

Attendance Policy - RBAir



Legislation / guidance that informs this document

- Education Act (1996) - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2010)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2011)
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2013)
- Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE - Sept 2016)

Other Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir) policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Admissions

Statement of intent

Guidance issued by the DfE (August 2013) includes the following assertion:

“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.”

The logic of the statement is undeniable, and all Red Balloon of the Air staff will work to:

- promote good attendance of all students;

- ensure every student has access to educational provision that matches their needs;
- support parents to enable students to attend well;
- enable students to arrive punctually at lessons.

Admission and Attendance Registers

The law requires all schools, including independent schools, to have an admissions register and, with the exception of schools where all students are boarders, an attendance register. All students (regardless of their age) must be placed on both registers. The proprietor of a school who fails to comply with these regulations is guilty of an offence and can be fined. All Red Balloon Centres (including Red Balloon of the Air) will maintain up-to-date, accurate admission and attendance registers.

The Admission Register

The admission register must contain the personal details of every student attending Air provision, along with the date of admission or re-admission to Air.

The information to be entered (and updated as necessary) in the admission register includes:

- full name of student;
- sex;
- date of birth;
- date of admission;
- name of last school attended;
- name and address of every parent / carer (with an indication as to which of these the student 'normally' lives with, and which has parental responsibility);
- emergency contact details of parents and carers;
- any necessary information concerning communication with parents (such as hearing impairment, requirement for information in Braille, language preference).

A student will only be deleted from the admissions register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Amendments to the Admission Register and Attendance Register

Every amendment made to the admission register and 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.

Where a parent notifies RBAir that a student will live at another address, the appropriate administrator will, in accordance with the requirements of statutory guidance (Children Missing Education Sept 2016), record in the admission register: the full name of the parent/carer with whom the student will live, the new address, and the date from when it is expected the student will live at this address.

Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 and section 458(4) and (5) of the Education Act (1996) every entry in the admission register and attendance register will be preserved for a period of three years after the date on which the entry is made.

Children at risk of missing education

RBAir will always inform both the commissioning agent and the local authority (in many cases these will be one and the same) when a student comes to the end of their placement. In the extremely unlikely event that RBAir excludes a student permanently or for a 'fixed term', the coordinator will ensure that both the commissioning agent and the local authority are informed and that requisite local practice is followed.

As required by statutory guidance (Children Missing Education Sept 2016), when RBAir notifies a local authority that a student's name is to be removed from the admission register, we will provide the local authority with: the full name of the student; the full name and address of any parent with whom the student lives; at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the student lives; the full name and address of the parent who the student is going to live with, and the date the student is expected to start living there, and, if applicable, the name of the student's destination school and the student's expected start date there. The centre will also provide the ground in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 under which the student's name is to be removed from the admission register.

Children who meet considerable difficulty in maintaining regular attendance

Students referred to RBAir are likely to have self-excluded from their previous educational provider, or have experienced extreme anxiety when forced to attend; they may have been out of school for some time prior to referral, thus a pragmatic approach to initial engagement is required. With the agreement of the commissioning agent, parent/carer and student we may adopt a staged integration or share attendance with another provider. In any such case we will aim for full attendance as soon as possible.

To ensure that attendance figures are in line with legal requirements, RBAir will mark a student present or absent on each day that is requested or purchased by the commissioning agent. Thus, if a commissioner requests a shared placement with, for example, three days a week attendance at RBAir, attendance will be recorded on that basis. In any case where a full-time placement is requested, RBAir will record attendance at each lesson and on each of the ten sessions per week (am and pm, Monday to Friday). Attendance figures will be reported to commissioning agents in line with their requirements, and any concerns about a particular student will be highlighted.

Helping students to attend regularly

RBAir seeks to provide a supportive, nurturing environment, and all staff help students make positive informed decisions about their education and their life in general. While it is hoped that this will enable students to attend regularly, the need for appropriate action should they not attend is acknowledged.

