

2023

# Attendance Policy



**SOUTHCHURCH  
HIGH SCHOOL**

## Review Framework

The policy should be reviewed

	Date
This policy was created in:	February, 2023
It was ratified by the Governing body on:	7 March, 2023
It will be reviewed in:	

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## Introduction

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all students can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated; students need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend school and it is the school's responsibility to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance so it is also important that parents ensure that their children arrive at school on time.

Ofsted considers the effectiveness of school's attendance figures by:

- Overall absence and persistent absence rates for all students, and for different groups, in relation to national figures for all students
- The extent to which low attenders are improving their attendance over time and whether attendance is consistently low (in the lowest 10%)
- Punctuality in arriving at school and at lessons

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create a safe, happy and rewarding environment for all children so that all children want to attend school. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

We recognise that children alone cannot be responsible for their own regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the school life and to share and support their children's learning. Through our Home-School Agreement, parents agree to ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually. We keep parents regularly informed about their children's attendance in a variety of ways.

## 1. Aims

We aim and work towards ensuring that all students value their education and rarely miss a day at school.

No groups of students should be disadvantaged by low attendance. We aim to have exceptionally high levels of attendance for all children.

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

- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled to promoting good attendance and punctuality
- Reducing absence, including persistent absence
- 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 at the beginning of a school day and to lessons.

## 2. 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.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3. School procedures for registration attendance registers

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

It will mark whether a student is:

- Present or absent

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The reason for the amended entry e.g., attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, lateness
- DfE attendance codes. (APPENDIX 1)
- Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made

### Procedures

Students are able to enter the school grounds at 7.00 am when breakfast club begins. A bell is rung at 8.35 am which signals that all students should make their way to their classrooms for 8.40 am. The register is taken by the class teacher on SIMS. If a child arrives after the teacher has completed calling

the register and before 9.00 am, then the teacher logs the child as a 'L' on SIMS. Teachers to save and close registers at 9:00 am. Children arriving at the school gate on/or after 8.40am will be given a late mark at the school gate. Should children arrive after the register has been taken (9.00 am) they will need to enter via the Main Reception to be registered by the administration team. Any child arriving late to school 9.00 am onwards will be marked as 'U'.

If children arrive during the day (after a Medical Appointment etc.) they will need to enter via the Main Reception to be registered by the administration team. If they arrive before the afternoon registration they will be registered then.

The afternoon register is taken at 12.30 pm for all year groups.

#### 4. Unplanned absences

Parents must notify the school on the first day and every day of an unplanned absence, for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health by 9.00 am or as soon as practically possible.

**The process for unplanned absence see 'First Day Calling' (APPENDIX 2)**

Parents contact the school and can speak directly to the Attendance Officer. They can also leave a voice message on the attendance mailbox. Parent mail also has an absence reporting feature which parents have access to also.

If a student is absent and the school has received no contact from the parent/s then the Attendance Officer will telephone and text directly to the parent informing them that they must respond with details of the absence.

If a child who is on the child protection register is absent from school, then the Attendance Officer must report this to the safeguarding team.

If by the second day contact between home and school has still not occurred, then the Attendance Officer will:

- Make further calls and send an email to the parent.
- Try and ascertain if there are other numbers on which the parents/carers can be contacted.

If by the third day, there is still no contact then the Safeguarding team **MUST** be alerted to investigate whether a home visit is to be conducted.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. Medical evidence must be provided if the absence is more than three days or the student's attendance is under particular scrutiny due to a poor absentee rate.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **Child missing education (CME)**

The school will continue to try and establish contact with home via various means including student's friends and parental acquaintances. However, if after 10 days no contact has been made then CME proceedings are initiated utilising the LA's BACME service.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an unauthorised absence unless advance notice is provided.

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents must use official appointment cards or letters when informing the school about medical or dental appointments. Our school administration staff will make a copy of the letter to store in the student's school file. Also, a second copy will be scanned into the SIMS system.

If a child becomes unwell whilst on the school site, only a member of SLT can authorise a child to leave the school site. Parents will be contacted to collect the child.

