

Attendance Policy and Procedures

Named responsible person	Headteacher
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1. Introduction and Aims

High levels of attendance and a punctual start to the school day are extremely important for all children at The Ryleys (the School). Our aim is to ensure that every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and which enables them to benefit from the provision in place.

Regular or unnecessarily prolonged absenteeism puts those pupils at a significant disadvantage compared to their peers and is hugely detrimental to their education. In line with Department for Education definitions, persistent absence is attendance below 90% and severe absence is attendance below 50%.

All pupils, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. Missing learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind, and poor attendance is strongly associated with lower attainment. The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child, beginning in the early years.

The safety and welfare of pupils is the prime responsibility of the School. Making sure that all pupils are present, accounted for and safe is therefore a vital role of every member of staff. **A child who is absent or missing from school or from home may be at risk of significant harm. Unexplained or persistent absence can be a warning sign of abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or sexual or criminal exploitation.** The School therefore considers attendance and safeguarding together and follows Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2026) and the school's safeguarding policy.

This policy is applied fairly and consistently, taking account of the individual needs of pupils and families who face specific barriers to attendance. The School recognises that absence is often a symptom of wider circumstances, and adopts a support-first approach: working in partnership with pupils and parents to understand and remove barriers before any formal action is considered.

1.1 Related Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been written having regard to the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (July 2026), which applies to independent schools through paragraph 7(b) of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (chapters 1 and 2 of the guidance). It is also based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, September 2026)
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), particularly Part 3 (Welfare, health and safety of pupils)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 7)
- The Education Act 2002 (Part 3)
- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6)
- Statutory guidance on Children Missing Education, Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions, and Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE)
- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (DfE)

When applying this policy, the school is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The school also takes account of the expectations of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and advice published by Cheshire East's Attendance and Children out of School Service.

1.2 Legal Requirements

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. The law requires all schools, including independent schools, to keep an admission register and an attendance register, and to record the attendance of every registered pupil, whatever their age, at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Registers must be kept electronically. Schools should follow up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised

The Government expects parents and carers to:

- Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children attend school regularly and arrive at school on time

The Government expects schools to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence

The school maintains an admission register and an attendance register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and meets its duties under The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended).

2. Scope and Responsibilities

This policy is applied to the whole school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Attendance is the responsibility of all members of the school community. However, we have allocated specific roles and responsibilities to named individuals to ensure that we are meeting statutory requirements.

2.1 Governors

Those responsible for governance at the school will:

- Ensure that the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements
- Work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance
- Reinforce the importance of attendance in documentation and communications as appropriate
- Ensure that key staff receive relevant training relating to attendance
- Review and analyse attendance data and support leaders to address any issues that become apparent
- Offer appropriate challenge regarding attendance data
- Keep up to date with changes in guidance and legislation and ensure that leaders are aware of any changes

- Hold the Headteacher to account for the effective implementation of this policy
- Ensure that this policy is published on the school website, is easily accessible to leaders, staff, pupils and parents, and is reviewed at least annually
- Consider attendance and safeguarding together, recognising that unexplained or persistent absence can indicate a safeguarding concern

2.2 Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion

The Headteacher, Mr Giles Puckle, is the school's Senior Attendance Champion and can be contacted through the school office (see Appendix). The school undertakes daily monitoring of attendance and punctuality; data is reviewed fortnightly to identify emerging patterns and vulnerable groups, and termly reports are shared with governors. As Senior Attendance Champion, the Headteacher will:

- Take overall responsibility for implementing this policy and set a clear vision and expectations for attendance across the school community
- Monitor the impact of the school's attendance strategies and systems, and change or update them where they are not working
- Identify and put in place systems and interventions to improve attendance, and make sure they are followed by all staff
- Arrange meetings with parents to address attendance concerns, and create intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their families
- Ensure that there are systems in place so that, when a pupil has a social worker, the relevant professionals are informed about any unexplained absences
- Liaise with pupils, parents and carers, the local authority (including its School Attendance Support Team) and other agencies where statutory attendance support or enforcement may be appropriate
- Decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances, considering each request on its individual merits
- Ensure that the school makes its statutory returns to the local authority (New Pupil, Deletion, attendance and sickness returns) accurately and on time
- Ensure that all staff receive training on attendance as part of induction and continuing professional development, and that staff with a specific attendance role receive dedicated training, including in interpreting attendance data

