

2025

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
Revised due to DfE and Local Authority changes and ratified by Governing Body on:	27 November, 2025
It will be reviewed in:	November 2026

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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. Legislative context: School attendance and the Law

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 which introduced a National Framework in England. By law all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly at the school at which they are registered.

Parents may be recognised differently under education law than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an 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 a school or by education otherwise than at a 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, on time. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "Working together to improve school attendance" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions. Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance.

This policy is written with the above guidance in mind and underpins our school ethos to:

- promote children's welfare and safeguarding
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ensure that pupils succeed whilst at school
- ensure that pupils have access to the widest possible range of opportunities at school, and when they leave school

This policy ensures that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

In addition, the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

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 whistle is blown at 8.27 am which signals that all students should line up and wait to be led to their form room for 8.30 am. The register is taken by the class teacher on Bromcom. If a child arrives after the line up is completed, the student is late. Teachers will save and close registers at 8.40 am. Children arriving at the school gate on/or after 8.30 am will be given a late mark at the school gate. Should children arrive after this they will need to enter via the Main Reception to be registered by the administration team.

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.

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 8.00 am or as soon as practically possible.

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

Parents should contact the school and can speak directly to the Attendance Officer. They can also leave a voice message on the attendance mailbox. They can also email the school.

We aim to contact all parents, irrespective of whether they have contacted the school.

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.

We prioritise home visits for absent students. LAC students and a child who is on the Child Protection Register will be visited in the first instance. We aim to visit all students by day three at the latest.

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 certain 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 with the local authority.

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, 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.

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 and parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss attendance.

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).

5. National Framework for Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

Sanctions may include:

- issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence)
- a second Penalty Notice issued within a three-year period, will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child.
- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.
- If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison.
- If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

6. 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

7. 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 weekly. 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 significantly, 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 Attendance Officer and Pastoral Team to intervene alongside the Safeguarding team.

Meetings/telephone meetings with students and their families.

Parental meetings (including 'parental attendance contracts' (APPENDIX 3).

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 on a daily basis.

8. 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, which:

- 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.

9. 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 15 school 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:

<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/8443/code-of-conduct-for-issuing-penalty-notices-after-1-september-2024->

Appendix 1: Attendance codes

Southchurch High School

Mark	Type	Description
	Cancelled	Cancelled
#	Cancelled	Planned whole or partial school closure - not counted in possible attendances
/	Present	Present at the school when attendance register begins to be taken
?	Missing Mark	Precreation Mark
\	Present	Present (PM)
A	Present	AWOL/Truant student not in TT lesson
B	Educational Activity	Attending a place for any other approved educational activity
C0	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for exceptional circumstances
C1	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance
C2	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave, of compulsory school age and temporary reduced timetable does not require them to attend
D	Cancelled	Attending another school at which they are a registered pupil
E	Authorised Absent	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
F	Present	School Meeting
G	Unauthorised Absent	Absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday
H	Present	!Q
I	Authorised Absent	Unable to attend because of sickness
J1	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
K	Educational Activity	Attending a place, other than the school or another school at which they are a registered pupil, for educational provision arranged by LA
L	Present	Absent from the school when attendance register begins to be taken but attends before the taking of the register has ended
M	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
N	Unauthorised Absent	Absent - circumstances not yet established
O	Unauthorised Absent	Absent - other circumstances
P	Educational Activity	Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity
Q	Cancelled	Unable to attend because of lack of access arrangements by LA to facilitate their attendance
R	Authorised Absent	Day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs
S	Authorised Absent	Absent with leave for the purpose of studying for a public examination

T	Authorised Absent	Mobile child whose parent is travelling in the course of their trade or business and is travelling with that parent
U	Unauthorised Absent	Absent for registration - arrived in school after registration closed
V	Educational Activity	Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a visit or trip
W	Educational Activity	Attending a place for an approved education activity that is work experience
X	Cancelled	Absent with leave, not of compulsory school age and timetable does not require them to attend
Y1	Cancelled	Unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of pupil's home and transport to and from school normally provided is not available
Y2	Cancelled	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency
Y3	Cancelled	Part of the school premises is unavoidably out of use and pupil cannot be accommodated in parts of the premises that remain in use
Y4	Cancelled	Whole school closed when school was due to meet for a session, but session has been cancelled
Y5	Cancelled	Unable to attend because pupil is subject to a sentence of detention
Y6	Cancelled	Travel to or attendance at school would be contrary/prohibited by guidance/law relating to incidence or transmission of infection or disease
Y7	Cancelled	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause
Z	Cancelled	Pupil's name entered in advance of start date

Appendix 2: First day calling protocol

Day One

Telephone call home by 11.00 am.

Inform Safeguarding team the absence of CP/CIN/LAC every day.

Inform SENDCo the absence of EHCP students.



Day Two

Telephone call home by 11.00 am.

