

RMET

Attendance Policy

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Document Change History

Date:	Version:	Description of Changes:
January 2024	2.0	Full review and approval
March 2024	2.1	Amendments following Local Authority review
July 2024	2.2	Full review and approval due to change in legislation

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the schools at RMET will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance.
- 1.2. Pupil attendance is mandatory and we expect our pupils' attendance to be at least 96%.
- 1.3. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.
- 1.4. The DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 states that attendance to school is "essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances".
- 1.5. Principles
 - Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement;
 - It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure this happens;
 - Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development and is essential if children are to benefit fully from their school life;
 - Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents;
 - All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British Law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

2. Aims of this policy

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils to ensure that all children attend school regularly and punctually, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development;
- To discharge the School/Academy's duty to safeguard its pupils to the best of its ability;
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance to ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and the governing body understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- Acting early to reduce absence and address patterns of absence, including persistent and severe absence;

- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled, improving their life chances and preparing them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood;
- Preparing pupils for the next stage of their education or working life, as regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training. Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 96%;
- Building strong relationships with families and working in partnership with external agencies so that pupils have the support in place to attend school;
- Adopting a culture of 'support first' to removing barriers to attendance.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2.1. Policy objectives

- To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children;
- To reduce persistent and severe absence;
- To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence;
- To promote commitment to education and high achievement;
- To maximise the potential of every individual pupil;
- Ensure robust systems are in place to monitor and manage attendance and punctuality throughout the school.

3. Legislation and guidance

3.1. This policy meets the statutory requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

4. Statement of equality

4.1. We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitments to

meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1. The Academy Trust and Academy Committees

5.1.1. The Academy Trust and Academy Committees are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents;
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources;
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs;
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs;
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data;
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across RMET schools;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

5.2. The Headteacher

5.2.1. The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school;
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels;
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Academy Committee;
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils;

- Monitoring the impact of the implemented attendance strategy;
- Requesting the Local Authority to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary;
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs;
- Communicating with local authority partners when a pupil with a social worker, including pupils who are looked after, has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.

5.3. The designated lead responsible for attendance

5.3.1. The designated senior leader in each school (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') are responsible for:

- Leading and improving attendance across the school;
- Setting a clear vision and strategy for improving and maintaining good attendance;
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis;
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance;
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff;
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed;
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues;
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers;
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families;

The senior attendance champion, responsible for attendance is Mrs Horstrup (RMGS), Mrs Robson (Riverside) and Mrs Hardie (Twydall) who can be contacted via the appropriate school.

5.4. The school attendance officer

5.4.1. The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Building positive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle barriers to attendance;
- Completing attendance checks on any pupils in Alternative Provisions or on a Managed Move and update the School's attendance register accordingly;
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data weekly (see section 10);
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement;
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated lead responsible for attendance and the Headteacher;
- Working with school staff to create targeted intervention, reintegration and attendance contracts in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers;

- Complete and track progress of Notices to Improve, sharing data with the local authority as requested;
- Advising the Headteacher when to request that the local authority issue fixed-penalty notices.

There is a dedicated attendance officer at each school who can be contacted via the appropriate school office.

5.5. Class teachers/form tutors

5.5.1. Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes (see Appendix 1), directly in to the electronic register, at the registration times detailed in the appendices 2 and 3 attached.

5.6. School office staff

5.6.1. School office staff will:

- Take calls/messages from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record the absence calls on the electronic registers;
- Transfer calls/messages from parents/carers to the appropriate member of staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance if necessary.

5.7. Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person;
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them).

5.7.1 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Fully support the school's attendance policy;
- Make sure their child attends every day/timetabled session on time;
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return;
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child;
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day;
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority;
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the class teacher or head of year, pastoral lead or Home School Support Worker, who can be contacted via the school office.

5.8. Pupils

5.8.1. Pupils are expected to:

- Primary schools - Attend school every day on time and aim for 100% attendance;
- Secondary schools - Attend every timetabled session on time and aim for 100% attendance;
- Sixth form - Attend every timetabled session on time and aim for 100% attendance. The only exception is agreed home study and any other sanctioned use of timetabled sessions.

6. Recording attendance

6.1. Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil 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.

We will also record for pupils of compulsory school age:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not;
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity;
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Legally the register must be taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day, and once during the afternoon session. Please see the appendices 2 and 3 for each school's registration timings.

6.1.1. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes in each school. In the primary schools, pupils arriving in school after 8.45am but before 9.15am will be coded L. At the secondary

school pupils arriving in school after 8.35am but before 9.05am will be coded L. This counts as a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register.

6.1.2. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed am (9:15/9:05) and pm (1:30/2:35) will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole morning/afternoon session.

6.1.3. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). It is reasonable for members of staff to ask questions regarding a child's attendance and punctuality and when appropriate, request evidence to support the reason for absence from school.

