

2022

Attendance Policy

KEY CONTACTS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

 01702 900777

Attendance Officer: Mrs S Rolfe

Assistant Attendance Officer: Miss K Richardson

Attendance Governor: Mr Tony Burr





Review Framework

The policy should be reviewed annually and targets updated

	Date
This policy was originally created in:	February 2015
School staff were consulted on this document in:	February 2015
This policy was reviewed and the Covid-19 Addendum added	September 2020
Ratified by the Local Governing Board:	19 October 2020
Reviewed and Appendix 1 added: SBC Access and Inclusion School Attendance Service Information	November 2021
Ratified by the Local Governing Board	November 2021

Local Authority **CFEIT** [Child and Family Early Intervention Team] now replaced by **EHFS** [Early Help and Family Support] Team



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Introduction

Southchurch High School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all students and embraces equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents and carers should work closely with the school to overcome any issues that may affect their child's attendance.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

For a student to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of over **96%** attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. If there are problems which affect a student's attendance, we will work in partnership with parents and students to resolve the problems as quickly and effectively as possible.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school's attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education. The school will examine the attendance figures at least monthly and set targets in accordance with the decision of Governors. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving set goals.



Promoting Attendance

The school will use as many opportunities as possible to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure their children receive their education.

We will also reward and celebrate attendance by:

- Asking students to complete a questionnaire to obtain their views on rewards
- Having inter-form competitions
- Rewarding overall attendance and improvement
- Having a **100% club**, which allows specific privileges for students with 100% attendance
- Celebrating and publicising good and improving attendance for all years, in Tutor sessions and Assemblies
- Promoting good and improving attendance in all rooms and shared spaces in the school

School Registration Procedures

- Registration in the morning begins at 8.40 am and ends at 9.00 am. Registration will be closed at 9.15am. Tutors are responsible for taking accurate registers on SIMS before 8.45am. Any student arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence, unless the school has received appropriate communication from a parent/carer detailing an appointment or other authorised absence, in which case the appropriate absence code will be entered by the Attendance Officer.
- Students registered after the start of school [8:40am] but before the end of the registration period [including up until 9.00 am in the morning], will be treated as present, but coded as 'late before the registers close'.
- All students must be marked as either present or absent on all registers. Staff must take care to record the mark on SIMS carefully, so that missing marks do not occur. All registers must be completed for both safeguarding and for data purposes.
- Registration in the afternoon will take place within 10 minutes of the start of Period 5 and will be carried out by the teacher teaching the students during that lesson.
- Students will be registered on SIMS for each teaching period and this will take place within **10 minutes** of the start of each lesson.
- If for any reason a register cannot be taken on SIMS a paper register will be taken and forwarded to the Attendance Officer **within 15 minutes of the lesson start**.

School Registers are legal documents and must be marked with accuracy.

- An extract of the register is used to prove non-attendance when the Local Authority Service prosecutes parents in the Magistrate's Court. A case can be thrown out of court if the defendant/lawyer can prove the register is incorrect. Corrections should be made **as soon as possible on the same day**.
- The register information is used by school administrative staff to contact parents about their absent children and if incorrect can result in embarrassment to the staff and distress for the parent/carer.
- If there should be a fire in school, an inaccurately marked register could result in a life being lost.



Punctuality Procedures

- Any student who is absent from school at the morning registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. If there is no known reason for the absence of registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.
- Punctuality must be recorded on SIMS in right click comment boxes, staff must record the number of minutes late a student is. The Attendance Officers will analyse patterns and in liaison with the Head of Year will put in appropriate interventions to prevent persistent lateness to school, and to lessons.
- Students who are late for school will be issued with detention. This will be on a sliding scale relating to the number of minutes late and may be at break/lunchtime or after school. Text messages will be sent to parents/carers giving details if the detention occurs after the school day.

