



Rugby Free

Primary School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy Details

Policy Level	School
Document Approver	Local Authority Board
Document Status	Final
Applicable to	Rugby Free Secondary School
Review Frequency	Every 2 Years

Revision History

Revision	Date	Details	Approved by
0	17 September 2024	First Issue	LAB

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1. Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Rugby Free Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. It also takes into account the updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2024 which now includes a section on attendance and children missing from education.

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive 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 either by attendance at school or by education otherwise than at school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Parents are expected to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly. The government expects all schools and local authorities to:

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

In accordance with the Education Act 1996, we will work with parents and carers and the Local Authority to ensure that parents are supported to secure education for children of compulsory school age. Where required, we will formalise support and where necessary, work with the LA to use legal measures.

A "Parent" is defined as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher, Local Accountability Board (LAB) and Trustees at our school,

work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning and also often struggle with their friendships and social, emotional and mental health. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

2. Scope of Policy

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic, diagnosed health issues
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
- Raise awareness to parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in dealing with difficulties
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance
- Make Parents/carers aware of their legal responsibilities and ensure their children have access to the education that they are entitled to

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually

- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school
- Working with outside agencies to support parents.

3. Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Completing the registers twice daily in an accurate and timely manner
- Having an awareness of pupils' poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers
- Informing the Leadership Team and FCSW where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted on the register
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings/meetings where necessary and also completing the attendance section on end of year reports

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Being firm in stance when it comes to absences and leave requests

- Organising the contacting of families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the LAB and Trust

Family and Child Support Worker

- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence
- Notifying/referring to Warwickshire Front Door (Social Care) when we believe that the attendance of a child is a significant safeguarding concern
- Liaising with outside agencies to support with attendance e.g. GP, Social Worker, school nursing team
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Meet with parents/carers who child has low attendance or frequent lateness
- Working with parents and carers to find out the reasons for poor attendance or punctuality and trying to address concerns and remove barriers.

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home during the school day and how many minutes of school they are missing
- Following safeguarding procedures if attendance/lateness is seen to be a child protection concern e.g. couldn't contact parents

Parents/Carers

Parents/Carers (no other family members) are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by child illness, attendance at a medical appointment or an authorised absence previously agreed by the Headteacher
- Contacting the school office on every morning of absence and giving the office a reasonable explanation e.g. types of illness



- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary, and giving school at least 14 days' notice is possible (without the 14 days' notice it will likely be recorded as unauthorised).
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with
- Always endeavour to take holidays in the school holidays and make appointments after school or in the holidays
- Being honest with the school about reasons for the absence
- Ensuring that pupils are consistently on time for school

4. Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

The absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent

Failure to notify the school of your child's illness will result in an unauthorised absence

- An absence, which school have clear evidence is in fact a holiday, will also be unauthorised
- An absence, which goes on longer than that which has been authorised, will be unauthorised
- An absence which we have good reason to believe is not as stated e.g. saying the child is ill but then child returns to say they have been on holiday and school gets international dialling tone etc.
- An absence when we have offered to collect the children and the parent has declined.
- An absence when it is regarding parental/carers ill-health and not the child's unless exceptional circumstances



5. Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- Have a clear attendance and punctuality policy available to all parents/carers
- To maintain appropriate registration processes
- To maintain appropriate attendance data
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, trustees, parents and pupils
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Warwickshire Attendance Service, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve
- To report attendance statistics to the LAB, Trust, LA, Ofsted and the DfE where requested
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team and/or Family Support Worker
- Work with the local authority on legal intervention where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate.
- Intensify support through a referral to statutory children's services where there are safeguarding concerns.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Proactively use data to identify cohorts with, or at risk of, low attendance and develop strategies to support them.
- Work with other schools in the local area and the local authority to share effective practice where there are common barriers to attendance.
- Maintain the same ambition for attendance and work with pupils with SEND and/or medical conditions and their parents to maximise attendance.

