

Policy document control box

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Approval date	November 2024
Date of next review	March 2026

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Purpose

This policy has been amended to reflect the guidance issued by the DfE entitled 'Working Together To Improve School Attendance' August 2024.

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex and are often specific to individual learners and families. Good attendance begins with the provision being somewhere learners want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that the Centre is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all learners are keen and ready to learn.

Some learners find it harder than others to attend an educational setting and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, Red Balloon Worthing should work in partnership with learners and parents/carers collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

We will be particularly mindful of learners absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

All RB Worthing staff will work to:

- promote good attendance of all learners;
- ensure every learners has access to full-time education;
- support parents/carers to enable learners to attend well;
- enable learners to arrive punctually at lessons.

Scope

This policy applies to all RB Worthing learners.

Policy statement, provision and safeguards

Responsibility for Implementation

The Head of Centre must ensure that RB Worthing 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.

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 learners are boarders, an attendance register. All learners (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. RB Worthing will maintain up-to-date, accurate admission and attendance registers.

The Admission Register

The admission register must contain the personal details of every learner 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 learner;

- 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 learner 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 learner 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 learner will only be deleted from the admissions register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Learner 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 RB Worthing that a learner will live at another address, RB Worthing 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 learner will live, the new address, and the date from when it is expected the learner will live at this address.

Preservation of the Admission Register and Attendance Register

In accordance with The Education (Learner 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 six years after the date on which the entry was made.

Children at risk of missing education

RB Worthing will always inform both the commissioning agent and the local authority (in many cases these will be one and the same) when a learner ceases to attend. In the extremely unlikely event that RB Worthing excludes a learner 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 RB Worthing notifies a local authority that a learner's name is to be removed from the admission register, RB Worthing will provide the local authority with: the full name of the learner; the full name and address of any parent with whom the learner lives; at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the learner lives; the full name and address of the parent who the learner is going to live with, and the date the learner is expected to start living there, and, if applicable, the name of the learner's destination school and the learner's expected start date there. RB Worthing will also provide the ground in regulation 8 of the Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 under which the learner's name is to be removed from the admission register (updated Children Missing Education 2016).

- learner has ceased to attend and is to be home educated;
- learner has moved out of the area;
- learner has been certified as medically unable to continue attending;
- learner is detained under a court order;
- learner has been permanently excluded;
- learner stops attending school named in school attendance order;
- learner stops attending one school while registered at two schools;
- learner 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);
- learner has been absent from school for 20 days (continuous) without authorisation;
- learner has died;
- learner stops attending other types of school;
- learner reaches the end of compulsory school age and will not be returning to school or the learner is removed by the commissioning agent.

Children who meet considerable difficulty in maintaining regular attendance

Since learners are most usually referred to RB Worthing 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 learners 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 learner 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, RB Worthing will mark a learner present or absent on each morning and afternoon 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 RB, RB Worthing will record attendance on that basis, but in any case where a full-time placement is requested, RB Worthing 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 learner will be highlighted.

Helping learners to attend regularly

RB Worthing seeks to provide a supportive, nurturing environment, and all staff help learners make positive informed decisions about their education and their life in general. While it is hoped that this will help learners to attend regularly, the need for prompt action should they not attend is acknowledged, particularly the need to ensure that the learner is 'safe'.

At the point of referral RB Worthing will ensure that learners 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 Head of Centre will ensure that liaison takes place with medical or other professionals working with the learner and family to find ways of enabling the learner to access education. If, for example, the learner is housebound because of illness, RB would consider sending work home and/or using online learning to maintain the learner's access to education.

If RB Worthing receives no information regarding an absence, or a learner '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 parents/carers to:

- identify the reason for absence;
- ensure that the learner 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, RB Worthing will always ensure that commissioners and appropriate local authority staff (eg School Attendance Support Team, social worker, EWO, YOS officer) are notified, and will work with them to attempt to re-engage the learner 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 learner.

NB. Given the nature of our learner body (ie most learners 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 learners attending, if a RB Worthing 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 learner and family, the learner will be safer and more likely to re-engage in the future. We believe this to be a more 'learner 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 learner.

Managing absence

In the first instance, we will work closely with families to address any barriers to attendance. A phone call home by a trusted adult to discuss barriers with the learner will form part of the absence monitoring process. If the absence continues and the learner is at risk of persistent absenteeism, then a meeting is called with parent/carers and the learner to address the concerns, and to identify how to improve attendance.

Process for reporting learner absence

Parents/carers are advised that they must report an unplanned absence eg sickness using the Arbor Parent App or if that is not available to them on the day, then by emailing worthing-admin@rbet.ac. They must include the reason for absence and inform the Centre before 9am on the day of absence.

Granting leaves of absence

The Centre can grant a leave of absence when a learner needs to be absent with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and schools maintained by a local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority must do so. These circumstances are: •

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA).
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the learner normally lives with.
- Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the learner normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the learner is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the learner normally lives with and school agree the learner should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the learner will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable

Exceptional circumstances: All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. In the case of schools maintained by local authorities and special schools not maintained by local authorities, it must be requested in advance by a parent who the learner normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the learner can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of

absence should not be granted for a learner to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Marking the attendance register

RB Worthing will ensure that the attendance register is marked accurately twice a day in accordance with the following guidelines, taken from the August 2024 Regulations.

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and in the afternoon. On each occasion they must record whether every learner is:

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

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

Legislation / guidance that informs this document

- Education Act (1996) - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- School Attendance (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education (Learner Registration) (England) Regulations (2006)
- Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2010)
- Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2011)
- Education (Learner Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2013)
- Children Missing Education - Statutory Guidance for local authorities (DfE - Sept 2016, Updated Aug 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Gov.UK Sept 2024)

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

- Admissions