6.1.4. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence (U code) and may be subject to legal action.

6.1.5. If a pupil's attendance falls, parents will be contacted regarding their child's school attendance.

6.1.6. Children at Primary School: Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies. If one is available, the school will place the child into the after-school club and the provider will then bill the parent.

6.1.7. See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

6.2. Unplanned absence

6.2.1. The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by contacting the school office.

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

6.2.3. Where there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

6.2.4. The school may also seek medical evidence where there has been a previous pattern of low attendance or where the absence is longer than [e.g. 5] days. The school will write to parents/carers to advise where this is the case. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

6.2.5. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

6.2.6. If a child is unwell but able to attend school we can offer support by issuing any medications sent into school in line with the medications plan. Please refer to the RMET's policy 'Supporting pupils with Medical Conditions' for further guidance.

6.3. Planned absence

6.3.1. Attending a medical or dental appointment will usually be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school office in advance of the appointment and provides suitable evidence of the appointment.

6.3.2. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 7 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

6.4. Lateness and punctuality

6.4.1. A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Where the school has concerns regarding punctuality these will be brought to the parent's attention by:

- Face to face or telephone conversation;
- Letters outlining concerns and impact of lateness;
- Invite parents to a meeting with the school attendance officer to identify what may be causing the problem and discuss solutions.

6.5. Following up unexplained absence

6.5.1. Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may reach out to other parties working with the family e.g. early help/social workers;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- Signpost to NHS advice/support around illnesses and attending school where possible;
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session;
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary;
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer, Virtual Head or social worker;
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals;
- If after 3 days of absence, a child has not been seen and contact has not been made with the school, we will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family;

- In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made, either by the Home School Support Worker or Attendance Officer, to ascertain the safety and well-being of the child and in addition to the reason for absence from school;
- Take advice from the local authority School Attendance Support Team (AASSA - Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies) for any absences incurring more than 5 days and Schools Safeguarding Team for any absences incurring more than 10 days;
- The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent then the Local Authority is notified that the child is at risk or missing education (CME). The school representative will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child; (see section 9.5)
- Carry out regular data collection checks throughout the year to ensure up to date contact details and emergency contact details for each family;
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, the school will work in partnership with the Local Authority to issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 7.2 below), as appropriate.

6.6. Reduced Timetables

- 6.6.1. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary reduced timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a reduced timetable maybe considered as part of a re-integration package. (Working Together to Improve School Attendance).
- 6.6.2. A reduced timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a reduced timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised and code in the register as a C2, which is an authorised absence. All reduced timetables are reported to the Local Authority.

6.7. Reporting to parents

6.7.1 The DfE expects schools to report school attendance to parents regularly.

- The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels. This information will be constantly available to parents/carers via Edulink One or shared at parent/teacher meetings, and detailed on any progress/end of year report.
- If there are concerns, the school will write to parents/carers regarding their child's attendance, a report of their attendance will be included in the correspondence.
- A copy of the attendance record can be requested at any time by contacting the school office. This will be provided to you no later than 5 working days following receipt of the request.

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

7.1. Approval for term-time absence

The Department for Education (DfE) and the Local Authority states that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Headteachers will not authorise term time holidays during the 190 days each year designated for school. Parents should seek permission from Headteachers to take their children out of school. If requests are declined and the parent decides to take their child out of school it will be recorded as unauthorised and will be subject to a penalty notice (see 7.2.5).

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher will only grant a **leave of absence** to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

7.1.1. The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

7.1.2. Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

7.1.3. As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

7.1.4. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

7.1.5. Any request should be submitted to the school office in writing, as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

7.1.6. If a pupil is over compulsory school age (e.g. sixth form), leave can be requested or agreed by the parent they normally live with.

7.1.7. Other Valid reasons for authorised absence include (but not limited to):

- Illness (including mental illness) and medical/dental appointments (see 6.3 And 6.4);
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents'/carers' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart;

- Parent(s) 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 school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending an educational provision;
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made).

7.1.8. Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school;
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration);
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority;
- Attending school arranged work experience;
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

7.2. Sanctions

Our schools will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis and are not taken lightly. The school will have pursued all reasonable attempts to improve a child's attendance before this decision is made.

7.2.1. Notice to improve

If the national threshold has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks), and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local statutory code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school (Medway).

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences;
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#);
- Details of the support provided so far;
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with;
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis;
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period;
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period.

7.2.2. Penalty notices

The 1996 Education Act clearly states, “If any child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, the parents/carer of the child shall be guilty of an offence”. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 also introduced the use of penalty notices as an additional sanction to address the problem of poor school attendance. Failure to ensure your child’s regular attendance at school may result in prosecution in the courts or a penalty notice being issued.

If there are 10 unauthorised sessions in a 10-week rolling period, the school may request the Local Authority to issue a penalty notice.

