



ROYAL  
BALLET  
SCHOOL

SETTING THE STANDARD

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## SEPTEMBER 2024



## ATTENDANCE POLICY

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### Aims of Policy

The Royal Ballet School (the School) aspires to high levels of attendance from all students. Good attendance is essential for all students to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances. The aims of this policy are:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance;
- to ensure, so far as possible, that every student in the School is able to benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the School;
- to prioritise and, where possible, improve attendance and punctuality across the School, reduce absence and set out the School's approach to the management of absence / non-attendance;
- to recognise the links between attendance / absence and student wellbeing, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding;
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection.

### Scope and application

This policy applies to the whole School and is designed to address the specific statutory obligations on the School to record attendance and absence.

### Regulatory framework

This policy has been prepared to meet the School's responsibilities under:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
- National minimum standards for boarding schools (Department for Education (DfE), September 2022);
- Education and Skills Act 2008;
- Children Act 1989;
- Sponsorship Duties (UKVI, July 2023);
- The School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024;
- Equality Act 2010;
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024);
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (DfE, August 2024);
- Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance (DfE, September 2023);
- Guidance for parents on school attendance (Office of the Children's Commissioner, September 2023);
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance (NHS, April 2024);
- Keeping children safe in education (DfE, September 2024);
- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures (DfE, May 2020);

- Children missing education (DfE, September 2016);
- Supporting students with medical conditions at school (DfE, August 2017);
- Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE, February 2024);
- Mental health and behaviour in schools (DfE, November 2018);
- Mental health issues affecting a student's attendance: guidance for schools (DfE, February 2023);
- Support for students where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (DfE, February 2023);
- Remote education guidance (DfE, updated February 2023);
- SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 years (DfE and Department of Health, May 2015).

The following School policies, procedures and resource materials are relevant to this policy:

- Safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures;
- Missing student policy and procedures;
- Special Educational Needs policy;
- Accessibility plan;
- Behaviour policy;
- Parent Contract;

### **Publication and availability**

This policy is published on the School website and is available in hard copy on request.

### **Definitions and interpretation**

Where the following words or phrases are used in this policy:

- references to attendance include attendance for all or part of the timetabled school day.
- references to a Parent means:
  1. all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
  2. any person who has parental responsibility for a student; and
  3. any person who has day to day responsibility for a student (i.e. lives with and looks after a student).
- references to a student includes anyone who is receiving an education at the school except a person who is over 19 or for whom further education is being provided, or a person for whom part-time education suitable for people over compulsory school age is being provided.
- SAC means the School's Attendance Champion.

## Responsibility statement and allocation of tasks

The Board of Governors (Governors) has overall responsibility for all matters which are the subject of this policy. The Governors recognises that improving attendance is a School leadership issue and has appointed a designated senior leader to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in School, referred to in this policy as the SAC. This person is Jill Tait-Harris, Assistant Principal Pastoral & Welfare. To ensure the efficient discharge of its responsibilities under this policy, the Governors have allocated the following tasks:

Task	Allocated to	When / frequency of review
Keeping the policy up to date and compliant with the law and best practice	SAC/DSL	As required, and at least annually
Monitoring the implementation of the policy	SAC	As required, and at least annually
Seeking input from interested groups (such as students, staff, parents) to consider improvements to the School's processes under the policy	SAC	As required, and at least annually
Formal annual review	Governors	Annually

## The importance of good attendance

The School recognises the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the School's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;
- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, SEN support, supporting students with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students;
- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students and communicating these regularly and effectively to students and parents;
- that attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies;
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

## **School responsibilities**

The School acknowledges that attendance is the essential foundation to securing positive outcomes for all students and that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage and improve attendance across the School community. The School will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every student and consistently communicating those expectations to students and parents.

Where there are challenges to attendance, the School will work effectively and respectfully with students, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them. The School will respond to non-attendance and / or lateness proactively, firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, its safeguarding and behaviour policies and the School's terms and conditions. It will act in a proportionate and targeted way in response to data or intelligence and ensure intervention is regularly reviewed.

The School will have robust systems in place to track and record attendance, reasons for absence and patterns at an individual level and by cohorts or groups in order to identify students at risk of non-attendance and those who are persistently absent and it will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early intervention to address issues.

## **Staff responsibilities**

The SAC

The Governors have appointed a senior member of staff of the School's leadership team as SAC to have overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Details of the individual appointed are at the front of this policy. The SAC's responsibilities are:

- to set a clear vision for improving attendance in school;
- to establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure the systems are followed by all staff;
- to regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes;
- to have oversight of and analyse attendance data; and
- to communicate clear messages on the importance of attendance to students and parents.