2.3 Parents

It is the responsibility of the parents:

- To make sure their children come to and are delivered to school safely
- Encourage regular and punctual attendance, being fully aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure good attendance when a child is fit, healthy and able to attend School
- Ensure that the child in their care arrives punctually, prepared for learning
- Provide clear reasons for any absence which ensures School can code the absence properly and accurately
- Contact the School on the first day of the child's absence as early as possible and preferably

before the start of the school day

- Avoid making arrangements to remove children from School during term time
- Respond helpfully and positively to any enquiry made by the School to ascertain the reason for any absence, including any safeguarding matter

2.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

- Be informed on the same day of any pupil whose absence is unexplained and where contact with the family cannot be made, and decide what safeguarding action is needed
- Receive regular attendance reports and work with the Headteacher to identify pupils whose attendance or punctuality may indicate a safeguarding concern
- Contribute to decisions about early help or children's social care referrals where absence is severe, persistent or unexplained

2.5 School Office Team

The School Office Team will:

- Monitor the registers daily and carry out first-day contact where no reason for absence has been given
- Make sure that any register entry using code N (reason not yet established) is corrected as soon as the reason is known and no later than five working days after the session
- Produce fortnightly and half-termly attendance and punctuality reports for the Senior Attendance Champion, the DSL and class teachers
- Review the attendance of pupils falling below the thresholds set out in section 9.1, send letters and arrange meetings with parents as required, and keep records of contact and support offered
- Prepare the statutory returns to the local authority for the Headteacher

2.6 Class teachers

Class teachers and form tutors will:

- Complete attendance registers at the times specified by the school using the school's agreed systems
- Use accurate attendance and absence codes as set out in Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Enter code N where the reason for an absence is not known at the time of registration, and tell the office of any pupil who is absent without explanation
- Record concerns about persistent lateness or absence and share them with the Headteacher on CPOMS

3. Registers and Registration

3.1 Recording attendance

In line with statutory requirements, the School will keep a register of school attendance and ensure that the name of every pupil is entered onto the register, irrespective of whether they are of statutory school age or not.

The School will add pupils to the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which it has agreed with (or been notified by) the parent that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed starting day, the school will follow this up and establish the reason for absence.

Once a pupil is added to the admission register, their attendance or absence will be recorded for each session. The register will be taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session, at the same time for all registered pupils.

Codes recorded in the register will be in line with regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and chapter 8 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance. The codes used most often are summarised in section 3.3.

The school will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not (if the pupil is of compulsory school age)
- The nature of any off-site activity
- Any exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an absence

3.2 Registration times

The school uses an electronic system of registration. The morning register is completed every morning, within 10 minutes of the morning session starting at 8.30am. The afternoon register is taken within 10 minutes of the afternoon session starting at 1.30pm. These are taken at the same time for all registered pupils. Registers are submitted to the office and closed 30 minutes after the start of each session. Registers are kept electronically and every entry is preserved for six years from the date it is made.

School begins at 8.30am prompt and finishes at 3.30pm.

3.3 Attendance and absence codes

The school records attendance using the national codes set out in regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and chapter 8 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance. The codes that staff and parents meet most often are:

Code	Meaning
Present	
/ \	Present in the morning session (/) or the afternoon session (\)
L	Arrived after the register opened but before it closed
B	Educated off site (approved activity not covered by K, P or V)
K	Attending provision arranged by the local authority

Code	Meaning
P	Approved sporting activity
V	Educational visit or trip
Authorised absence	
C	Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances
C1	In a regulated performance
C2	Agreed temporary part-time timetable
D	Dual registered
E	Suspended or permanently excluded
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
J1	Absent due to visiting another school for potential future admission
M	Medical or dental appointment
Q	Unable to attend due to lack of access arrangements
R	Religious observance (only 1 day allowed, any more coded as 'C' if agreed)
S	Study Leave
T	Parents travelling for occupational purposes
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread travel disruption
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to whole school closure
Y7	Unable to attend due to other unavoidable cause
Unauthorised absence	
G	Holiday not authorised by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established (must be corrected within five working days)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances, without authorisation
U	Arrived after the register closed (9.00am)

The full list, including code X (a pupil below compulsory school age who is not required to attend that session) and codes Y1 to Y7 (unavoidable causes), is set out in chapter 8 of the guidance and is used exactly as prescribed.

