns for their child.
- Report medical concerns appropriately on ISAMS / ORAH.
- Work with the boarding team to ensure any boarding students are signed out due to medical reasons and supported.

Teachers:

- Ensure accurate registers are taken within the first 10mins of each lesson, highlighting any concerns to the Attendance Manager via email or phone.
- Ensure registers are updated throughout the lesson for any lateness.
- Raise patterns of absence to the personal tutor or, in the case of safeguarding concerns, to the safeguarding team.

Parents/Guardians/Carers:

- Perform their legal duty to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- Notify the college of any absences using absence@rochester-college.org.uk or calling the college directly - on the first day of absence by 9am and each concurrent day of absence, unless agreed otherwise.
- Notify the college of any planned absences, for example medical appointments, in advance. To ensure, where possible, that all appointments are made out of school hours.
- Ensure any term time absences are only taken in exceptional circumstances and requested, in advance, via email to the Principal.

Students:

- Attend college regularly and on time.
- Make up any missed work promptly upon return.
- Students should be in school by 8:45am. If a student (day) is running late they must contact Student Services using either absence@rochester-college.org.uk or telephone the college. On arrival at the college the student needs to sign in with the Student Services Team in Star Hill.
- If a boarder is running late they must contact their House Parent who will coordinate them getting to lessons.

Sponsored Students:

- Good attendance is required for sponsored students in the UK.
- The college is responsible for accurate monitoring and follow-up.



- Sponsorship may cease for students who miss ten consecutive contact points without authorisation.
- Missing 5 contact points without authorisation triggers a Pastoral Review with the Dukes immigration officer to plan for improved attendance. The frequency of reviews depends on the needs of the student
- Missing 10 contact points results in a likely cessation of sponsorship and reporting to UKVI, possibly leading to the student's permission to stay being curtailed.
- Sponsorship will cease if the student cannot complete their course within their permitted stay.
- Absences exceeding 60 days presume sponsorship withdrawal unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- The college recognises a contact point each day from Monday to Friday based on AM or PM register marking.

Admissions Team

- To keep an up to date electronic admissions register ensuring all students are recorded and liaise with the local authority when students are added or taken off role outside of standard admission times.
- Ensure the register is kept in accordance with school attendance (pupil registration) (England) regulations 2024.

Absence:

Rochester Independent College acknowledges that there can be barriers to college attendance and understands that it may be more challenging for some students than others. Therefore, we will work closely with parents, guardians, and carers to seek their support throughout the student's time with us. This policy will be applied fairly and consistently, taking into account the individual needs of each student and their family.

It is the legal responsibility of parents, guardians, and carers to ensure their child accesses education, whether within a school or through alternative means. This means students must attend college every day it is open, except in a few allowable circumstances.

We aim for all students to maintain 100% attendance and expect at least 95% attendance from every student. The table below illustrates the impact of missing even a small percentage of lessons:

By understanding and addressing attendance barriers, we strive to ensure every student can achieve their full potential through consistent school attendance.

Student attendance over the year	... number of days missed	... number of teaching hours missed
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95%	9	54
90%	18	108
85%	26	156
80%	35	210
75%	44	264

Absence can be authorised in the college by the Attendance Manager, the Medical Team or any member of SLT.

Students absent without permission from boarding will be dealt with, initially, through our Missing Students Policy.

Persistent and Severe Absence

KCSIE 2024 places emphasis on students absent from education as a safeguarding concern, especially if this is for prolonged periods or repeated occasions. Disciplinary procedures or welfare interventions will be followed as appropriate. In order to ensure early intervention, attendance data is circulated to Tutors via the shared online drive at the end of every week. Tutors follow up on any minor attendance issues with students/parents/guardians/carers.

The Pastoral and Safeguarding Director will check the attendance data and follow up on any patterns of non-attendance at least half termly. Through regular monitoring, students who are identified as needing additional support with attendance will be targeted and the relevant actions discussed with the student and their parents/guardians/carers. If there is no improvement, despite a collaborative effort, an escalation of support may be required. Depending on the individual circumstances, there may be a requirement for a multi-disciplinary support, a targeted support meeting, parenting contract, involvement from the Local Authority Attendance Support Team or Integrated Children's Services. If there is still no improvement, the local authority may seek legal intervention.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 recognises persistent absenteeism as students missing 10% or more of school. Targeted support will be put in place to re-engage these students where appropriate.

Particular focus is given to students who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent students may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.



See also Children Missing in Education (CME) Policy.

Part Time Timetables

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable is not used to manage a student's behaviour. Part time timetables will be documented and reviewed regularly and agreed with the student and parents/guardians/carers.

Communication

The Attendance Policy is available from the college. The Senior Attendance Champion is our Pastoral and Safeguarding Director, Kayleigh Simpson. She can be contacted by calling the college number or emailing absence@rochester-college.org.uk

Communication in the context of attendance is recorded on the student's electronic file.

Created/Updated	Author	Approved by	Date
September 2020	KF	AB	September 2020
August 2021	KF	AB	August 2021
September 2022	HR, KS & CD	KF	September 2022
May 2023	KS, JW	AB	May 2023
September 2023	KS, JW	AB	September 2023
September 2024	KS, JW	KF	September 2024