When a child leaves the school site for such appointments, they must sign out using the inventory system in the main reception area.

### **Lateness and punctuality**

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code. The school values good punctuality as much as it values good attendance. Students and parents are constantly reminded via newsletters, school magazines, letters, assemblies, parents' evenings, annual reports, parent meetings about the benefits of having good punctuality.

The Attendance Officer will track and monitor children who are late:

- If your child is late you will be notified by a text message which will also inform you of the sanction.
- A total of 10 lates will result in a phone call home from the DHT to offer support to families.
- A total of 20 lates will result in a meeting with the Attendance Officer.
- Any child who arrives to school after 9.00 am, a 'U' code will be issued, this will be tracked and monitored by the Attendance Officer.

### **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport, operating at a high level of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance — "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs" The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c).
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.
- The school does not permit children to go home early during curriculum hours, unless exceptional circumstances. Evidence may be requested.
- We will consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (with medical evidence if required).
- Bereavement.
- Religious observance; where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. A maximum of two days is granted.
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes; this covers Roma, English and Welsh. Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

Should the school not deem an absence as authorised, then it will be recorded in the register and monitored in case of repeat offences.

As the school believes that poor attendance prejudices achievement, attainment and progress it will not sanction 'term time holidays'. All requests to remove a student from school to attend a holiday during term time will be denied.

All absences during term time for holiday purposes will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in 'parental fixed penalty fines'. (See Legal Sanctions Section)



## Legal Sanctions

Southchurch High School reserves the right to fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year.
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission. Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason.
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw notice.

## 5. Strategies for promoting good attendance

Good attendance is promoted throughout the school. We engage with families to ensure that they understand the value of ensuring that their children attend every day. Letters, texts, parent information evenings, newsletters, school magazines and the website all promote an ethos of high expectations and standards of attendance and punctuality.

Students are rewarded for good, and just as importantly, improved attendance and punctuality.

Initiatives such as:

- 100% weekly attendance reward points
- Published results weekly in newsletter
- Hampers at Easter and Christmas

## 6. Attendance monitoring and intervention

The Attendance Officer and Inclusion Lead are constantly monitoring school attendance and student absence. As safeguarding our students at Southchurch High School is of paramount importance, the Attendance Officer works extremely closely with all members of the pastoral and Safeguarding teams.

The Attendance Lead joins the Inclusion Team and Attendance Officer fortnightly. At these meetings every student's attendance and absence patterns are monitored and scrutinised.

Where necessary, measures are put in place to support students and their families understand the necessity for good attendance and inform them that, should the attendance not improve without authorised reasons, then further measures will be sanctioned which may include the involvement of the Education Welfare Service.

**Measures include:**

When a child's attendance drops to 96%, the Attendance Officer will send a letter (APPENDIX 5) to the family to inform them of the attendance drop. If the attendance rate does not increase, then the family will be referred to the Deputy Headteacher to intervene alongside the Safeguarding team.

Meetings/telephone meetings with students and their families.

Parental meetings (including 'parental attendance contracts' (APPENDIX 3) NPR proceedings (involving the EWS).

**Court action**

Southchurch High School will always pursue this course of action when all other measures have been exhausted.

The persistent absence threshold is 90% or below.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

Vulnerable students including CP, CIN and LAC are monitored on a weekly basis and parents, carers and CSC are constantly updated and informed of any absence.

## 7. Roles and responsibilities

**The Governing body:**

The Governing body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implantation of this policy.

**The Headteacher:**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

**The Attendance Officer:**

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level.
- Meets with SLT, inclusion lead and safeguarding team to implement strategies to combat poor attendance of individuals and groups.
- Arranges meetings/telephone meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.

- Works with education welfare service and Attendance Officer, to tackle persistent absence.
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

#### **Conduct Senior Leadership home visits, will:**

- Promote good attendance and its ethos.
- Devise motivational initiatives to improve year group and phase attendance.
- Monitor absence and attendance alongside the Attendance Officer.
- Meet with students and parents of concern.
- Conduct home visits.

