



Rainbow Education Multi Academy Trust

Townfield Primary School

Policy number: 16

**Attendance & Punctuality
COVID-19 Supplemental Policy**



The purpose of this document is not replace our existing **Attendance Policy**, which can be found on each of our school websites, but to outline our attendance procedures and clarify our expectations for the period of school re-opening from September 2020 until matters are reviewed in January 2021.

In March 2020 when the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, the Government made amendments to the legislation which meant, parents would not be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school.

It is now vital for **all children** to return to school to minimise the long-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

School Attendance will be compulsory from the beginning of the autumn term in September 2020.

Your child will be welcomed back into school and the usual rules on **School Attendance** will apply:

- It is the duty of the parent to ensure that their child (when of compulsory school age) attends school regularly.
- Parents are expected to inform the school of any absence on the first day and then provide updates on a regular basis.
- It is the responsibility of the school to monitor attendance daily, record and follow up all absences.
- The availability of the local authority (Education Welfare Service) to issue sanctions relating to unauthorised absence from school will now continue.
- It is at the discretion of the school to authorise any absence.

Who cannot attend school?

There are now only three situations relating to COVID-19 in which pupils cannot attend school:

- **pupils who have COVID-19 symptoms;**
- **pupils who live in the same household as someone who has COVID-19 symptoms;**
- **pupils who have been identified as a close or direct contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.**

Where this is the case, please refer to the NHS testing website and inform the school immediately.

If someone in your household is extremely clinically vulnerable, the school will discuss individual cases with parents as necessary. We understand that there are situations where vulnerable family members need to be especially cautious and we will endeavour to provide support and reassurance in order to allow the pupils to return to full time education.



Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating

We now know much more about Coronavirus (COVID-19), so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. However:

- A small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has Coronavirus (COVID-19);
- Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- If you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you should have received a letter confirming this or have been told directly by your GP or hospital clinician.
- Where you and your child have been delayed in returning to the UK or travelling abroad and have been told to remain at home, you should not attend school during the period of quarantine. Please discuss such circumstances with the school and provide documentary evidence in support of the absence. School will consider the circumstances of the trip/time abroad to inform our decision to authorise absence or not. Please check current government advice on travel corridors.
- If rates of the virus rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high. Therefore, they may be temporarily absent.
- Some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school. You can find more advice from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health ('COVID-19 Shielding Guidance for Children and Young People').
- Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer access to education at home resources. We will monitor engagement with this activity to ensure learning is being accessed appropriately. This may also apply to some pupils with Education Health Care Plans.

Where pupils are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised. In this instance medical evidence will be required.

All other pupils must attend school.

Pupils of compulsory school age must be in school unless a statutory reason applies and the absence has been **authorised**. For example:

- the pupil has been granted a leave of absence;
- the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness;
- the pupil is absent for a necessary religious observance etc.



We understand that some pupils, parents and households may be reluctant or anxious about returning to school. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from Coronavirus (COVID-19), including those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds or who have certain conditions. This may also include some pupils with EHCP plans.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, they should discuss these concerns with the school so that we can understand each situation and provide reassurance concerning the measures we have in place to reduce the risk in school. The school may contact the SEND and School Nursing Teams for advice and support, and we may require medical verification or other relevant documentation in order to assess risk.

Punctuality

One of the measures that REMAT schools have implemented to reduce large gatherings of pupils and parents is to stagger the start and finish times in order to keep 'bubbles' apart as they arrive and leave school. As part of our risk assessment, this is constantly monitored and changes made if necessary. Members of the school staff will be on duty to help ensure safety measures are being adhered to and parents will be informed of any changes. Staggered start and finish times will not reduce the amount of overall teaching time each child receives. Please ensure your child arrives on time and is collected on time in order to minimise disruption in line with the school's Coronavirus risk management.

Please contact the school if you are experiencing difficulties. If lateness persists, the school will want to discuss this with you and agree some support measures; if matters do not improve, the lateness will **not be authorised** and the matter may be referred to the local authority Education Welfare Service.

Please refer to our 'drop off and collection' arrangements and be aware that the gathering of parents at the school gates and on the school yard is not allowed at this time. Please also note that no visitors will be allowed into school without a prior appointment.

Absence Procedures

Parents and carers should notify the school as normal if their child is unable to attend on any given day. You must update the school regularly regarding any ongoing absence.