## **Staff with specific responsibilities for attendance**

The Attendance Officer has day to day responsibility for monitoring and promoting good attendance and punctuality. They should:

- have a formal routine for registers being taken accurately each morning and afternoon;
- seek explanations of absences required from students on their return to School;
- make enquiries about unexplained absences, including those within the school day, and follow up with students to ensure that an explanation has been formally given to the School;
- look out for trends or patterns in a student's attendance and inform the SAC of any specific concerns;
- deal with lateness to lessons consistently and promptly;
- consider appropriate sanctions for students who arrive late to a lesson in line with the School's behaviour and discipline policies;

- discuss non-attendance and / or lateness with students and parents (where possible) and emphasise the importance of punctuality and attendance.

### **All staff**

The School ensures that all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with students and parents about it. Appropriate training and professional development are provided for staff consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

### **School arrangements**

The School will accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. These registers are kept electronically. Contact details of relevant staff can be found at the front of the policy and other details about the School's arrangements can be found in Appendices 1-3.

### **Monitoring attendance**

The School will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to students or student cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the School and develop strategies to address them. Such analysis may include:

- monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends and provide support in a targeted way to students and families;
- using this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with students and to leaders (including the head of learning support and DSL);
- conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends;
- benchmarking attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level to identify areas of focus for improvement;
- devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- monitoring the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented;
- providing data and reports to the Proprietor to support its work.

### **Student responsibilities**

School attendance is important to student attainment, wellbeing and development. The School therefore has high expectations of students as to their attendance and has systems in place to reward good attendance and manage poor attendance. Students should be aware that:

- they are expected to be present in-person for the duration of each School day;
- they are expected to arrive on time and attend all timetabled lessons;
- they should not leave a lesson or the School site without permission or otherwise in accordance with School rules;
- they should engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance as set out in this policy;
- any unexplained absence will be followed up;
- persistent lateness or non-attendance will result in action being taken by the School.

This may take the form of:

1. offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance;

2. communication with parents;
3. reporting to other agencies such as children's social care;
4. sanctions against them or their parents in line with the School's behaviour policies.

If students are having difficulties that might discourage or prevent them from attending School or specific lessons regularly, they may speak to any member of staff, although the School encourages them to speak to their houseparent or those staff identified in Appendix 1 in the first instance. Students are entitled to expect this information to be managed sensitively.

### **Additional needs**

The School recognises some students may find it harder than others to attend School and will work with those students and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. The School will make reasonable adjustments where a student has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with students without a disability, in relation to school attendance. It will also work with parents, and where appropriate with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with special educational needs and disabilities e.g. ensuring the provision outlined in a student's education, health and care plan is accessed. Suitable strategies will also be considered for students with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.

Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and students to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help. The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a student is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the student will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the student's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

### **Parent / carer responsibilities**

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education. This means students must attend every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the School.

The School will help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development and provide clarity on the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance. Expectations the School places on parents can be found in Appendix 1 of this policy

Parents are bound by the terms relating to conduct and attendance in the parent contract and failure to ensure a child's attendance or engage with the School about it could amount to a breach of contract or a finding that the parent is treating the School unreasonably.



## Training

Staff: The School ensures that regular guidance and training on attendance is arranged on induction and at regular intervals thereafter so that staff and volunteers understand what is expected of them by this policy and have the necessary knowledge and skills to carry out their roles. As a minimum this will include all staff understanding:

- the importance of good attendance and that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances;
- the School's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up and improving attendance.

Dedicated attendance training is provided to any member of staff with a specified attendance function in their role, including administrative, pastoral or family support staff and senior leaders. This should include:

- the law and requirements of schools including on the keeping of registers;
- the process for working with other partners to provide more intensive support to students who need it;
- the necessary skills to interpret and analyse attendance data;
- any additional training that would be beneficial to support students and student cohorts overcome commonly seen barriers to attendance.

The School maintains written records of all staff training.

## Information sharing

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education. The School, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a student (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familial harms). Where appropriate the schools will attend regular targeting support meetings.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes information concerning students who leave the School prior to their normal school leaving age.

The law allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the School's registers.

The School must provide specific student information on request to the Secretary of State.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a student's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.



## **Record keeping and confidentiality**

All records created in accordance with this policy are managed in accordance with the School's policies that apply to the retention and destruction of records. The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The School has published privacy notices on its website which explain how the School will use personal data.

