

Attendance Policy

The Rushmere Academy



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POLCY SCOPE

Rushmere believes that regular and punctual attendance is essential to learners' academic achievement, personal well-being, and ongoing social development. Consistent attendance enables learners to fully engage in educational opportunities, build positive relationships, and reach their full potential.

This policy is based on the understanding that many learners at Rushmere may be vulnerable. It is therefore important to establish the whereabouts of any learner who is absent or arrives late, to ensure their safety and well-being, and to identify any underlying factors that may be contributing to persistent or prolonged absence. By identifying concerns at an early stage, Rushmere can provide appropriate support and work collaboratively with learners, families, and relevant agencies to promote positive attendance.

What Rushmere Will Do

Rushmere is committed to promoting positive attendance, punctuality, and engagement for all learners. We recognise that good attendance is essential for learning, wellbeing, and successful reintegration into education. We will work collaboratively with learners, parents/carers, home schools, and relevant professionals to identify and address barriers to attendance.

Rushmere will:

- Maintain accurate attendance and punctuality records for all learners.
- Record all late arrivals and monitor patterns of lateness.
- Encourage learners to attend on their agreed days and arrive at the expected times.
- Contact parents/carers when a learner fails to arrive as expected and establish the reason for absence. Where appropriate, communication will also take place with the home school or relevant professionals.
- Report learner absences to the home school by email on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable, including reasons for absence where known.
- Treat any learner leaving the site without permission as an unauthorised absence. Where a learner leaves the site for an agreed reason, this will only be recorded as authorised where parents/carers have provided a valid reason. In some circumstances, Rushmere staff may support a learner by taking them home safely.
- Consider appropriate actions following a period of absence based on the individual needs of the learner and the circumstances contributing to their absence.
- Report prolonged or unexplained absences to the home school, EIPT, and/or SASS. Where no appropriate reason for absence is provided, further action may be considered, including a referral to MASH where there are concerns regarding a learner being missing from education.
- Report any learner who has not been seen at Rushmere, their home school, or by SASS for 10 consecutive days. A home visit may be undertaken by the relevant service to establish the learner's circumstances. In some cases, the learner's placement at Rushmere may be reviewed.
- Support learners returning after a period of absence by meeting with them to understand the reasons for absence, where this has not already been established, and identify any support required.
- Monitor attendance closely when a learner's attendance falls below 60%. A formal letter will be sent to parents/carers, and attendance will be reviewed over a four-week period with the aim of securing improvement.
- Arrange a meeting with the learner, parents/carers, and home school if attendance does not improve. Attendance targets and agreed actions will be established, and a parent/carer agreement may be implemented where appropriate.
- Seek additional support from SASS and/or the home school if attendance remains below expectations.
- Provide attendance information to the home school, who may use Rushmere attendance data as part of their own attendance procedures, including consideration of penalty notices where applicable.
- Address persistent lateness by working with the learner to establish clear expectations and boundaries, while minimising disruption to learning and the wider learner community.
- Reserve the right to refuse entry to learners whose persistent lateness prevents them from accessing provision safely and effectively.
- Work with the home school and relevant professionals where attendance does not improve, which may include reviewing or withdrawing the Rushmere placement.

What Parents and Carers Should Do to Support Attendance

Parents and carers play a vital role in supporting regular attendance and helping learners develop positive routines and attitudes towards education. Rushmere recognises that there may be times when learners

experience barriers to attendance; however, parents and carers are expected to work openly and collaboratively with the school to address these concerns.

Parents and carers should:

- Encourage and support their child to attend Rushmere on all agreed days and arrive on time.
- Establish consistent routines that support good attendance, including appropriate sleep routines, preparation for the school day, and readiness to attend.
- Communicate openly with Rushmere and provide honest information regarding any absence or difficulties affecting attendance.
- Inform Rushmere by telephone or text message by **9:00am** on the first day of absence if their child is unable to attend, providing a clear reason for the absence.
- Provide updates where an absence continues and work with Rushmere and the home school to support a timely return to education.
- Avoid providing misleading information or making false statements to explain a child's absence. Parents and carers should not excuse or conceal non-attendance, as this can prevent the right support being identified and may negatively impact the learner's education and wellbeing.
- Engage with meetings, reviews, and support plans where attendance concerns are identified.
- Work alongside Rushmere, the home school, and other professionals to identify and reduce barriers to attendance.

Rushmere understands that some learners may experience anxiety, emotional difficulties, or other barriers that make attendance challenging. Parents and carers are encouraged to share concerns early so that appropriate support can be put in place. Working together, we can help learners build confidence, maintain engagement, and achieve positive outcomes through regular attendance.

Supporting Learners Experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Rushmere is committed to recognising and supporting learners who may be experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) through a compassionate, trauma-informed approach. We understand that difficulties with attendance are often a response to anxiety, emotional distress, adverse experiences, unmet needs, or other barriers, rather than a refusal or lack of willingness to engage with education.

All staff are expected to recognise the early indicators of EBSA, including changes in attendance patterns, increased lateness, heightened emotional responses, avoidance of school activities, changes in behaviour, or withdrawal from usual routines and relationships. Staff will seek to understand the underlying reasons behind these behaviours and respond with empathy, consistency, and appropriate support.

Where concerns are identified, the school will work collaboratively with the learner, parents or carers, and relevant professionals to build a shared understanding of the barriers affecting attendance and wellbeing. Support will be personalised and may include reasonable adjustments, a phased or graduated reintegration programme, trusted adult support, pastoral interventions, access to wellbeing services, and regular review meetings to monitor progress and adapt provision.

Through our trauma-informed approach, we aim to create a safe, predictable, and inclusive environment where learners feel understood, respected, and supported. Our goal is to help learners rebuild confidence, develop resilience, overcome barriers to attendance, and successfully re-engage with education.

Sleep Difficulties and Attendance

Rushmere recognises that sleep difficulties can have a significant impact on a learner's wellbeing, emotional regulation, concentration, and ability to engage with education. However, a lack of sleep or poor sleep routine will not, in itself, be accepted as a reason for authorised absence from education.

Where a learner is experiencing ongoing sleep difficulties that are affecting their ability to attend, parents/carers will be expected to seek appropriate professional advice and support. Any consideration of sleep-related barriers to attendance must be supported by involvement from relevant professionals, such as a GP, paediatrician, clinical psychologist, or specialist sleep practitioner, and form part of an agreed support plan.

Until professional advice has been sought and a clear plan is in place, absence due to lack of sleep will normally be recorded as unauthorised. Rushmere will work collaboratively with the learner, parents/carers, home school, and relevant professionals to identify appropriate strategies and support the learner to maintain or return to regular attendance.

The aim is to ensure that learners receive appropriate support for genuine sleep-related difficulties while maintaining the expectation that education remains a priority and that attendance is supported wherever possible.