4. Lateness

Pupils arriving after the start of the school day must enter the school via the main entrance at the front of the building, where they will be met by the reception staff. Pupils' attendance is recorded on the electronic registers. It is vital that any pupil arriving late is signed in in order to comply with health and safety procedures. Pupils arriving after 8.40am and before the register closes will be marked with a late (L) code and recorded as present. Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at 9am will be marked with code U, which is recorded as unauthorised absence. It is imperative that children arrive at school on time to ensure that education is not missed.

The Senior Attendance Champion will track lateness half-termly. Where lateness is persistent or a pattern develops, the school will speak to parents to understand the reason and offer support, and the Headteacher will write to parents if no improvement is seen. Concerns about persistent lateness are recorded so that patterns can be identified and followed up.

5. Notification and Following Up Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Parents should notify the school before 8.30am on the first school day of their child's absence from school. They should contact the school on each further day of absence unless a return date has been agreed, and should give the reason for the absence so that it can be recorded accurately. In most cases a parent's notification that their child is too unwell to attend will be accepted without question. The school will only ask for medical evidence where it has genuine and reasonable doubt about the illness, or where a pupil's health needs are complex, long term or frequently recurring and evidence is needed to identify the right support. It will be flexible about the form the evidence takes.

If any child is absent and the school has not been notified, the receptionist will phone the child's parent or carer, followed by an email if there is no response. These actions will be completed as a matter of urgency, and by 9.30am each morning. In the event that contact cannot be made, the receptionist will try the pupil's other emergency contacts and record the outcome on the register. If there are any child welfare or safety concerns, then the matter may be referred to the local authority and/or social services. The reception staff will share this information with the Attendance Officer and class teacher and, where contact has not been made, with the DSL on the same day.

Unexplained absence is followed up for the afternoon session in the same way. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure the pupil is safe.

Where absence is unexplained and contact cannot be made, the school will consider whether referral to external agencies is appropriate in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a register entry is code N (reason for absence not yet established), the reason will be established and the correct code entered as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the session.

6. Promoting and Incentivising Good Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents and carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The school will:

- Offer a safe and supportive environment, which welcomes children regardless of race, gender or ability
- Establish clear and effective procedures for administration
- Engender a climate where the school community — teachers, parents and carers, governors and pupils — values attendance and punctuality
- Comply with legal requirements
- Ensure any child presenting poor levels of attendance and punctuality is noted and monitored, and appropriate action taken
- Keep parents and carers informed about their child's attendance through established procedures
- Support governors in taking an active role in promoting good attendance
- Work in partnership with parents and carers, the local authority, social care and other outside agencies

The school promotes and incentivises good attendance in the following ways:

- Setting clear expectations for attendance and punctuality with parents from the point of admission, and reminding them at the start of each school year and whenever this policy is updated
- Explaining the link between attendance, attainment and wellbeing to parents, including at parent information events, and being clear about the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance
- Including individual attendance information in reports to parents, expressed as the amount of school time missed and its likely impact on learning, rather than as headline percentages alone
- Keeping attendance visible and valued through assemblies, class discussion and displays, with pupils invited to contribute where appropriate
- Recognising and celebrating improvements in attendance and punctuality at class and individual level, sensitively and without discrimination, so that pupils whose absence is beyond their control are never disadvantaged
- Considering attendance alongside the school's approaches to behaviour, bullying, special educational needs, medical conditions, safeguarding, wellbeing and support for disadvantaged pupils
- To give pupils ownership of the attendance message, Year 6 pupils will be involved in creating displays exploring the question "Why do we come to school?", which are prominently displayed around the school buildings. These pupil-created materials serve as reminders of the value of school attendance, presented in the voice of the eldest children to inspire younger children.

Through this multi-faceted approach involving parents, pupils and staff, the School fosters a culture where excellent attendance is understood and expected.

7. Monitoring Attendance and Absence

7.1 Patterns of Absence

First day of absence: if a child is absent from school, the parent should contact the school on 01625 583241, or email the school. If a parent does not inform the school, the reception staff will ring the parental home on the first day of absence and send an email to ascertain why the child is absent.