## **Appendix 1 School arrangements**

### **Managing attendance**

The School monitors, records and shares data about student attendance and as part of its duty to safeguard and protect students and promote attendance. It accurately completes admission and attendance registers as required by law and set out in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 respectively. The admission and attendance registers must be kept electronically and retained by the School for the relevant time period as stated by law. The School expects all students to be present at School for the whole of the School day, which is from morning registration until the end of the last lesson. This period may be extended, for example for rehearsals, performances or school trips.

### **The role of parents / carers**

The School expects all Parents to make any application for an authorised leave of absence at the earliest opportunity and notify the School of any absence or delay as soon as reasonably possible in accordance with this policy and when doing so, give an accurate explanation for this. Parents are expected to cooperate with the School to explore possible barriers to attendance and to improve it where attendance has been raised as an issue.

Students are expected to return from exeats, half-terms and holidays at the times stated in the School Diary. Suitable travel arrangements must be made for the end of term to accommodate timely departures and arrivals and these must be communicated with houseparents. If an early departure is required then a request must be made in writing to the Academic & Pastoral Principal. If a student is unable to travel home at the end of term, Parents must ensure that a suitable guardian is in place to care for them. The School sends parents the term dates well in advance in order that holidays can be arranged without disrupting their child's education. It is the School's policy not to allow holiday to be taken during the school term unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Academic & Pastoral Principal.

### **Reporting absence**

If a day student is unwell and will be absent from school, or if they are going to be late for any reason, parents should ring Front of House as soon as possible on 0208 392 8440. If your child's illness lasts for more than one day, parents should contact Front of House on every consecutive day of illness. Dental or medical appointments should be made during School holidays except in cases of emergency.

Apart from illness, no student should be away from School without prior permission. An authorised absence means that the School has either given approval in advance for a student to be away (granted an authorised leave of absence) or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence. The School will consider each application for an authorised leave of absence individually, considering the specific facts and circumstances, the student's past attendance record and the relevant background context behind the request.

If you wish to request an authorised absence from school and this involves missing academic or vocational lessons, Parents should email the request directly to the Academic & Pastoral Principal. The Academic & Pastoral Principal will then consider the request. Please note that no other member of staff is able to give permission for absence from lessons. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Academic & Pastoral Principal to determine the length of time the student is permitted to be away from School. It will be recorded as an authorised absence. See section 3 of Appendix 3 for more details.

A leave of absence will usually be authorised for religious observance if the day concerned is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which parents and students belong. Parents are expected to make a request for this type of leave of absence in advance.

Parents wishing to request a weekend or evening absence (boarding students only) should contact their child's Senior Houseparent giving at least five days' notice so that any necessary arrangements can be made and relevant staff notified.

It is the School's policy that permission is not given for students to be absent from lessons in order to attend social events. It is expected that such events are planned for chosen weekends, exeats, half-terms and holidays. Such requests will not be approved but if you do decide to remove your child in order to attend such an event, please inform the Principal as the School has a duty of care to know the whereabouts of all students at all times. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will appear as such on school reports. There are some extraordinary circumstances or occasions for which permission would be given but these would be individually addressed.

KCSIE states that children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. The school is alert to the fact that persistently absent students and children missing education are possible indicators of such abuse and identifying persistently absent students can help prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. The Principal, in conjunction with the DSL and the Attendance Officer, will monitor unauthorised absence, particularly where children are persistently absent or go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day to help identify such abuse and also prevent the risk of them going missing in the future. The school is mindful of the DfE guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' in working with the local authority children's services where school absence indicates safeguarding concerns.

Absence will be recorded on the Attendance Register as set out in Appendix 3. Registration and attendance checks

All day students are required to register with at Front of House between 07.45-08.00am. The school day ends for day students after their last lesson and once their school commitments are over. If a day student is ill, parents should e-mail or telephone Front of House by 8.00am.

All boarding students are registered by their houseparent every morning and any absences are logged on the School's electronic registration system by 8.30am.

All boarding and day students are registered at lunchtime. Any absence during the normal school day is entered onto the School's electronic registration system with the relevant details.

Registers will also be called at the beginning of each lesson in order to identify and follow-up on absences from lessons that might occur after morning or afternoon registration.

All boarders are also registered at 7.00pm and again at bedtime.

### **Reporting duties**

The School has statutory reporting obligations if a student fails to regularly attend and their absence is unauthorised. The School must report unauthorised absences for a continuous period of 10 days or more to the local authority.