6. Registration

The gates open at 8.35am for all pupils. The gate is locked at 8.50am and we expect pupils to be on time for school. Any child who arrives after the gates have closed will need to enter school through the school office and parents/carers must fill in a form to ensure accurate registers are taken and the reason for lateness is recorded.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am in the morning and by 10 minutes after the end of the pupil's lunch time e.g Year 1 and 2 finish lunch at 12.45pm so registers must be taken by 12.55pm. If there is a child missing in the afternoon register that was here in the morning, the teacher must find out the reason for the child not being there immediately. The office should have communicated with the class teacher if the child has gone home at lunchtime. The registers are submitted electronically via Bromcom. If the internet is not working, or other reason, teachers are to send completed fire list registers to the school office.

All attendance records are documented using Bromcom MIS software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

7. Lateness

Once the gates are closed at 8.50am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school after 8.50am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 8.55am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.

Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

8. Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on every day of their child's absence by 9.00am. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the electronic register. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 8.50am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. If we have not heard from the child's parents as to their whereabouts by 11am this will be reported to a DSL as a safeguarding concern.

If a child is absent, the following actions will be initiated by the school:

- The first day calling procedures will be activated for all pupils who are not in school after close of register at 9.30am and where no reason for absence is known.
- If there is still no contact made from the pupil's parents, a further telephone call home will be made again that morning. If no response can be gained, the child's named emergency contact will be telephoned.
- If school cannot contact a parent and are concerned about a pupil, a home visit may be carried out.

The school will also:

- Visit the home of the pupil if they are absent for 2 days or more regardless of contact made.
- Write to the parents of a pupil to highlight attendance or punctuality issues **if they are absent for 10 sessions (5 days) in a 10-week running period.**
- If no contact is made after 2 days of an unexplained absence school will contact the Police for a 'concern for safety' check.
- Invite parents to discuss how school can support the family to make improvements and form an attendance support plan.
- Discuss the pupil at the half termly Attendance Support Meetings to seek advice and guidance on additional support strategies.
- Refer to Early Help and/or other external agencies to offer support, guidance, and advice.

- Refer to the Local Authority for joint enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts through Children Missing in Education procedures.
- Refer to the Local Authority to consider issuing a penalty notice or to consider prosecution when all other interventions have failed, or an unauthorised leave of absence has been taken.

Safeguarding Children

- The school has a duty to safeguard the welfare of all students. Any concerns about a child's attendance will be investigated promptly to ensure their well-being e.g. visit on first day of absence.
- Unexplained or extended absences will trigger safeguarding procedures, including home visits and communication with relevant agencies.

NB: Guidance given in 2022 asks that schools consider whether persistent or severely absent children are victims of neglect within the home and whether we should refer to Children's Services.

Removal from roll

This refers to the process of a child's name being officially taken off the school's register, typically due to extended non-attendance or other circumstances. Elective Home Education (EHE) is an option that some parents choose after removal from roll, where they take responsibility for providing education to their child at home.

Children will be removed from school when:

- We have confirmation from the next school that they have been admitted
- Children have been absent from school for 20 school days with no contact made (upon completion of CME forms)
- An email has been received from parents stating their wish to Electively Home Educate (EHE) and the 10 'cool down' days have lapsed.

9. Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If a child has been away from school for 5 consecutive days (including weekends) the school will conduct an unannounced home visit to check on the child's welfare. The school reserves the right to carry out this home visit earlier in the absence period than 5 days if they feel there are concerns around the absence or the child is already classed as a persistent absentee (has attendance of below 90%). The home visit will likely to be unannounced due to the difficulties in giving a specific time due to availability of staff as two members of staff will need to visit.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where, over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. After the child has been away from school for 7 consecutive days (including weekends), we will ask you to provide a doctor's note for this time. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. In the event of school not being satisfied with the evidence we have been given, this may be recorded as a safeguarding concern and may be passed on to Integrated Front Door (Social Care).

10. Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. These circumstances have to be very exceptional e.g. funeral of close relative. It is normal practice for school to ask for evidence e.g. wedding invite with the time, date and location stated on it.

Parents/carers request exceptional leave via the exceptional leave form which is available on RFPS's website or via the school office. Please give as much notice as possible for this and no less than 5 working days.