Before referring to the Local Authority for a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks);
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil;
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution;
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate;

7.2.3. A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

7.2.4. One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission will also result in a penalty notice and count towards the escalation of penalty notices.

7.2.5. Each parent who is liable for the pupil’s offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice. Penalty notices are issued to each parent who has day-to-day responsibility for the child, and are issued per child. The payment must be made directly to Medway Local Authority. Penalty notices will be issued as follows (with a maximum of two penalty notices within a rolling three-year period, per parent, per child:

- **first offence** – the first time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be £80 per parent, per child, paid with 21 days, this increases £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21 until day 28, any no- payment of the penalty notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.
- **second offence (within three years)** – the second time a penalty notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child, paid within 28 days any non-payment of the penalty notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court;
- **third offence and any further offences (within 3 years)** – the third time an offence is committed, a penalty notice **will not** be issued and the case may be presented straight to the Magistrates Court under S.444 of the Education Act (1996) or other legal interventions considered. The Magistrates Court can order fines up to £2500 per parent, per child.

8. Promoting attendance

8.1. The Schools will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include the home/school agreement, newsletters, rewards, assemblies, displays and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

The School will:

- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and know that their presence is valued;
- Build positive relationships with parents/carers, identifying key staff as points of contact, such as Home School Support Workers and Pastoral Assistants;
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using newsletters and other communications to parents; making attendance a high priority;
- Signposting to NHS guidance and supporting attendance where possible;
- Deploy a key member of senior staff in each school as the Attendance Champion with responsibility for developing a strategy for improvement and monitoring and evaluating the impact. At RMET the attendance champion role is fulfilled by the Mrs Horstrup (RMGS), Mrs Robson (RPS) and Mrs Hardie (TPS), who can be contacted via the relevant school office;
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education. All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance via the website and school information sessions;
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life;
- Celebrate good attendance by individual school systems such as assemblies and rewards;
- Adopt a 'support first' approach to attendance, with each school offering a range of interventions to support families and overcome barriers to attendance. These will be tiered as universal interventions, targeted and specialist;
- At the point of targeted interventions, the school will meet with parents/carers and agree an attendance contract with bespoke interventions outlined and a target for improvement. This will be reviewed by all parties regularly and precede specialist intervention where support from external agencies will be secured;
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored, using the SIMs registration system, and absences are followed up promptly in accordance with this policy;
- Communicate effectively with other agencies such as the School Attendance Support Team (Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies, Medway Council), Medway Special Educational Needs (SEND), School Health, Early Help/Family Solutions, Social Services;
- Meet the legal requirements with the use of correct codes for absence, with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence (DFE guidance);
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality;
- Ensure attendance information is available for trustees and parents;
- Share good practice with the Local Authority and other schools.

9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

9.1. Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

- Obtain pupil and parent voice to inform action plans and attendance contracts;
- Offer Early Help and engage with external agencies where appropriate;
- Children who are In Care (CIC), subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officer. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a telephone call to the home. Any outside professionals who are also working with the children and family will also be notified of the absence (Social Worker, School Attendance Support Team).

9.2. Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

- Children with Special Educational Needs (SEND) will be treated as a priority in order that their learning is supported to the greatest extent possible;
- Every effort will be made to support attendance and learning in school through adaptations to the environment, curriculum and timetable if possible and where appropriate;
- Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority;
- Where a pupil whose health needs do not allow them to attend school, liaise with the Local Authority (LA) and other relevant agencies promptly and in line with the RMET policy 'Children with health needs who cannot attend School'.

9.3. Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

- Each school will have procedures in place to help children settle back to school after a long absence;
- On return from an unavoidable absence all pupils will be made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils;
- The pupil and parent voice will be obtained and used to support pupils sustain good attendance;
- Adaptations to the environment, curriculum and timetable will be made if possible and where appropriate.

9.4. Leavers and children who cease to attend and elect to home educate (EHE)

- 9.4.1. Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from school. This must include the details of the new home address, new school the child is planning to attend or that they are exercising their right to educate their child otherwise.
- 9.4.2. If electing to educate otherwise, all education information will be passed to the Elective Home Education Officer, at Medway Council, who are responsible for monitoring all children who are educated otherwise. The school will notify the Elective Home Education team homeeducation@medway.gov.uk, when the parent

informs them of their intention to home educate, to enable sufficient time to liaise with parents/carers and ensure required paperwork is emailed to the LA.

9.5. Leavers and children who cease to attend without prior notice (CME) procedures

- 9.5.1. If after 5 days of continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will notify the local Authority and instigate an investigation into the whereabouts of the pupil including home visits (See section 6.5)
- 9.5.2. If after 10 days of continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority, Children Missing Education cme@medway.gov.uk in order to perform further checks that are not available to school.

