

Policy title	<b>Attendance</b>
Policy owner (including job title)	Sarah Saunders (Head of Centre)
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RBET - Norfolk approving body	Red Balloon Educational Trust (Rob Watson – Director of Education)
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<b>Policy contents:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose</li> <li>● Scope</li> <li>● Policy statement, provision and safeguards</li> <li>● Responsibility for Implementation</li> <li>● Admission and Attendance Registers</li> <li>● Amendments to the Admission and Attendance Register</li> <li>● Children at risk of missing education</li> <li>● Children who meet considerable difficulty in maintaining regular attendance</li> <li>● Helping students to attend regularly</li> <li>● Marking the attendance register</li> <li>● Legislation / guidance that informs this document</li> <li>● Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one</li> </ul>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p> <p>5</p>

## **Purpose**

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

*“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students 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.”*

All RBET - Norfolk staff will work to:

- promote good attendance of all students;
- ensure every student has access to full-time education;
- support families to enable students to attend well;
- enable students to arrive punctually at lessons.

## **Scope**

Red Balloon Norfolk refers to itself as a “Centre” demonstrating the important differences between how it operates and that of other schools. It is legally, however, a school so the two terms are interchangeable in this policy, with “school” particularly used when quoting from current legislation and guidance.

This policy applies to all RBET - Norfolk students.

## **Policy statement, provision and safeguards**

### **Responsibility for Implementation**

The Head of Centre must ensure that RBET - Norfolk has clear practice guidelines for encouraging attendance, including a response to non-attendance. A designated administrator is responsible for ensuring that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with this policy.

### **Day to Day leadership of Attendance:**

The Red Balloon - Norfolk leads for Attendance are:

Ellie Rix, Assistant Headteacher

[ellie.rix@rbet.ac](mailto:ellie.rix@rbet.ac)

Sarah Saunders, Headteacher

[sarah.saunders@rbet.ac](mailto:sarah.saunders@rbet.ac)

Ellie Rix, Assistant Head is the primary contact for attendance related matters. This includes notification of unplanned student absences and responding to requests in advance for planned student absences.

Term dates are:

Spring Term: 3 Jan 2024 – 28 March 2024 (half term 19-23<sup>rd</sup> February)  
Summer Term: 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 – 12 July 2024 (half term 27-31 May)

## **Unplanned absence**

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the Centre of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence as soon as practically possible by calling the Centre 01603 327 856.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless there is a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

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

## **Managing attendance**

The school's day to day process for managing attendance will be as follows:

**DAY 1** Parents should call in to explain students' absence and give an idea when they will return.

If the parent has not called in the absence, the Attendance lead (AL) will call home and confirm the absence. Call to be made after 10:30am. If the parent does not respond to call, the AL will try twice and send email.

**DAY 2** Parent confirmed the reason for absence for previous day. AL changes code accordingly (From N to ....)

Parent has still not contacted the school regarding absence. AL continues to try and email for reason. AL tries alternative numbers on the system.

**DAY 3** Parent still not confirmed absence. AL does a home visit. If at home, AL confirms absence and offers support to family and young person.

Nobody is in the house during home visit/ not answering door. Letter put through the door, that police will be contacted within 24 hours if no contact made.

- DAY 4/5 No contact from parents regarding absence. AL will contact any other agencies involved with the family. AL continues to try phone/email/alternative numbers and try to visit the home address. Police alerted.
- Day 7 AL will seek advice from Childrens Advice and Duty Line and Police. Continue to try and contact and complete home visits.
- DAY 10 AL will contact Local authority – Child missing education to seek support about off rolling.

If a young person goes missing in the school day, staff should do their best to locate the student and inform the AL. Parents should be informed and police as soon as possible.

### **Planned absence**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the Centre in advance of the appointment.

This can be done by calling the centre (01603 327 856) or emailing Ellie Rix, Assistant Head (ellie.rix@rbet.ac)

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

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Red Balloon Norfolk helps and supports students to attend the Centre regularly, This is described later in this policy. We are obliged however to state the following:

Parent and carers should be aware that by law, the Centre, local authority and the police have the authority to fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from the Centre, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent/carers must pay £60 (£80 from Aug '24) within 21 days or £120 (£160 from Aug '24) within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The 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 pupil is found in a public place during Centre hours without a justifiable reason

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

### **Admission and Attendance Registers**

The law requires all schools, including independent schools to have an admission 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. RBET - Norfolk will maintain up-to-date, accurate admission and attendance registers.