The school is aiming to achieve an attendance target of 95% or above. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% and there is not justifiable cause in the eyes of the School, this will be addressed with parents.

7.2 Analysing Attendance Data

The school recognises that poor attendance is habitual and that early intervention is essential. To target support at the pupils and groups who need it most, the school will:

- Monitor attendance and punctuality daily, and analyse monthly patterns and trends for individual pupils, classes and year groups, looking beyond headline percentages (for example, patterns in the use of particular codes and on particular days of the week)
- Analyse half-termly, termly and full-year data
- Consider the attendance of key groups, including pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker or who are looked after, young carers, pupils in the Early Years, and any group whose attendance is, or has historically been, lower than that of their peers
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, the DSL, and the SENCo, and termly reports to governors
- Evaluate the impact of the strategies used, and change them where they are not working

8. Persistent and Severe Absence

8.1 Escalation of Intervention

The school's approach is graduated and support-first: to expect and promote good attendance, monitor it, listen to and understand the barriers, facilitate support, formalise support where needed and, only where necessary and appropriate, involve the local authority in legal intervention.

- The Senior Attendance Champion will review all absences and the reasons given for children whose attendance falls below 90% in any half term. In most cases, the school will send a letter to the parents and carers informing them of their child's attendance and the school's concerns.
- If a child's attendance level has not improved or has fallen further at the end of the next half term, the Senior Attendance Champion will contact the parent or carer to arrange a meeting. They will liaise with the class teacher and, when necessary, other professionals if the need for support is identified.
- At the meeting, the school will listen to and understand the barriers to attendance, explain the importance of regular attendance and the consequences of persistent absence, and agree actions with the family. These will be recorded and regularly reviewed with the pupil and parents. Support may include in-school adjustments, pastoral support, a reintegration plan, referrals to other services or a voluntary early help assessment through the local authority.

- A pupil whose attendance falls below 90% is persistently absent. The Senior Attendance Champion will hold a meeting with the parents of any pupil at risk of persistent or severe absence, agree an action plan and, where appropriate, involve the SENCo and DSL. Where possible the family will have one consistent point of contact in school.
- In the event that the child's attendance levels still do not improve, the school will work with the local authority's School Attendance Support Team (Cheshire East Council, or the local authority where the pupil lives) to agree further support, which may include support formalised by the local authority, for example through an attendance contract or an education supervision order.
- The school will make the statutory returns to the local authority required by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. An attendance return names pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly, or who have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days with an unauthorised absence code (G, N, O or U); it is made at intervals agreed with the local authority and at least monthly. A sickness return is made for a pupil recorded with code I where there are reasonable grounds to believe they will miss 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively, because of sickness; only one sickness return is needed for a continuous period of sickness in a school year.
- Where a pupil's attendance falls below 50%, the school treats this as a top priority and a possible safeguarding concern. The DSL and Headteacher will agree an action plan with the family and the local authority. Where all support has been offered and severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, this may constitute neglect, and the school will follow its safeguarding procedures, which may include a referral to children's social care.

9. Early Years Foundation Stage

This section operates in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in Nursery and Reception are pupils of the school, and the school's admission and attendance registers record every registered pupil, whatever their age.

Although there is no legal requirement that children attend a childcare setting before the age of five, good attendance enables children to take full advantage of the learning and development opportunities available, which is key to giving children the best chance to thrive.

Regular attendance helps children build trusting relationships with their carers and peers. These, in turn, help children develop good social skills and feel safe and secure, free to explore and learn. Good attendance can also help children follow daily routines and understand behaviour boundaries, preparing them for future educational settings. Regular attendance allows children to be included in friendship groups, take advantage of valuable learning opportunities, and may make settling in easier.

Children become of compulsory school age at the start of the term after their fifth birthday. The local authority returns and legal interventions described in this policy apply only to pupils of compulsory school age. However, the school records the attendance of all Early Years pupils, twice daily on Isams using the national codes (code X may be used for sessions that a child is not required to attend), monitors it in the same way, and treats unexplained absence in the same way as for older pupils, because the absence of a young child can be a warning sign of a welfare concern.

