

Attendance Policy

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Version History

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Purpose

A core belief at Red Balloon of the Air (RBAir) is that engagement is vital for the social, emotional and academic development of our learners. However, learners at RBAir may face significant barriers to attendance due to a range of issues regarding their mental health, previous school-based trauma, and diagnosed conditions and clinical needs. RBAir adopts a 'non-punitive approach' to engagement and attendance and is committed to working collaboratively with families, staff and external agencies to support every young person in re-engaging with education at a pace that is right for them.

RBAir aims to:

- encourage and support engagement and attendance for all learners;
- identify barriers to engagement and attendance early and respond proactively;
- foster a supportive and non-punitive approach to absence;
- work in partnership with families and professionals to develop individualised attendance and re-engagement strategies.

Scope

This policy outlines how attendance is monitored and managed at RBAir. The blended nature of the provision means that attendance procedures are designed to reflect the specific needs of RBAir.

1. Legal framework

This policy is based on the DfE's statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) and [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- The [Equality Act 2010](#)

This policy works in conjunction with the RBAir's Attendance Strategy.

2. Roles and responsibilities

Head of Centre	• Overall responsibility for safeguarding and learner welfare
Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Lead	• Strategic oversight of attendance, analysis of attendance data, coordination of support and liaison with local authorities and commissioners • Liaison with Local Authority Attendance Teams • Attendance data analysis • Implementation of Behaviour Support Plans
Teachers and Link Mentors	• Daily contact with learners, report concerns promptly
Parents and Carers	• Inform RBAir of absence, work with RBAir to overcome barriers

3. Admissions and attendance

The Head of Centre will ensure that RBAir has clear practice guidelines for encouraging attendance, including a response to absence (Please see RBAir's Attendance Strategy, which is updated yearly). A designated administrator will ensure that admission and attendance registers are maintained in accordance with this policy.

RBAir uses the MIS system 'Arbor'. Individual absence data is drawn from the attendance function on a weekly basis and is monitored by SLT. Absence also forms part of our Pastoral Review process and the inclusion of a 'purple' RAG rated judgement is applied to those young people causing concern.

As our learners have extremely complex social and emotional needs and have been out of school persistently for periods of time usually for many months, sometimes years, RBAir maintains a highly dynamic and personalised approach to absence. While national benchmarking data is relevant for comparison, our learners' fluctuating mental health is balanced alongside holistic progress, rather than using blunt attendance data to determine overall engagement.

The Attendance Strategy, to be read in conjunction with this policy, outlines our non-punitive approach and how our attendance data forms part of the picture of progress for any learner.

Therefore, the definitions used by RBAir for the benefit of analysis reflect that approach as follows:

Learners with attendance at or above 90%	Learners with attendance between 75% and 89%	Learners with attendance less than 75%	Learners causing concern with persistently low attendance

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

RBAir 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 (2026);
- hold regular meetings with parents/carers and learners;
- understand and work towards reducing identified barriers to attendance;
- explain the help that is available;
- review any existing actions or interventions.

Admission and Attendance Registers

RBAir will maintain up-to-date, accurate admission and attendance registers. All attendance is tracked and monitored through our MIS system, Arbor.

The Admission Register

The admission register contains the personal details of every learner along with the date of admission or re-admission.

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/re-admission;

- name and address of all parent(s)/carer(s) 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 learner and date learner began to reside there;
- full name of parent(s)/ carer(s) the learner lives with;
- name and address of last school attended;
- emergency contact details of parent(s)/carer(s);
- name of destination school;
- start date at new school;
- any necessary information concerning communication with parent(s)/carer(s) (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 (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/carers notifies RBAir that a learner will live at another address, RBAir will, in accordance with the requirements of statutory guidance (Children Missing Education – Statutory Guidelines for Local Authorities, DfE August 2024), record in the admission register:

- the full name of the parent(s)/carer(s) 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 (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.