#### **The Admission Register**

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

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 / readmission;
- name and address of all parents / guardians and one telephone number (with an indication as to which of those the student normally lives with and who has parental responsibility);
- address of new or additional place(s) of residence of child and date child began to reside there;
- full name of parent the student lives with;
- name and address of last school attended;
- emergency contact details of parents and carers;
- name of destination school;
- start date at new school;
- 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 (amended Sept 2016).

### **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 RBET - Norfolk that a student will live at another address, RBET - Norfolk 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 was made.

#### **Children at risk of missing education**

Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2023) identifies students who are missing from education or absent from education as being additionally vulnerable to child abuse. RBET - Norfolk will ensure this possibility is always considered when such cases arise.

RBET - Norfolk will always inform both the commissioning agent and the local authority (in many cases these will be one and the same) when a student ceases to attend. In the extremely unlikely event that RBET - Norfolk excludes a student permanently or for a 'fixed term,' the Head of Centre 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 RBET - Norfolk notifies a local authority that a student's name is to be removed from the admission register, RBET - Norfolk 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. RBET - Norfolk 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 (updated Children Missing Education 2016).

- student has ceased to attend and is to be home educated;
- student has moved out of the area;
- student has been certified as medically unable to continue attending;
- student is detained under a court order;
- student has been permanently excluded;
- student stops attending school named in school attendance order;
- student stops attending one school while registered at two schools;
- student has not returned for 10 days after authorised absence, is not believed to be unwell, and neither the school nor the local authority knows where the child is (NB The school and LA will also now be required to work cooperatively in investigating);
- student has been absent from school for 20 days (continuous) without authorisation;

- student has died;
- student stops attending other types of school;
- student reaches the end of compulsory school age and will not be returning to school, or the student is removed by the commissioning agent.

### **Children who meet considerable difficulty in maintaining regular attendance**

Since students are most usually referred to RBET - Norfolk because they 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 (some of our students have been out of education or non-attending for two years or more), 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, RBET - Norfolk 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 RBET - Norfolk, we will record attendance on that basis, but in any case, where a full-time placement is requested, RBET - Norfolk will record a presence or absence on each of the ten sessions in the week.

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**

RBET - Norfolk 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 help students to attend regularly, the need for prompt action should they not attend is acknowledged, particularly the need to ensure that the student is 'safe.'

At the point of referral, RBET - Norfolk will ensure that students and families 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 Head of Centre 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, for example, the student is housebound because of illness, RBET - Norfolk would consider sending work home and/or using online learning to maintain the student's access to education.

If RBET - Norfolk receives no information regarding an absence, or a student 'self certifies,' then a 'first day' response is adopted and the Head of Centre (the Head of Centre may delegate that responsibility) or administrator will contact the family to:

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

Depending upon the circumstances, the action that may be taken includes:

- 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 RBET - Norfolk will always ensure that commissioners and appropriate local authority staff (e.g. social worker, EWO, YOS officer) 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 up to the commissioning agent to decide the point at which they cease to commission a place for that student.*

NB. Given the nature of our student body (i.e. most students will have met considerable difficulty in attending education prior to referral to Red Balloon), we will seek to provide informative detail to back up our statistical attendance returns. Given the small number of students attending, if a RBET - Norfolk 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. 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 centred' 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.

### **Marking the attendance register**

RBET - Norfolk will ensure that the attendance register is marked accurately twice a day in accordance with the following guidelines, taken from the August 2013 Regulations.

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 pupil is:

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

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.

The register will be closed 30 minutes after the start of the Centre day in the morning and 30 minutes after the start of the afternoon session.

### **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, amended Sept 2016... see 'Children Missing Education')
- 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)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Gov.UK Sept 2023)

Other Red Balloon policies to be read in conjunction with this one:

- Admissions
- Safeguarding
- SEND