



Attendance of Pupils Policy

Review Body/Role: Trust Board	Date: 11 December 2024
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Please note that this policy is one of the suite of SET Policies for School Standards Boards to acknowledge. Part 2 of this policy must be reviewed and tailored in the areas identified by each school and ratified by the School Standards Board.	

SOUTHERN EDUCATION TRUST

Attendance of Pupils Policy

Our policies refer to Senior Leaders. This can mean Executive Head Teacher, Head Teacher or Head of School.

Throughout this policy, the term 'parent' means:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who has parental responsibility for a pupil or young person; and,
- any person who has care of a pupil or young person (i.e. lives with and looks after the pupil). ACAD

Introduction

Punctuality and regular attendance are crucial to a pupil's achievement at school and therefore, improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. However, any barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. Schools within Southern Education Trust are committed to work in collaboration with parents, carers and pupils to ensure that all pupils benefit from regular attendance.

All staff in Trust schools communicate to pupils that their contribution to the school community is valued and respected; furthermore, staff endeavour to make school a fruitful and enjoyable place to be so that a positive attitude to school and learning is fostered: through this, we aim to ensure that pupils want to attend school regularly in the first place. However, some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, schools will work collaboratively with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why regular attendance is so vital:

There is a clear and proven link between attendance and achievement. The pupils with the highest attainment have higher rates of attendance than those achieving lower grades. Pupils who miss a substantial amount of school fall behind their peers and struggle to catch up as most of the work they miss is never made up, which can lead to big gaps in their learning. Poor attendance often starts at first/primary school, and pupils who fall into this pattern are likely to underachieve at upper/secondary school. Friendships can be negatively affected by absence, too: it can be hard for a pupil who misses lots of school to form relationships with their peers.

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

These tables show the impact of absence on a pupil's education

Minutes late <u>per day</u>	Days of learning lost per year
5	3.2
10	6.5
15	9.5
20	12.5
30	19

Number of days absent each year	Overall attendance level	Impact on pupil's education
5 days or less	97% +	These pupils have every chance to make really strong progress at school.
10 days	95%	These pupils benefit from strong overall attendance and are very well placed to make good progress at school. We aim for every pupil to have at least 95% attendance overall
19 days	90%	Pupils in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best
29 days	85%	Pupils in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; there is a real risk that this lower attendance will hinder a pupil's progress. Absence below 90% is considered to be persistently absent from school.
38 days	80%	Pupils are missing a year of school over 5 years of education. They are not benefitting from their right to be educated. Parents / carers of young people in this group could be fined or prosecuted.

Attendance and safeguarding

The safeguarding of all pupils is of utmost importance. School provides a protective environment for those who attend. Schools are well placed to identify safeguarding issues early and regular attendance is vital for this. For those who don't attend regularly, and where all avenues of support have been facilitated, and the appropriate educational support has been provided but the unauthorised absence continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, request that a full pupil's social care assessment is conducted. When a pupil is absent and no reason has been given for the absence, the school will prioritise the safety of these pupils. See 'Where the school is not notified of an absence' below.

Working with families and partners:

Trust schools are committed to successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly. This requires local partners to work collaboratively with families. The school will work collaboratively to:

- Identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual, cohort and school level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.
- Ensure aspiration to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents by building a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.
- Listen to families to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.
- Remove barriers in school where practically able and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school.
- Escalate concerns where the voluntary support is not having an impact by explaining the consequences of non-attendance clearly and ensuring support is also in place to enable families to respond.
- Enforce attendance through statutory interventions or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education where support is not having an impact or not being engaged with.

More details on roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix A

Schools' overall approach takes these six graduated stages:

1	Expect	High expectations that all pupils will attend well
2	Monitor	Closely monitor the attendance of all pupils to spot problems early
3	Listen/Understand	Work with pupils and parents to understand any barriers to good attendance
4	Facilitate Support	Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents overcome the barriers outside of school
5	Formalise Support	Formalise support where informal, voluntary approaches are not working
6	Enforce	If all else fails, enforce attendance through statutory intervention and prosecution

Expectations for punctuality and attendance

Punctuality

Schools will actively discourage late arrivals and will be alert to any patterns of late arrival in order to start an early discussion with the family to provide appropriate support.

It is our expectation that all pupils will arrive in time for morning registration. If a pupil arrives after the registers open but before they close, they will be marked as 'late arrival before registers close' (L). If a pupil arrives after registers close, they will be marked as 'unauthorised absence' (U) or another more

appropriate attendance code. Where a pupil is persistently late (more than 3 times in a half term) without a reasonable excuse, they may be subject to disciplinary action, for example, a lunchtime detention.

Individual school procedures can be found in Part Two of this policy.

Absence Reporting

All pupils will be expected to attend school on every day that it is open. If an unexpected absence occurs, there are expectations that relate to pupil safety.