#### **Class teachers:**

- Ensure that registers are accurately taken on SIMS.
- Support the ethos of good attendance.
- Monitor patterns of attendance and punctuality, informing SLT, Safeguarding Team and phase leads with concerns.
- Use provided data to enable students to engage with their own attendance profile.

## **8. Admission Process**

- Admission Lead will check the SIMS system on a weekly basis to ensure families who have been allocated a place at Southchurch High School are contacted within 10 working days.
- Admission Lead will organise and complete an admissions interview with the family.
- Admission Lead will allow at least three working days' notice for class teachers before a child is admitted into Southchurch High School.
- Admission Lead will email Heads of Year and Student Services Assistants information collated during admission interview to ensure all parties have as much information as possible before the child starts at Southchurch High School.
- Admission Lead will organise reading and numeracy assessment if required.
- Admission Lead will organise a meeting with the EAL Lead, if required.
- Admission Lead will ensure any medical needs are assessed appropriately, e.g., any medical training that needs to be undertaken before the new student starts at Southchurch High School. This information is also passed onto the class teacher two days prior to the student starting at Southchurch High School.

#### **Links with other policies:**

This policy is linked to our:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy

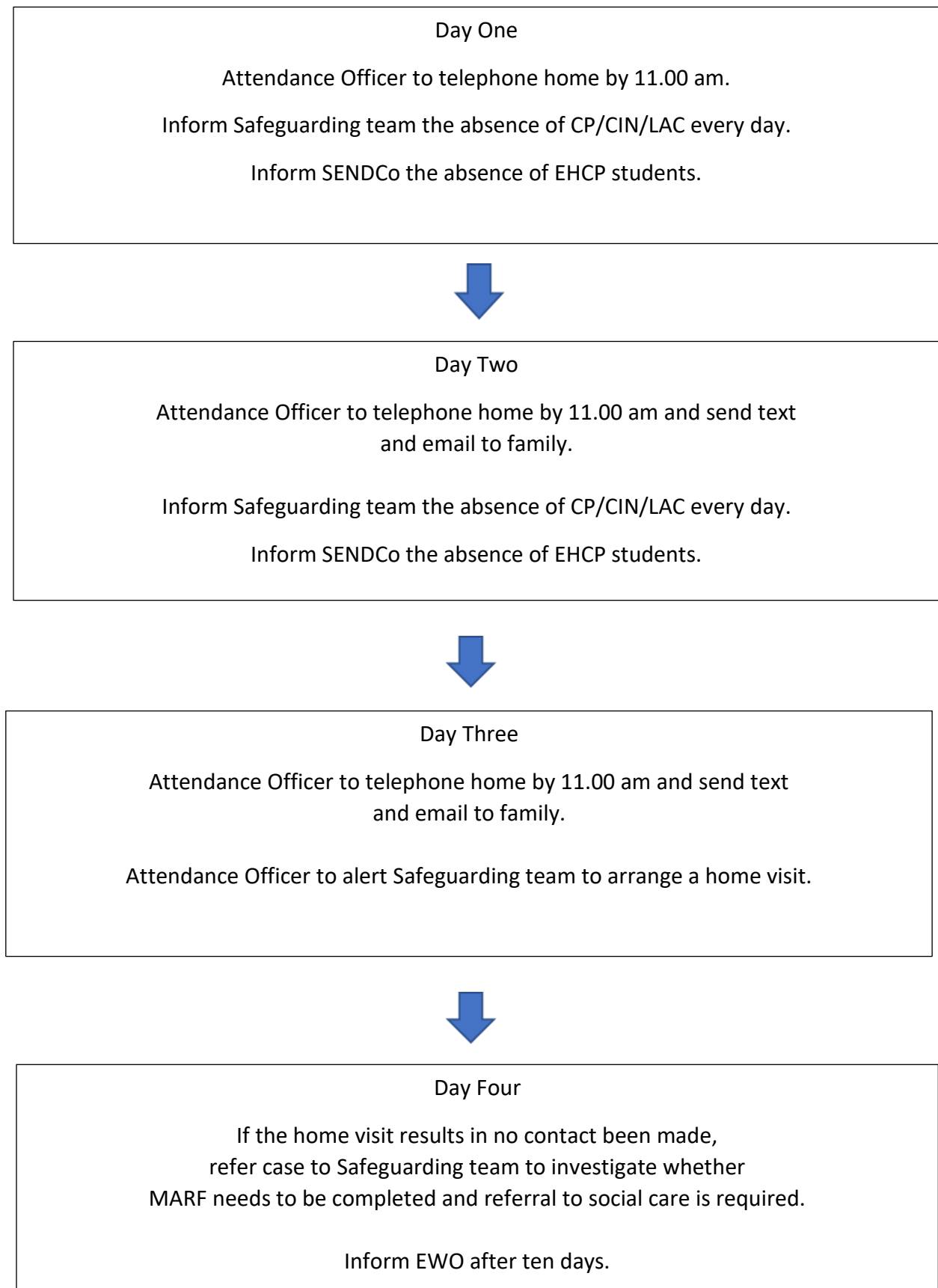
- Teaching Learning Policy
- Southend on Sea City Council – Penalty notice code of conduct for irregular school attendance:

<http://www.southchurchschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Code-of-Conduct-for-issuing-Penalty-Notices-Sept-2022.pdf>

## Appendix 1: Attendance codes

<b>Attendance Codes</b>	
/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration
E	Excluded
G	Family holiday (not agreed)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
Q	Present but not in lessons
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
Y/#	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
X	Non-compulsory school age or Covid-19 related
-	All should attend/No mark recorded
7	Illness due to Covid-19
8	Self-isolating due to Covid-19
9	Shielding due to Covid-19

## Appendix 2: First day calling protocol

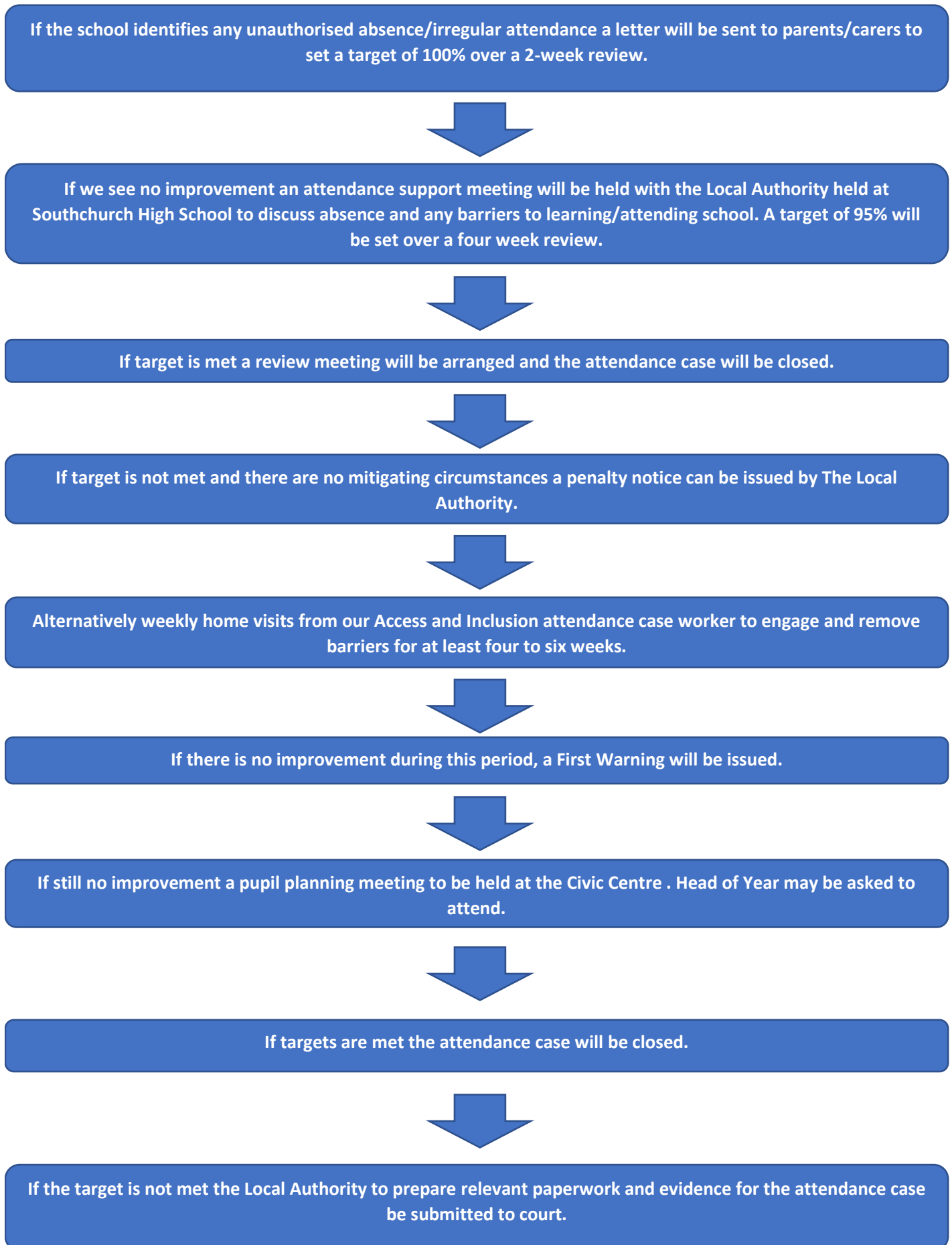


## Appendix 4: Attendance contract

Student name		Year group	
		DOB	
Date:		Time	
SEN status		Looked after child	
Child in need		Child protection	
Current attendance recorded on SIMS:			
In attendance		Role	
Discussion points			
Actions agreed			
Parent/carer signature			
Student signature			
Staff signature			

## Appendix 5: Attendance ladder

### Southchurch High School Attendance Ladder



## Appendix 5: Southchurch High School attendance letters to parents/carers

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you because [student's name]'s attendance has become a cause for concern. It currently stands at [add %]. It is the Department of Education/Ofsted that dictate attendance below 96% is poor and that below 90% is 'persistent absenteeism'.

### The Law

Children must attend school under the Education Act 1989 [revised]. Poor attendance at school can result in one or more of the following:

- A parenting order
- An education supervision order
- A school attendance order
- A fine [sometimes known as a 'penalty notice']

Regular attendance is an important factor in a child's academic success. When students are frequently absent, it is difficult for them to keep up with their school work and this could affect their life chances. For this reason, we take school attendance very seriously.