Where a child is not regularly attending school, we will discuss this with you to understand what the difficulties are and agree some supportive measures to improve matters as early as possible. Normal absence procedures will be followed (please refer to our main Attendance Policy - this can be found on our school blog).

Where the school's efforts do not result in an improvement in attendance or punctuality, and if there is no valid reason for the child to be absent, we will refer to the local authority Education Welfare Service for additional support, advice and statutory intervention.

The decision to authorise absences is at the discretion of the school and not of the parents/carers. Each absence will be considered before a mark is given depending on the circumstances.

Procedures for COVID-19 Related Absence

The main difficulty that parents and schools face during this time is that the symptoms of Coronavirus are very similar to those of a common cold or flu, which is increasingly prevalent during the autumn term.

We understand that parents will be very cautious at this time, but in order to limit the amount of unnecessary days off school, it is imperative that parents access medical support as soon as possible and remain in contact with the school.

If a parent reports a pupil absence due to COVID-19 symptoms, they should stay at home, be advised to get a test immediately and engage with the NHS test and trace process. Tests can be booked online through the NHS testing and tracing for coronavirus website or ordered by telephone via NHS 119 for those without access to the internet.

Parents must inform school immediately of the results of a test.

- If a pupil tests negative, they should return to school the following day if they are well.
- If the child tests positive they should follow the 'stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection' and must continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms and then return to school only if they do not have symptoms other than cough or loss of sense of smell/taste. (This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone) The 10-day period starts from the day when they first became ill. If they still have a high temperature, they should keep self-isolating until their temperature returns to normal.
- **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. If a positive result is confirmed the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.
- Any siblings in the same household should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days.
- If a pupil tests positive but has no symptoms for COVID-19 they must self-isolate for 10 days, starting from the day the test was taken.
- If they develop symptoms during this isolation period, **they must restart** their 10-day isolation from the day they develop symptoms.

*Note to school staff: **Code X** should be used for the period of self-isolation until the outcome of the test is known. Once a positive result is confirmed, the pupil should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.*

- After 10 days, if the pupil still has a temperature above 37.8 C, they should continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice. The pupil does not need to self-isolate after 10 days if they only have a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste, as these symptoms can last for several weeks after the infection has gone.
*Note to school staff: **Code I** should be used.*
- In certain cases, all pupils and staff in a 'bubble' may be sent home and asked to self-isolate for 14 days. *Note to school staff: **Code X** should be used for all pupils who have been asked to self-isolate. The coding should be updated to **I** if any of the pupils subsequently develop symptoms and test positive for COVID-19.*

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

As usual, parents should plan their holidays as part of school holidays, not in term time.

Note to school staff: Code X should be used if a pupil is required to quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK.

From September, the normal rules will apply during the period of absence relating to the holiday dates. We will not authorise holidays during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is at the discretion of the headteacher, and all requests must be submitted in writing before the pupil is withdrawn.

Please refer to our main policy for guidance regarding holidays taken during term time.

Referrals to the Education Welfare Service

- All unauthorised absence is reported to the Education Welfare Service so the local authority can offer additional advice and support to parents as necessary. Where unauthorised absence is persistent, sanctions may be imposed to include warnings, penalty notices, prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.
- Where a child or family is away from home including abroad, and unable to return home, parents are expected to provide the school with detailed information as to the whereabouts, reasons for travel and estimated return dates. Where the school is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence will not be authorised, and this could result in the local authority issuing a Penalty Notice (please refer to our main Attendance Policy)
- Leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**, at the discretion of the headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body. **Holidays in term time are not viewed as exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to time off during term time.**
- Where the school and the Education Welfare Service have failed to locate the child/family within 20 school days, the child will be referred to the **Local authority**



Children Missing Education Pupil Tracking Officer (CME officer) who will undertake additional checks with other agencies to locate them, including consultation with social care, the police, health and housing. Where these enquiries do not lead to confirmation of the child's whereabouts, the matter will remain open to that service who will widen their enquiries. In these circumstances, the school cannot guarantee to keep a school place open for your child.

Safeguarding

The safety and wellbeing of our pupils is our primary concern. If at any time the school becomes concerned for a child's safety or welfare from any year group, we will consult with the relevant agencies and follow the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.