At the point of referral RBAir will ensure that students and parents/carers are aware of the need to report the reason for any absence immediately.

If the reason given for absence is considered to be legitimate, no further action will be taken. Should the absence continue (legitimately) for more than two weeks, the coordinator or regional mentor will ensure that liaison takes place with medical or other professionals working with the student and family to find ways of enabling the student to access education

If RBAir receives no information regarding an absence, or a student 'self certifies', then a 'first day' response will be adopted and a nominated member of staff will contact the parents/carers to:

- identify the reason for absence;
- ensure that the student is safe.

Depending upon the circumstances the action taken may include:

- making an immediate home visit;
- contacting the family by phone, email or SMS;
- notifying appropriate local agencies if the child is believed to be unsafe for whatever reason.

In any case where there is prolonged unauthorised absence, RBAir mentors will always ensure that commissioners and appropriate local authority staff (eg social worker, education welfare officer, youth offending team) are notified, and will work with them to attempt to re-engage the student in accordance with any local agreements that have been reached.

It is the responsibility of the commissioning agent to decide the point at which they cease to commission a place for that student.

NB. Given the nature of RBAir's student body (ie most students will have met considerable difficulty in attending education prior to referral to Red

Balloon of the Air), we will seek to provide informative detail to back up our statistical attendance returns. Given the small number of students attending, if RBAir has a persistent non-attender or poor attender and the commissioning agent deems the placement to be a worthwhile one and therefore continues with it, there will be a significant impact on the overall average attendance. One poor attender within a group of between 10 and 15 students might reduce the average attendance by between 10% and 6.6%. Provided (with the agreement of the commissioner) we respond rapidly and supportively to non-attendance, liaise effectively with all appropriate local agencies and professionals, and remain in frequent contact with the student and family, the student will be safer and more likely to re-engage in the future: we believe this to be a more 'student centered' approach than to cease the placement simply to protect our attendance statistics. It would be unreasonable for an inspecting body to criticise us for our attendance rates without considering the individual circumstances of each student.

Policy updated (Sept 2019) by Bob Sproson, Director of Education - for annual review

Guidance concerning marking the attendance register

RBAir will ensure that attendance registers are marked accurately twice per day in accordance with the guidelines attached, taken from the August 2013 Regulations (hence use of the term pupil rather than student and school rather than centre / RBAir... the title coordinator has been inserted in place of 'headteacher').

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 they must record whether every student is:

- present;
- attending an approved educational activity;
- absent;
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration, they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but registers should not be kept open for the whole morning or afternoon. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present but at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is one in which a pupil is taking part in a supervised educational activity, such as a field trip, educational visit,

work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as taking part in an off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

The attendance codes for students who are present at approved off-site educational activity are:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the Centre. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of students educated off-site. Therefore, by using code B schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Consortia Schools pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course only need to be placed on the registers of their 'main' school rather than on all of the schools they attend. They should be treated as guest pupils at the other consortia schools. The consortia schools however, must ensure they have suitable systems in place for monitoring and reporting the attendance and absence of the pupils involved, which must be shared with the 'main' school.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to

attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, but only when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question.

Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment

This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity

This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip

This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of

any absences by individual students. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

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

Absence codes when students are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made, they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school

Coordinators should only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the coordinator must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances that warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the coordinator will determine the number of days a student can be away

from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the coordinator's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)

Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the legitimacy of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support the claim.

Schools may record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school only for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. If necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to year 11 students during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those students who want to continue to come into the school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term 'Traveller' – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the coordinator.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the pupil out of school, or the pupil is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools must follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established, the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from the school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived at the school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census.

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age pupils are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- the school, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause;
- the transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the student's home is not within walking distance;
- a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because they are in custody and detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of students joining to ease administration burdens. Schools must put students on the admission register from the first day that the School has agreed, or been notified, that the student will attend.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half-term breaks; occasional days (such as bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning or INSET; and the use of schools as polling stations.