4. Monitoring attendance at live sessions

RBAir staff seek to provide a supportive, nurturing environment, and all staff help learners make positive informed decisions about their education and their life in general. Whilst 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, RBAir will ensure that learners and parent(s)/carer(s) 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.

Weekly monitoring of overall absence rates will be the responsibility of a nominated member of SLT. This will involve checking individual absence rates, overall patterns of absence and any circumstances surrounding those absences. Appropriate support systems will be activated to encourage improved attendance levels when necessary. These would include:

- checking with the learner's Link Mentor to establish reasons behind the absence;
- exploring strategies which could/have been put in place by the Link Mentor;
- SLT contact with parent(s)/carer(s) where appropriate;
- escalation to emergency review of the appropriateness of the provision.

The Attendance Lead will routinely analyse:

- attendance trends;
- persistent absence;
- severe absence;
- attendance by vulnerable groups;
- attendance linked to SEND;
- attendance linked to mental health barriers;
- attendance following reintegration plans.

In any case where there is prolonged unauthorised absence, RBAir will always ensure that commissioners and appropriate local authority staff are notified and will work with them to attempt to re-engage the learner in accordance with any local agreements that have been reached.

5. Guidance concerning marking the attendance register

Recording live attendance

- Registers must be completed by all staff within ten minutes of a session opening. If a learner is not present and no advance information is available, a learner will be marked 'N'.

- Admin staff will check registers after ten minutes. A phone call will be made home for

/ \	Present / = morning session \ = afternoon session
N	Not present
L	Record number of minutes
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
M	Leave of absence for attending a medical or dental appointment
S	Study Leave
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
I	*Illness – not medical or dental appointment
K	Used by schools if a YP is on roll and attends an Alternative Education Provision
Y7	An unavoidable cause, that is not covered by one of the other ‘unable to attend’ codes detailed above, is preventing the pupil from attending the school. This code should be used only where something in the nature of an emergency has prevented the pupil from attending the session in question

any learner marked as ‘N’.

- Registers will be updated with any new information.
- Admin staff will notify a DSL should there be any concerns for the welfare of the learner.

If teaching staff do not enter a mark in the register after the ten-minute period, RBAir's Admin Team will contact the head of that department or a member of SLT.

Attendance Codes

Attendance codes will be used in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and current DfE guidance. Staff will use codes as directed within Arbor and associated attendance procedures.

Further explanation of Code I

***Code I:** Illness (not medical or dental appointment). This code should be used if:

- the learner is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related). Educational provisions should advise parents/carers to notify them on the first day their child is unable to attend due to illness.

DFE guidance for Non-attendance Described as Illness

- RBAir does not routinely request that parents/carers provide medical evidence to support illness absences. RBAir would only request reasonable medical evidence in cases where clarification is needed to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that Code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the learner is not present in the session in question.
- In most cases, a parent's/carers' notification that their child is too ill to attend will be sufficient and can be accepted without question or concern. Only where RBAir has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence.
- Where medical evidence is deemed necessary, RBAir will not be rigid about the form of evidence requested and should speak to the family about what evidence is available. RBAir will be mindful that requesting additional medical evidence unnecessarily places pressure on health professionals, their staff and their appointment system, particularly if the illness is one that does not require treatment by a health professional.

6. Attendance and Learners with SEND, EBSA and Mental Health Needs

RBAir recognises that attendance difficulties may be related to anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance, trauma, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, or unmet special educational needs. Attendance support will focus on reducing barriers and building engagement over time (please refer to RBAir's Attendance Strategy).

Strategies for support include:

- gradual reintegration plans;
- part-time timetables where lawfully agreed;
- SEND support plans;
- Negotiation of RBAir/commissioner-agreed attendance targets.

7. Governance

The RBAir Advisory Board regards attendance and attendance policy as a core evaluative area which informs leadership priorities in terms of culture and safeguarding. The Advisory Board will:

- receive attendance reports;
- monitor attendance trends;
- challenge leaders on attendance performance;
- ensure statutory attendance duties are met.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the RBAir Advisory Board.