Student Absence Protocol

- SIMS data will be analysed after each registration period has closed, first day absent contact made, and the Attendance Officers will be aware of all of that day's absences including reasons as known. The Attendance Officers will update the registers with any received information. If no contact is made with the school during a student's absence, the student may receive an unannounced visit by the attendance team or truancy patrol.
- Parents / carers are advised to contact the school via the school's absence line, text or by email direct to the Attendance Officers. In the event that no contact is made and after the registers have been closed, the school will make contact with the named parent/carers as indicated by SIMS.
- Any student who is absent for 5 days without contact being made by parents/carers will be notified to the Local Authority by submitting a referral for "A Child Missing from Education". This will be filled in by the Attendance Officers. A welfare check by the police may also be made to check on the safety of the student.
- Internal truancy will be tracked by Heads of Year and the Student Support Team.

A Welcome Back

It is the responsibility of the form tutor to welcome back all students in their forms after an absence. They must remind the student to catch up on missed work and must also bring the student up to date on any information that has been passed to other students.

It is the responsibility of the form tutor to complete a return to school interview form where the reason for absence will be recorded as will any concerns or further support needed at school.

We will work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued, sending a clear message that if a student is absent, he/she is missed.

Frequent Absence Procedure

It is the responsibility of the **Form Tutor** to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. This should be reported to the Heads of Year and the Attendance Officer, who will discuss what action to take.



Students with attendance below **93%** parents will receive a level 1 letter with a target of 100% attendance of the following two weeks with any absences requiring medical evidence.

Attendance Support meetings with the with the **Attendance Officer and LA Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team** will be held if attendance has not improved since the date of the Level 1 letter. Identified students will be sent an attendance support letter requesting a parent/carer attend a meeting at the school. An attendance action plan will be completed, a 95% target and a review date will be agreed during the meeting.

For cases not meeting attendance targets at review meetings will result in weekly home visits from our designated case worker from the Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team.

Penalty Notices may be issued following an Attendance Panel or Pupil Planning meeting where there has been assessment of unacceptable levels of unauthorised absence of 10 school sessions or more within a 10-week period (term time) prior to the panel meeting. A Penalty Notice would be issued after the first unauthorised absence after parent had received the warning letter where there is evidence that any plan identified at the panel meeting had been implemented and no additional mitigating factors have been identified by the parent/s or services supporting the family.

Attendance Panels must be held with a **senior member of staff, school governor and chaired by Access and Inclusion School Attendance Team**. Parents will be issued with a **Final Warning Notice** and issued a **Penalty Fine** on the next unauthorised absence in the next school half term.

All cases held at level 3 that do not make **significant** improvement with attendance and do not have mitigating reasons for absence will be heard at a **Pupil Planning Meeting** chaired by the Access and Inclusion and School Attendance Team Leader, a school member of staff is expected to attend as well as the student and his/her parent/carer. The school will need to bring to the meeting an up to date attendance certificate. This is a formal meeting with a caution to parents regarding outcome could include a penalty notice or referral to magistrate's court. The primary aim being to agree an action plan with parent/carer and school with immediate return to regular attendance. A **Final Warning Notice** will be issued at the end of the meeting and a **Fixed Penalty** on the next unauthorised absence in the next school half term or evidence may be gathered to take the parents to court.

Penalty Notices for Suspended Children Found in a Public Place

The parent must have been notified in writing of their duty and provided with a written warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued where there are no measures in place to supervise their child and ensure that they are not in a public place during school hours.

Where a parent/carer fails in their duty to ensure a child is not in a public place, a penalty notice may be issued under S.105 Education and Inspections Act, unless the parent/carer can prove there was reasonable justification.

If the pupil is identified in a public place and it is within the first five days of the suspension or exclusion and notified to the school, the school is to write to the parent/carer within ten school days and allow an opportunity to provide a justifiable reason.

The local authority officer will assess the facts and decide whether it is appropriate to apply for a penalty notice, based upon the information the school provides. The application for a penalty notice must be made within 21 school days of the sighting of the pupil.