10. Attendance Monitoring

10.1. Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level;
- Report attendance to the senior attendance champion every week and meet with them to discuss areas and pupils of concern;
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern;
- Engage with the Local Authority Targeted Support Meetings and Multi-Disciplinary Support.

10.1.1. Pupil-level absence data will be collected each day 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the Academy Committee and Academy Trust.

10.2. Analysing attendance

10.2.1. The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted or specialist support to these pupils and their families;
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence;
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends;
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

10.3. Using data to improve attendance

10.3.1. The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis;
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section 10.4 below);
- Provide regular attendance reports to [class teachers/form tutors], to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads);
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies;
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the trust, Medway Local Authority and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping partners informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.

10.4. Reducing persistent and severe absence

10.4.1. Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

10.4.2. The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence;
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or Local Authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, (or at risk) to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school;
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance;
 - Explain the help that is available;
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence;
 - Review any existing actions or interventions.
- Meetings will be offered with the attendance officer and pastoral support staff initially, before escalating to the attendance champion and other partners;
- Provide access wider specialist support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority where relevant;
- Share good practice across trust member schools and work together where siblings attend more than one of our trust schools;
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence including emotional based school avoidance and deploy the appropriate strategies to re-engage and reintegrate pupils;
- Implement sanctions, where necessary and when there is no engagement with support and interventions offered by the school (see section 7.2 above)

11. Policy review arrangements

- 11.1. This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Director of Education. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trust Board or their designated committee.

12. Useful information for parents and carers

- 12.1. Your child's school is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.
- 12.2. Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.
- 12.3. Medical evidence may be required and examples of this are:
- Hospital discharge letter;
 - Copy of your appointment card from your GP;
 - Copy of the prescription or copy of the medication label;
 - Note from your GP (parent can request list of appointments, from the practice manager free of charge);
 - Note from a pharmacist;
 - Note from any other health care professional (e.g. physiotherapist, consultant optician, podiatrist etc.
- 12.4. My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What shall I do?
- 12.4.1. Contact the Attendance Officer immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with schoolwork, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.
- 12.5. What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?
- 12.5.1. Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. If your child brings home a school diary each evening, please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it if required, ready for the next day. Be interested in what your child is doing in school,

chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

12.6. Early Help/Family Solutions

12.6.1. Early identification of needs and support required can prevent concerns escalating. Early Help (Medway Family Solutions) is a pathway to support you when things become complicated at home and this can impact on your child's attendance. Your views will be sought to create a plan focused on improving outcomes for you and your family. Plans should deliver evidence-based interventions using single agency or common assessment frameworks, and clear thresholds for specific agency intervention e.g. Social care, housing, mental health services. We see how early help can transform a child in school, not just what they are able to achieve academically, but how their personal, social, and emotional development can thrive with the right support. We are committed to Early Help because it is the right thing to do for our children to give them the best start in life.

12.7 For primary schools

12.7.1. For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

12.7.2. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued.

12.7.3. Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

12.8. At RMET, our schools are committed to supporting you overcome any barriers to attendance, so communicate any concerns as soon as possible.

13. Links with other policies

13.1. This policy links to the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy (RMET)
- Behaviour policies (SCHOOL)
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions policy (RMET)
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school policy (RMET)

Please also refer to each school's medicines procedures.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination

X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays

Appendix 2: RMET Secondary Schools

Registration and punctuality procedures

- Legally the register must be taken twice a day: once at the start of the school day and once during the afternoon session.
- The registers will remain open for 30 minutes at registration.
- AM registration is at 08:35 and PM registration is at 14:05.
- Students who arrive after 08:35 but before 09:05 must sign in at main school office and will be coded L. This counts as a present mark. They must collect a “L” late ticket and give it to their form tutor or lesson 1 teacher depending on arrival time.
- Students arriving after 09:05 must sign in at the main school office where they will be coded “U” meaning late after registers closed. This counts as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. They must collect a “U” late ticket and give to their lesson teacher.
- The school will use its behaviour system to deal with persistent lateness to registration.
- Unauthorised absences and a failure to improve may lead to the local authority issuing a penalty notice on behalf of the school per section 7.2 of this policy.

Appendix 3: RMET Primary Schools

Registration and punctuality procedures

- Legally the register must be taken twice a day: once at the start of the school day and once during the afternoon session.
- The registers will remain open for 30 minutes at AM registration.
- AM registration is 8.45am and PM registration is 1.00pm.
- Pupils arriving in school after 8.45am but before 9.15am must sign in at main school office and will be coded L. This counts as a present mark.
- Pupils arriving after 9.15am must sign in at the main school office where they will be coded “U” meaning late after registers closed. This counts as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.
- Unauthorised absences and a failure to improve may lead to the local authority issuing a penalty notice on behalf of the school per section 7.2 of this policy.