9.1 Absences

If your child is unable to attend due to an unexpected reason — such as illness, a family emergency, or other unforeseen circumstances — please notify us as soon as you become aware of the absence. Notifications can be submitted through the Family app, where you can select “absent” or “sick”. Parents can also contact the office to advise of an absence.

9.2 Planned Absences

For any planned absences, such as family holidays, you can also use the Family app or the office to let us know in advance.

9.3 Failure to Notify

If any child is absent and the school has not been notified, we will message the child’s parent or carer on Family and follow up with a phone call if we receive no reply. In the event that contact cannot be made, we will record this on Family/Isams and mark them as absent for an unknown reason, and the emergency contact will be called. If there are any child welfare or safety concerns, then the matter may be referred to the local authority and/or social services. Where contact cannot be made on the same day, the DSL will be informed.

If a child misses a significant number of their scheduled sessions, we will arrange a discussion with their parents or carers to explore any challenges they may be facing. Our aim is to offer support and work together to minimise any disruption to the child’s development and wellbeing.

We use our professional judgement to decide whether a child's attendance is a cause for concern, and we look out for any patterns of absence, such as regular absences on the same day or frequent absences just before or after holidays. If there are indications that a child’s absence may be linked to a welfare issue, we will follow our safeguarding policy and take appropriate action in line with our duty of care.

10. Procedures for Handing Over Pupils at the End of the School Day

Pupils are handed over directly to a parent or carer, or to another adult authorised by the parent, at the end of the school day, a club, or any wraparound session. Once a pupil has been handed over, responsibility passes to the adult collecting them. Staff will not release a pupil unless a known, authorised adult is collecting, and pupils are supervised until they are collected. This applies to all pupils, including those in the Early Years. Another adult may only collect a pupil if the school holds the parent’s authorisation. In situations where the School allows older pupils to travel home unaccompanied, they are released only where parents have confirmed the arrangement in advance.

12. Procedures for an Uncollected Pupil

If a pupil is not collected, they will be looked after by the member of the Senior Leadership Team on late duty and the school will contact the parents, then the secondary contact, then the emergency contact nominated by the parents, to arrange collection. No pupil will be left unsupervised. If contact cannot be made with the parents or the emergency contact by 6.30pm, the school will contact the local authority’s children’s services. The pupil will remain fully supervised by staff until collected.

13. Record Keeping and Data Protection

Registers are legal records. The School keeps its admission and attendance registers electronically and preserves every entry for six years from the date it was made. Any amendment records the original entry, the amended entry, the reason, the date and the name of the person making it. The registers are available for examination by the local authority officers and others entitled to see them under the 2024 Regulations. Records made under this policy, including letters, meeting notes and records of support offered, are managed in line with the school's data protection and records retention policies. They contain personal data, which is used only in accordance with data protection law and for the purposes of promoting attendance and safeguarding pupils. Questions about how attendance data is used can be directed to the School's Data Protection Officer.

14. Monitoring, Review and Publication

The Headteacher, as Senior Attendance Champion, monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of this policy and of the School's attendance strategies, and reports to governors at least termly. The policy is reviewed at least annually, or sooner if legislation, regulation or statutory guidance changes, by the Headteacher and Governors, and the views of pupils and parents are sought as part of the review. The date of the next review is shown on the front page.

The policy is published on the school website and sent to parents with the information provided when pupils join the school. Parents will be signposted to updates at the start of each school year (and at any other time it has been updated), through the yearly parent handbooks.

All staff receive training on attendance as part of induction and continuing professional development, covering the importance of good attendance, the law on registers, the school's procedures for tracking and following up absence, and how the school works with other agencies.

Appendix: Quick Reference Contact Details for Parents

Reason for communication	Person to contact	Contact details
Informing the school of a pupil's absence on the day	School Office (Nursery and Reception parents may also use Family)	Telephone 01625 583241 or email reception@theryleys.com , before 8.30am
Requesting leave of absence	Headteacher	In writing, in advance via reception@theryleys.com
To discuss wider attendance issues or support	Senior Attendance Champion (Headteacher, Mr Giles Puckle)	In writing, in advance via reception@theryleys.com
Day-to-day attendance queries and letters about attendance	School Office	Telephone 01625 583241 or email reception@theryleys.com
A concern about a pupil's safety or welfare related to absence	Designated Safeguarding Lead	Via the school office on 01625 583241