If your child is going to be absent from school, it is important that you contact the school on the first day of the absence to inform us of the reasons. If this continues for more than one day, you should make contact with the school on a daily basis to keep us updated.

We are keen to work with you to address any barriers to your child's attendance. If you require any advice or support on this matter, please get in touch with me to discuss this and we will do our best to help.

Your sincerely

Attendance Officer

<p><u>GREEN</u> Students with attendance from 96% to 100%</p>
<p><u>AMBER</u> Students with attendance from 90% to 95.9%</p>
<p><u>RED</u> Students with attendance below 90%</p>



Dear Parent/Carer

We have been monitoring the attendance as well as punctuality of your child. They have been late for school [times] since [date]. This is very concerning.

It is vital that your child attends school on time to receive an education suitable to their needs, abilities, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

If your child has a problem that affects them attending school on time, then you must discuss this with your child's Head of Year, Student Support Assistant or Miss Watkins, Medical Officer. The school will do what it can to support you and your child to address the issue. If your child has a high level of lateness and there seems to be no logical reason for this, then the school will be referring your case to the Attendance Officer from Southchurch High School. If it does not improve this may lead to a fine being issued or prosecution may proceed.

You have a legal responsibility to ensure our child attends school on a regular basis and on time with equipment to support them throughout the day. If your child's attendance continues to be poor, then legal sanctions may be considered.

I hope to see an improvement and will continue to monitor the situation. If you wish to discuss this letter please contact the school.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Deputy Headteacher