A parent MUST notify the school by 8:30 any day a pupil will be absent. Please give details of the pupil's name, class and nature of absence. Please do not email the pupil's teacher as they may not check emails until later in the day. We cannot accept "unwell" or other such vague terms if you are reporting an absence. If you do, we will record the absence as "unauthorised".

If you fail to report your pupil as absent by 08:30, without reasonable excuse, we will record the absence as "unauthorised". Timely and accurate absence reporting is a safeguarding requirement. We will telephone you to ensure your pupil is safe with you.

Appointments during the day

Parents must avoid arranging appointments for their pupil during the day. However, if it is unavoidable, parents must notify the school of the appointment details.

A pupil should only be taken out of school for their own appointment, not because another family member has an appointment. This includes collecting a pupil early so a family member can attend an appointment. However, the school does appreciate that this can be difficult and in exceptional circumstances, Senior Leaders may authorise a sibling to leave school early. Their decision is final.

Leave of absence during term time

The Department for Education prohibits Senior Leaders from authorising any leave of absence during term time unless a genuine **exceptional** circumstance applies.

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short; 'unavoidable' should be taken to mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that Senior Leaders have all the information in writing to be able to determine whether the request is truly exceptional.

We would ask that any request for leave of absence during term time is submitted by way of a Leave of Absence form which can be found on the school website or can be obtained from the main school office. We would ask that this is submitted at least 10 school days in advance of the proposed leave being taken. If the leave of absence is not granted due to an exceptional reason, the Senior Leaders may apply to the Local Authority for a fine to be issued if any of the following criteria apply:

- The pupil's attendance is below 90%
- The pupil has been absent without authorisation in the 10 weeks prior to the absence
- The pupil has already been on holiday in term time in the same academic year

If we do not receive a leave of absence form in advance of the pupil going on holiday, we are unable to retrospectively update the register to reflect that the Senior Leaders have given authorisation for the leave to be taken and the pupil will be marked absent without authorisation and an 'O' code applied on the register for each session they are absent from school.

Off-site education, alternative provision or specialist provision

Where a pupil's needs are recognised by the school, and specialist resources not available in school are required, the allocated lead within the school may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside of school.

For pupils using alternative provision or off-site education, the allocated lead will ensure that the safeguarding and quality of education for the pupil is good or better by following Southern Education Trust's procedures. All pupils placed in a more appropriate provision will have full time education and clearly defined outcomes agreed before the placement starts and attendance will be tracked by the provider and the school at which the pupil is on roll. Such pupils will be coded appropriately and, if in attendance at the agreed appropriate provision, will not be marked as absent. Stringent safeguarding checks will be carried out before and during the placement as well as checking safeguarding daily through the daily attendance phone call.

Pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs

Please refer to the DfE Guidance "Arranging Education for pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs" (December 2023).

Where possible, the pupil's health needs should be managed by the school they attend, in partnership with the pupil's family, so that they can continue to be educated either at school or at home, with support, and without the need for the intervention of the local authority. However, as soon as it is clear that the school can no longer support the pupil's health needs and provide suitable education, the school should refer the matter to the local authority about putting alternative provision in place. Please refer to the DfE Guidance for further details and information.

When a pupil is in hospital, or recovering from treatment, liaison between hospital teaching staff, the local authority, alternative provision or home tuition service, and the pupil's school can ensure continuity of provision and consistency of curriculum. Such collaboration can enable the pupil's home school to make information available about the curriculum and work the pupil may miss, helping the pupil to keep up, rather than having to catch up.

Our Trust is committed to ensuring pupils are in school when required. However, we do understand that sometimes health problems make this difficult, impossible or not in the pupil's best interests. We will look to ways to support the pupil being in school as far as their health will allow.

This may involve the use of part-time timetables.

Part-time timetables

A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour. A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and will not be treated as a long-term solution. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

Where a part-time timetable is considered in the pupil's best interests, there **MUST** be agreement from the family; if there is no agreement then it will be classed as an unofficial exclusion. If a pupil has a part-time timetable agreed, the Southern Education Trust Part-Time Timetable process must be followed which includes a thorough safeguarding risk assessment, desired outcomes for the pupil, expectations of work completed when not on school premises and a six-week timetable that is gradually increased to maintain full time education by the end of week six. In exceptional circumstances and with significant evidence that it is in the pupil's best interest, a part-time timetable may be extended for a further period of time. Weekly reviews of the part-time timetable must occur with the family and school and stringent records kept of how successful the timetable has been.