The Local Authority will always issue Penalty Notices by first class post.

Safeguarding

The school reserves the right to invite parents into school to discuss any attendance issues that raise potential safeguarding concerns, i.e. female genital mutilation, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, forced marriage, radicalisation. In addition, if the school suspects that a student may be at potential risk as a result of their absence from school the safeguarding team reserve the right to refer these concerns to the appropriate external agencies, i.e. social care, police. The school will inform parents / carers if a referral is to be made. However, this may not be appropriate in every circumstance depending on the nature of the safeguarding concern and a referral may be made without informing the parent / carer.

Children Missing from Education

The school recognizes that when a child goes missing from school it is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, i.e. sexual abuse or exploitation. The school follows the Southend-on-Sea LSCB

procedures: "Identifying and maintaining contact with children missing or at risk of going missing from Education 2013".

Under Section 8h of the Education Regulations Act (2006) the school will make 'reasonable' enquiries into the location of students with 10 days continuous unauthorized absence, or for those who fail to return from leave of absence granted during term time. A referral will be made to the **Children Missing Education Team. [CME]** to be investigated further by their safeguarding panel and appropriate interventions taken at that level, i.e. refer to police.

The school reserves the right, however, to contact relevant agencies to seek advice [**Children's Social Care, Police**] if any child is absent from school for more than five days without confirmation from parents. Every attempt will be made to communicate with parents to ensure the child is safe and well, including home visits by the EHFS Officer. The school will contact relevant agencies if the child is subject to a 'Child in Need' or 'Child Protection' Plan or is considered vulnerable in other ways.

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education:

- Students at risk of harm / neglect (school will follow standard Child Protection procedures for referrals to social care / police)
- Children of Gypsy, Roma or Traveller families (school will inform local authority when a GRT student leaves the school without identifying a new destination school.
- Families of Armed Forces (school will contact MOD Children's Education Advisory Service for advice on making arrangements for continuity of education)
- Missing children / runaways (direct referral to Children's Services and Police)
- Children supervised in the Youth Justice system
- Children who cease to attend a school

When a student returns from a period of extended absence, appropriate daily attendance checks will be carried out and their attendance, behaviour, emotional and physical well-being will be monitored closely by the safeguarding team in school. Parents / carers will be invited into school



with the student to meet the Designated Safeguarding Lead as part of the reintegration programme and relevant support will be offered to the student / family as necessary.

Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

In addition to the Local Authority and DfE [Department for Education] the Governing Body will establish, in consultation with the Headteacher, staff, students and parents, the policy for the promotion of attendance and punctuality and keep it under regular review. It will ensure that it is communicated to students and parents, is non-discriminatory and the school's expectations about student attendance and punctuality are clear. Governors will support the school in maintaining high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Headteacher

The Headteacher will be responsible for the school's policy and procedures, and may delegate aspects of its day-to-day implementation and management to a designated member of the school's leadership team.

All Staff

All staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures are followed, and consistently and fairly applied. Mutual support amongst all staff in the implementation of the policy is essential. Staff have a key role in advising the Headteacher on the effectiveness of the policy and procedures. They also have responsibility, with the support of the school leadership team, for implementing the agreed policy and procedures consistently.

The **Local Governing Board, Headteacher and staff** will ensure there is no differential application of the policy and procedures on any grounds, particularly of ethnic or national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexuality. They will also ensure that the concerns of students are listened to and appropriately addressed.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their child both inside and outside the school. They will be encouraged to work in partnership with the school to assist the school in maintaining high standards of attendance and punctuality and will have the opportunity to raise with the school any issues arising from the operation of the policy.

Students

Students will be expected to take responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality and will be made fully aware of the school policy, procedure and expectations.

Absence Notes

These must be collected by the form tutor and passed immediately to the Attendance Officer who will use the information to amend SIMS. They will then be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If a student has been highlighted as either a 'persistent absence' or below 90% attendance, or other attendance concern, then their absence notes will be kept until they leave the school.