Inform Safeguarding team the absence of CP/CIN/LAC every day.

Inform SENDCo the absence of EHCP students.

Potential Home Visit



Day Three

Telephone call home by 11.00 am.

Potential Home Visit.



Day Four

If the home visit results in no contact been made,
refer case to Safeguarding team to investigate whether
MARF needs to be completed and referral to social care is required.

Appendix 3: Attendance contract

Attendance Contract

Date/time of meeting:	
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Student name:	
Date of birth:	
Attendance today:	

Actions agreed:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Attendance target:	
Timescale for improvement:	
Agreed start date of contract:	

Date for review meeting:	
Date of next meeting:	

I confirm that this Attendance Action Plan was agreed by all present.

Paper copy signed: Parent/carer:

Paper copy signed: Student:

School Representative:

Appendix 4: Fining procedure

Fining Procedures

Non-Complex Attendance Concerns

70-90%



A conversation held/letter sent about attendance concerns – drop to between 90%-95%. At present the HoYs should do this.

If parent doesn't answer, send a letter. Call must be recorded.



1. Meeting:

- Letter must be sent home with date and time of meeting specified.
- Attendance/Pastoral/TAF in place at meeting.
- Interventions need to be put in place (school).
- School Contract introduced and signed.
- Minutes taken.
- An attendance target for the next 4 weeks must be set: 100%- 90% is the norm.



2. Review Meeting:

- Letter must be sent home with date and time of meeting specified.
- No improvements; adjustments maybe necessary.
- Notice to improve **must** be issued; signed and dated, stating what has been carried out.
- It must be made clear that a Penalty Warning may be enforced; within 6 weeks, although school does not have to wait for a set time period in order to fine, if

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

DATE

Dear Parent/Carer

Re:

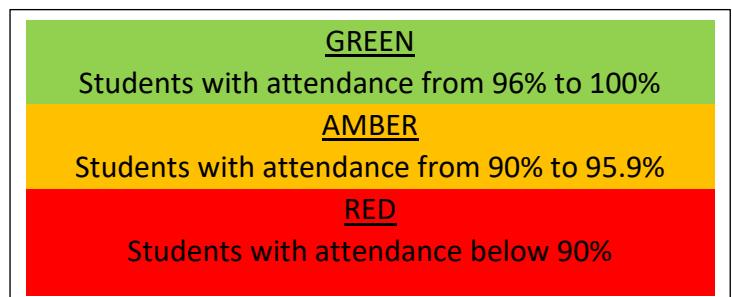
Following our previous communications [STUDENT NAME] absences from school continue to be a cause for concern.

So that we can discuss any barriers to regular attendance, we are inviting you to attend a meeting in school on [DATE AND TIME] with Mrs Kelly, Attendance Officer and Miss McDonald, Family Liaison Officer.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Miss S Murray
Deputy Headteacher



DATE

Dear Parent/Carer

Re:

Following our previous communications offering opportunities to access support, and further to any support plans that may have been devised, <STUDENT NAME> absences from school continue to be a cause for concern.

So that we can discuss any further barriers to regular attendance, we are inviting you to attend a review meeting in school **on <DATE AND TIME>** with Miss Murray, Deputy Headteacher and Miss McDonald, Family Liaison Officer.

Thank you for your support in this matter.

Yours faithfully

Miss S Murray
Deputy Headteacher

Appendix 6: Notice to Improve

NOTICE TO IMPROVE

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Sec.23)

Education Act 1996(Section 444(1A), 444A & 444B)

The Children Act 1989

Dear Parent/Carer

This is to inform you that [Student Name], [DOB], [Year Group], a registered pupil at Southchurch High School has not attended her Education Sessions regularly. A current attendance [Attendance %] with [#] sessions of unauthorised absence.

It is disappointing that [Student Name]’s attendance has not improved, and she is not attending school regularly.

Should we not see sufficient improvement and no further unauthorised absences within the **next 2 school weeks** a Pupil Planning meeting may be arranged where a Final Warning letter could be issued, which could result in legal action being taken against you should there be further unauthorised absence. This could take the form of one of the following.

A Under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Section 23(1), issuing a Penalty Notice which incurs a fine of £80.00 if paid within 21 days rising to £160.00 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. (NB. Failure to pay will cause the Authority to commence proceedings in the Magistrates Court – see paragraph ii.)

OR

B Prosecution in the Magistrates Court **under the Education Act 1996 (Section 444(1A), 444A & 444B)** where, if convicted, disposals include a range of fines up to £2500.00, Parenting Orders or Community Sentences depending on the circumstances.

AND/OR

C Applying for an Education Supervision Order on your child in accordance with **the Children Act 1989.**

If attendance does not improve and a Final Warning needs to be issued a referral to Social Care may be made which would result in them undertaking an assessment of needs for your family.

Yours faithfully

Miss S Murray
Deputy Headteacher