Staffing for monitoring and promoting good attendance

Schools will identify appropriate key staff to undertake attendance monitoring and adhere to the following key principles:

- There will be a school attendance lead, who will ensure that careful records of attendance are maintained which conform to the codes set out by the Department for Education and provide information as requested by staff and weekly for whole school attendance monitoring meetings;
- The school will have an allocated Senior Leader for attendance who will have a close link with the school attendance officer;
- Schools will work in close partnership with the Local Authority through the Inclusion Leads for their locality;
- All staff will have training in attendance including how to complete registers, how to spot patterns of absence/punctuality, how to use other information about a pupil to see the wider context, how to report concerns and how to build relationships and offer support for families that struggle to maintain good attendance.

Resolving poor attendance

Where a pupil has been identified as having low attendance and there appears to be no reasonable excuse for it, an initial and informal conversation will be held between the teacher/tutor and parent(s) for that pupil in the first instance to understand what the barriers to attendance are and agree ways to improve it.

If the pupil's attendance does not improve, the case will be escalated to the Attendance Lead who may invite the parent(s) to attend a formal meeting known as an initial ***Fast Track to Attendance*** meeting at which a parent contract will be agreed and signed by the parent(s) and the Attendance Lead. Where appropriate, a referral can be made to the Local Authority partner as part of the agreement to assist the parent(s) (with their consent) and the appropriate personnel within the Local Authority will also be

notified. This will initiate a 12-week attendance monitoring period which is reviewed at 6 weeks with the parent(s) present. At the 6-week review point the contract will be reviewed and amended where necessary with the agreement of both the parent(s) and the school. If the agreed attendance targets are not met by the end of the 12 weeks, the case will be referred to the Local Authority Inclusion Team for consideration of legal action.

Where a parent declines or fails to attend an initial Fast Track to Attendance meeting, a second opportunity will be provided to attend one. If the second appointment is not attended the school will notify the parent(s) in writing that the pupil will be subject of **Attendance Monitoring** which can be a period of 15 or 25 school days. If the pupil is absent without reasonable excuse for 10% or more of either period, the case will be referred to the Local Authority for consideration of legal action which could result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

Wider Support

Wider support with attendance is available. Please see the links below for more information although this list is not exhaustive:

- [SENDIASS – BPC & DCC](#)
- [School attendance and absence - Dorset Council](#)
- [BCP Council Family Information Directory](#)
- [BCP Council Schools and Learning](#)
- <http://www.pupilline.org.uk/get-support/>
- [It's not possible to go to school for a health reason - Dorset Council](#)
- [Southern Education Trust](#)
- [Young Minds Mental Health Charity – help and support with Emotionally Based School Avoidance](#)
- [Sleep hygiene in pupils and young people – Great Ormond Street Hospital](#)

Your pupil's school can provide further information and guidance.

Relevant legislation:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Pupils Act 1989](#)
- [The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Sentencing Act 2020](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

Relevant government guidance:

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour](#)
- [Pupils missing education](#)
- [Keeping Pupils Safe in Education](#)
- [Working together to safeguard pupils](#)
- [Elective home education](#)
- [Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)
- [Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)
- [Ensuring a good education for pupils who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)
- [Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)
- [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying](#)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)
- [Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance Effective practice examples](#)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance](#)

PART TWO – SCHOOL SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR **insert school name here** SCHOOL

Schools should insert their specific information where indicated, after which this section should be ratified by the School Standards Board.

School Procedures

At **XXX** School, pupils may start arriving at school from **[X:00]** but **we expect all of our pupils to be on site and sitting in their classrooms by [0X:00].**

Register completion starts at **[X:00]** and finishes (closes) at **[X:00]** for morning sessions. Any pupil ***not in their classrooms*** when **the [X:00]** bell sounds will be considered late.

Contacting Staff about Attendance

The Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance is:	
The Attendance admin is:	
To tell your school that your pupil is going to be absent, you should:	
If a parent is concerned about their pupil's attendance, they should	
Other key staff involved in supporting attendance are:	
If you wish to request a leave of absence for your pupil, you should:	

Appendices:

A) Summary of Expectations

For ALL pupils			
Parents / pupils are expected to:	School is expected to:	The Education Trust is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
Ensure their pupil attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
Notify the school as soon as possible when their pupil has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness)	Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance	Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.	Have a School Inclusion Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.	Accurately complete admission and attendance registers	Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	Provide each school with an Attendance Support Worker who can support with queries and advice.
Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible	Have robust daily processes to follow up absence		Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.
Observe the school attendance policy at all times	Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance		

For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent (95-90% attendance):			
Parents / pupils are expected to:	School is expected to:	The Academy Trust is expected to:	The Local Authority is expected to:
Work with the school and Local Authority to help them understand their pupil's barriers to attendance. Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.	Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. Work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to the required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the Local Authority and other partners. Act as the lead practitioner where all partners agree that the school is the best-placed lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the school, continue to work with the Local Authority and partners.	Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus on support on the pupils who need it.	Hold a termly meeting with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so. Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary Early Help assessment where appropriate. Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners. Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a Local Authority service is best placed to lead. Where the lead practitioner is outside of the Local Authority, continue to work with the school and partners.