In the event that a student holding a Student or Child Student visa sponsored by the School under the Points Based System goes missing, the School will report to UKVI if the student misses ten consecutive expected contact points. Each time the School's attendance register is completed it is treated as a contact point for these purposes.

The report will be made by the School's Level 1 user via the Sponsor Management and in accordance with prevailing UKVI guidance

Action will also be taken in accordance with the missing student policy and safeguarding and child protection policy if any absence of a student from the School gives rise to a concern about their welfare.

## Appendix 2 Admission register

In accordance with the requirements of the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the School will:

- maintain an admission register of all students (of both compulsory and non-compulsory school age) admitted to the School (also known as the school roll);
- inform the local authority of any student who is going to be added to or deleted from the School's admission register at non-standard transition points.

The admission register must be kept electronically and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

The School must ensure that every entry in the School's admission register is preserved for six years beginning with the day on which the entry was made; and every back-up copy of the register is preserved for six years after the end of the school year that it relates to.

The admissions register contains specific personal details of every student in the School, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attended, and whether each student of compulsory school age is a boarder or day student.

A student's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. When any of the situations set out in regulation 9 occurs, the student's name must be deleted.

Where the School notifies the local authority that the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register, the School must provide it with the following information:

- the full name of the student;
- the address of the student;
- the full name and address of any parent the student normally lives with;
- at least one telephone number of any parent with whom the student lives or can be contacted in an emergency;
- the student's future address, 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, if applicable;
- the name of the student's other or future school and student's start date or expected start date there, if applicable;
- the ground (prescribed in regulation 9) under which the student's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

### **Appendix 3 Attendance register**

The School records and monitors the attendance of all students (both of compulsory and non-compulsory school age) including boarders in accordance with the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024.

The School uses the appropriate national attendance and absence codes system to enable it to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with regulation 10 of the Attendance Regulations.

The attendance register is kept electronically, and a back-up copy of the register is made at least once a month in the form of an electronic or printed copy.

The School will also use these records to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) and work with students and parents to resolve any issues before they become entrenched.

The School is required by law to take attendance registers twice daily - once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion it will be recorded whether every student is:

- physically present in school when the attendance register begins to be taken; or
- absent from the school when the attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended; or
- attending a place other than the school; or
- absent.

The circumstances in which a student may be recorded as attending a place, other than the school, can include:

- attending educational provision arranged by a local authority;
- for an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff;
- attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity;
- attending an approved educational activity that is work experience provided under arrangements made by the school as part of the student's education;
- attending a place for any other approved educational activity.

### **Recording absence**

Absence will be recorded in accordance with the national absence codes set out in regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) (Regulations) 2024 and statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance relating to:

- leaves of absence;
- other authorised reasons;
- unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause;
- unauthorised absence.

## Remote education

The School is required to record all absence from in-person lessons. The School may, in limited circumstances, provide remote education to enable students, who are well enough to learn but unable to attend the School site, to keep pace with their education. In the limited circumstances when the School decides to use remote education for individual students when they are absent, the following will be considered:

- ensuring mutual agreement of remote education by the School, parents or carers, potentially students, and if appropriate a relevant medical professional. If the student has an Education, Health and Care plan or has a social worker, the local authority should also be involved in the decision;
- if remote education is being used as part of a plan to reintegrate back to school, putting a formal arrangement in place to review its efficacy regularly, alongside identifying what other support and flexibilities can be put in place to help ease the student back to school at the earliest opportunity;
- setting a time limit within which the period of remote education provision should be reviewed, with the aim that the student returns to in person education with the required support in place to meet their needs.

Students who are absent from school and receiving remote education still need to be recorded as absent using the most appropriate absence code. The School will keep a record of, and monitor student's engagement with, remote education, but this is not formally tracked in the attendance register. Where appropriate, this information may be used to make plans for a student's reintegration to school.

The School will utilise a digital education platform that will be kept up-to-date and keep students safe. Staff will remain trained and confident in its use.

## Unauthorised absence

The "unauthorised absence" code will be used when prior permission for absence has not been given and where the School is not satisfied with the explanation given for absence or delayed attendance meaning that the code for "unable to attend due to an exceptional circumstance" is not appropriate. Examples include:

- holiday has not been authorised by the School or is in excess of the period determined by the Academic & Pastoral Principal
- the reason for absence has not been provided;
- a student is absent from school without authorisation;
- a student has arrived in school after registration has closed and without reasonable explanation.