All absences due to holiday will incur a fine per pupil once the absence is over 5 days. If a pupil fails to return (after 20 days) and contact with the parent has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006. This means that **the child may lose their school place**.

A penalty notice request may be submitted to the Local Authority by the headteacher should:

- The parent fails to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave.
- An application for a leave of absence is not authorised by the headteacher but is still taken and is over 5 days in length.
- A longer period is taken more than the agreed number of days.

When absence is granted by the head teacher, the parent will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, the school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in a possible child missing from education procedure being instigated.

11. Pupil Absence for the purpose of Religious Observance

RFPS acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil's absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school. One day is usually authorised for religious observance.

12. Persistent Absence and the use of legal interventions

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance **drops to 90% and below** for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be **40 sessions (19 days)**. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. All pupils at our school are monitored to identify children who are PA or on track to become PA. Where emerging concerns are identified, we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as per our MultiTiered System of Support. Referrals will be made to external agencies for targeted support.

If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.

Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3-month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

13. Penalty Notices

Penalty notices will be issued by the Head teacher to parents or carers if your children are absent from school. Penalty notices will be issued in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices. This is in conjunction with the Local Authority and the Local Authority receive the payment, not the school.

The threshold is **10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days)** for any unauthorised absence **within a rolling 10 school week period**. The 10-week period may span different terms or school years.

The school will prioritise a 'support first' approach offering support to families in cases where it is appropriate. Penalty notices can still be issued where support is not appropriate, such as leave of absence in term time or when support has not been engaged with.

Penalty Notices will be issued by post to your home address to each parent or carer by the local authority at the request of the Headteacher. The Penalty Notice is:

- £80 for each of your children if paid in full within 21 days.
- £160 if paid in full after 21 days but within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent within a rolling 3-year period, the notice will be charged at the higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. A national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent of the same child within a rolling 3-year period has been set within the National Framework, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) a prosecution will be considered.

14. Staged Reintegration/Part-time timetables

All children of compulsory school age are entitled to a suitable full-time education, and the school and local authority have a statutory duty to ensure that all children in the area receive such an education. In very exceptional circumstances, we may decide to implement a temporary, part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs and only where it is safe to do so.

We will **not use** a part-time timetable to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will not be treated as a long-term solution and will have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision where applicable. We will never put a part-time timetable in place without written agreement from parent/carer and/or other professionals working with the family as appropriate. This intervention will only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the pupil; it will be reviewed regularly in partnership with the child, parent and any other relevant professionals working with the family.

We will notify the Attendance and Children Missing Education Team of all part-time timetables as soon as a plan has been agreed and use the appropriate attendance code to record this within our admission register.

15. Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%. Good attendance is 98%+

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school journey. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the trustees to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school may refer on to Warwickshire Attendance Service and to our Targeted Attendance Casework officer. In cases where we believe there is a safeguarding concern linked to the low attendance e.g. parental mental health needs or unusual amounts of illness, we will seek advice from Front Door (social care) and may send in a Multi-agency concern form (MAC) to them to investigate further. Low or unexplained attendance could trigger the need for an Early Help Pathway to be started with parents' consent.

Termly letters will be sent to parents of children who are persistently absent, with attendance less than 90% or pupils who are late on several occasions. These are sent to all pupils, even those who may have reasons for the absence.

16. Monitoring Attendance

Office staff have the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on our MIS software, Bromcom. Regular meetings are held with the Family support worker and Headteacher to discuss all attendance concerns, looking at patterns/trends and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents. Attendance is also discussed in weekly safeguarding meetings, Senior Leadership Team meetings and staff meetings and that's because attendance of pupils is everyone's responsibility.

17. Appendices

Appendix 1	DFE Attendance and Absence Register Codes
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Appendix 1 – DFE Attendance and Absence Register Codes

Code / \: Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session
Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Attending a place other than the school

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

Code V: Attending an educational visit or trip

Code P: Participating in a sporting activity

Code W: Attending work experience

Code B: Attending any other approved educational activity

Code D: Dual registered at another school

Absent - leave of absence

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.

Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment

Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Code R: Religious observance

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Administrative codes

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole school closure