

# Southend High School for Boys



## Attendance Policy

October 2019

## **1. Rationale and policy aims**

The link between regular school attendance and academic attainment is clear. However, regular attendance also enables pupils to experience a positive educational experience. 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.

Research shows that school work missed through absence is unlikely to be caught up. Pupils who miss between 10 to 20% of a school year (between 19 to 38 days) stand only a 35% chance of gaining 5 or more good GCSE's whereas the figure is 73% for those pupils whose attendance is above this rate. Poor attendance may also lead to behavioural issues at school and general unhappiness; bi-products of the intermittent engagement of the pupil with academic and pastoral support, friends and broader opportunities offered by the school environment.

Consequently, high attendance levels are an essential element of success.

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

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

## **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 (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil 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.

## **3. School procedures**

### **3.1 Attendance register**

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

*(See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.)*

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for three years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.30am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.35am and will be kept open until 8.40am. The register for the second session will be taken at 2.05pm and will be kept open until 2.10pm. Pupils arriving after these times will be marked as late.

### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – at the earliest opportunity.

A parent should then contact the school on each day of absence *unless* a period of absence has already been predetermined, most obviously by a doctor's certificate.

On the first day of attendance after the absence, a letter should then be given (usually to the form tutor) that explains the reason for absence and is signed by a parent.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. In such cases, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription and appointment card. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school remains dissatisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the school may seek the advice and assistance of external agencies, most obviously an attendance officer. Remaining doubt about the legitimacy of the absence may result in the absence as being recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence, but we expect the school to be notified in advance. This may be done by email. If email is not possible a signed, parental letter should be presented to the form tutor in advance of the appointment.

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

The school will support any pupil with extended medical treatment that disrupts the ongoing education of the young person. Such support may take the form of providing any relevant institution, most obviously a hospital, with any necessary educational materials.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

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

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Form tutors and Year Leaders oversee processes designed to encourage good punctuality. Such systems are designed to ensure that poor punctuality does not become habitual on the part of the pupil. Contact will be made with parents when appropriate.

### **3.5 Following up absence**

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

Information about pupil attendance is accessed through Go4Schools. This is live data, and parents can see this information on the app or via the website.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

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

'Exceptional circumstances' may be defined as a special family event e.g. graduation, medical emergency. It may be the case that a pupil with an outstanding record of attendance and punctuality, along with consistently high effort levels may be permitted an authorized absence for an activity relevant to a planned future career e.g. medical work experience. In addition, authorization may be given if the pupil is engaged in an activity that has been arranged by an external organisation that has is deemed to provide educational merit e.g. scout camp.

The school considers 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 at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- University Open Days (Sixth form pupils will be allowed to attend three open day visits during any one academic year)

- Family emergencies-such as a funeral for a close family member

Examples of Unauthorised Absence:

- Family Holiday
- Cultural/Sporting event-this would include events such as a music festival, Wimbledon
- A sporting event for a club

Instances of unauthorised absence will be investigated by the school. Action may include the involvement of external agencies.

#### **4.2 Legal sanctions**

Schools can 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:

- the number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- patterns of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- an excluded pupil being 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 the notice.

### **5. Strategies for promoting attendance and punctuality**

There are a number of strategies promoted by the school to encourage good attendance. These include:

- the attendance officer monitors attendance records daily. There is an early warning system in place, where the attendance officer notifies pastoral staff about unauthorised absences and patterns of poor attendance or punctuality.
- the school has effective links with the attendance services at the local authority, including a designated attendance practitioner. Meetings are held with the school attendance officer, and data scrutinised.
- when pupils arrive to lessons, staff are requested to mark on the register the number of minutes of the lesson that have been missed. Patterns are then picked up when the data is analysed by pastoral staff.
- a late card is used for pupils with poor punctuality, and students are asked to make up the time missed at the end of the school day.
- the importance of good attendance is highlighted in presentations at parental events throughout the year.
- a safe learning environment with clear lines of support for pupils with issues.

- The early identification of possible factors leading to disrupted attendance with consequent early intervention.

## **6. Attendance monitoring**

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If the school has not been contacted by the parent of an absent pupil on the first day of absence by 9.30am, the parent will be contacted. For any pupil identified as being 'at risk' for any reason, the call will be made at 9am

If a pupil's attendance continues to fall, external agencies will be involved. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national 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.

Any irregular absence during the course of the day, most obviously a pupil missing from a lesson will be pursued immediately. In such an eventuality, the school's attendance officer will inform the pastoral support colleague who will then inform the relevant pastoral leader, either the Year Leader or any member of the key stage team. If no relevant members of the pastoral team are available, any available member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be informed

Attendance data is recorded via an electronic system (Lesson Monitor). Pastoral leaders will use this data to:

- track general patterns of attendance
- track patterns of absence
- identify internal or external factors that might have an impact upon attendance

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 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 implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 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 pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 The attendance officer**

The attendance officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the relevant pastoral leader
- Works with the relevant pastoral leader/external services to tackle persistent absence

### **7.4 Form Tutors and teachers**

Form tutors and teachers are responsible for recording attendance accurately, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office in a timely fashion.

## **8. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our child protection and safeguarding policy.

## **Appendix 1: attendance codes**

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day