Unauthorised Leave during Term Time

The Department for Education advises that leave of absence can only be granted in **exceptional circumstances**.



If you decide to take your child/children out of school for this period, you may be subject to a Penalty Notice issued by the Local Authority on your return. Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Section 23(1), the issuing of a Penalty Notice incurs a fine of £60.00 per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. (NB.in the case where the Penalty Notice has not been paid within the 28 days of issue, the case may be escalated to prosecution in Magistrates Court for non-school attendance).

Further details can be found on the Local Authority website: www.southend.gov.uk

Attendance Targets

Our school targets are **96%** attendance rate and a P.A. rate of (**<90%**) of **5%**. The progress towards our target will be analysed weekly by the member of SLT with responsibility for attendance, in conjunction with the Attendance Officer.



Fire Drill

SIMS fire drill register proformas are printed on the sounding of the fire alarm. The Attendance Officer will take the attendance registers to the assembly point for collection by the Heads of Year, who will in turn distribute them to the tutors.

Heads of Year must be informed **immediately** if a student is missing; they will then report this to the member of the Senior Leadership Team who is overseeing the evacuation, together with any information gained from the class e.g. reasons for absence, last location of any missing student etc.

Registers are finally returned to the Attendance Officer.



Appendix 1:

Southend Borough Council Access and Inclusion School Attendance Service

Why your child's Attendance is important:

The Education Act 1996 (Section 444) states that it is the legal responsibility of a Parent or Carer to ensure that their child or children attend school regularly and punctually.

Reducing absence from school is a key priority both nationally and locally. Missing school has an adverse effect on a student's achievement, it also disrupts school routines, the learning of others and can leave a young person vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime.

The view of Southend Borough Council is that regular attendance at school is of such importance that it adheres to a staged policy of intervention where poor attendance is identified. The primary aim of the Local Authority is to work closely with schools and parents to identify and remove any barriers that may be preventing a child from receiving their legal right to an education.

What action may a school take?

The school may ask you to attend a meeting or contact you to discuss the reason for your child's absence and try to resolve any issues.

You could be asked to provide **medical evidence** of any illness related absences. This is to ensure that any underlying health needs are being identified and that a pupil can be supported within the school environment to avoid missing critical parts of their education.

The school might ask you to engage in a process to identify any issues affecting your child and your family and to put in place any support that you feel you need. This is known as an **EHFSA (Early Help Family Support Assessment)**.

If the school feels that it is unable to resolve an attendance issue it can ask the Local Authority to become involved. This could involve a meeting between school, parents, and the Local Authority Officer to agree a parenting contract to improve attendance.

What action will the Local Authority take?

If following the school action, attendance does not improve there are several courses of action that the authority may take:

- ❖ The Local Authority Officer will commence regular home visits to establish reasons for continued absence and to work with parents to resolve these.
- ❖ An Attendance Panel may be held with a view to issuing a Penalty Notice if the absences continue. Payment within 21 days of receipt of a notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. In the case where the penalty has not been paid within 28 days of issue, the case may be escalated to prosecution for non-school attendance.
- ❖ A First Warning could be issued, which states there needs to be a significant improvement in attendance.
- ❖ A Pupil Planning Meeting will be held to address issues in a legal forum where a final warning letter may be issued stating the Authority's intention to proceed to magistrates court.



Section 444(1) As for Section 444(1) plus Section 444(1a) aggravated offence

- Conditional Discharge
- Fine - up to £2500
- Community Sentence
- Parenting Order
- Community Punishment Order
- Rehabilitation Order
- Custodial Sentence (up to 3 months)
- Curfew Order
- Absolute Discharge

However, it should be stressed that the primary concern of both school and the Local Authority is to ensure that all children across the borough are receiving their legal right to regular education and that it is only as a last resort that legal action is taken.